SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY, 09 FEBRUARY 2011 at 10.10am
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Sinead McDonnell (deputising for Richard Stewart)** **John Stewart** **Sebastian Mingout (deputising for Stephen Welch)** **Hugh Widdis** **Gareth McGrath**
Apologies:	**Richard Stewart and Stephen Welch**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Tony Logue (Agenda items 6 and 7)** **Georgie Campbell (Agenda items 8 and 9)** **Brendan O'Neill (Agenda Items 15, 16 and 17)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Richard Stewart and Stephen Welch. Sinead McDonnell and Sebastian Mingout attended as their respective deputies.

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

(a) **21 January 2011**
The Minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2011 were approved with some amendments.

(b) **7 January 2011**
Following publication of the Minutes of the meeting of 7 January 2011, a query was raised in relation to the record of the discussion on Item 13. After discussion, it was agreed to amend the Minutes accordingly.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Outstanding matters arising will be dealt with through the Action Points or discussed within today's items.

5 SMG Action Points

5.1 SMG reviewed and updated the list of Action Points.

ACTION: JIM BEATTY

6 Future SMG/Commission Business

6.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting and advised SMG of the business to be discussed at the Commission meeting on 22 February 2011:

- Various Matters Arising
- Clerk's Key Update report
- European Strategy

6.2 The Commission and the SMG Forward Work Plans were noted.

6.3 It was agreed that Mr Logue would consider producing an end-of-mandate report on behalf of the Commission.

7 Current FOI Requests/Assembly Questions

7.1 The FOI requests and Assembly Questions were noted.

8 Corporate Risk Register

8.1 Georgie Campbell joined the meeting and referred SMG to several entries in the Risk Register which may need to be updated/amended.

8.2 It was agreed that Georgie Campbell would update the Risk Register as discussed.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

9 Review of Questions to Clerk/DG

9.1 At the meeting on 15 October 2010, SMG agreed that a review of the questions process should be carried out and the findings referred to SMG.

9.2 Georgie Campbell spoke to her paper on the outcome of the review and the recommendations on the way forward.

9.3 SMG discussed the benefits and shortfalls of the system, including the high proportion of those submissions which were made anonymously – 74%. There was support for retention of the process although it was agreed that some amendments were necessary, including the need to address concerns regarding the nature of some comments received.

9.4 It was agreed that the Clerk/DG would speak with Georgie Campbell before the issue of revised guidelines. The process will be reviewed again in three months.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
GEORGIE CAMPBELL

10 Amalgamation/Review of Dining 1st Floor Catering Facilities

10.1 Sebastian Mingout spoke to his paper on the issue. During recent meetings with Eurest concern was expressed about the low usage of the Member’s Dining Room (MDR) and the Brasserie and the costs in maintaining the present level of service.

10.2 A range of options were discussed and it was agreed that the two facilities should be combined within the MDR while retaining a choice of menus and that the new facility will close at 2.30pm. The Brasserie room will be available for other uses, for example, meetings. The Commission is to be advised of the proposal at its next meeting.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

11 Review of Assembly Effectiveness

11.1 Hugh Widdis introduced the report to SMG. In March 2010 SMG had agreed a qualitative and quantitative methodology for assessing the effectiveness of the NIA. The research has now been completed and a near-final draft prepared.

11.2 SMG welcomed the report and its largely positive findings. It was recognised that there were still some areas for improvement but these would be addressed through the group to be set up to take forward the final recommendations.

11.3 SMG agreed that it was vital that the report should be brought to the Commission and the Chairperson's Liaison Group before the end of this mandate and Hugh Widdis was tasked with finalising the report and bringing it back to the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: HUGH WIDDIS

.

12 Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy

12.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to her paper on this issue which had been before SMG at an earlier meeting. Mrs McDonnell explained the rationale behind the strategy and the potential benefits.

12.2 SMG supported the introduction of the strategy and during the discussion identified some areas for amendment.

12.3 It was agreed that having made the proposed changes, Mrs McDonnell would circulate the revised paper to HoBs and then consult with TUS and staff. The final paper will be brought back to SMG.

ACTION: SINEAD MCDONNELL

13 Staff Handbook – Conduct Chapter

13.1 Discussion on this item was deferred to the next SMG meeting.

14 Managing Attendance – Key Principles

14.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to her paper on this issue. SMG had agreed the key principles of this policy at the meeting on 21 January 2011. However, the NICS had recently significantly changed its corresponding policy and SMG was asked to consider amendments to the draft policy.

14.2 In its discussions, SMG emphasised the need for managers to comply with the guidance and procedures in relation to Managing Attendance.

14.3 Some amendments were agreed and Mrs McDonnell was asked to incorporate these into the draft policy before circulating it to HoBs for comments. The revised draft is to be circulated to SMG before consultation with TUS and staff.

ACTION: SINEAD MCDONNELL

15 ICT Provision to Members for 2011 – 2015 Mandate

15.1 Brendan O'Neill joined the meeting and spoke to his paper on this issue. Mr O'Neill spoke of the continuing changes in technology and how the diverse needs of MLAs may best be met over the coming years.

15.2 In order to provide the service appropriate to the need, Mr O'Neill recommended that the existing hardware should be retained for the next two years with software updates as necessary. The levels of funding for a Broadband service had yet to be decided.

15.3 It was agreed that the Clerk/DG would consult with Richard Stewart about the Broadband service currently provided to constituency offices. It is intended that a paper would then be brought to the Commission.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

16 ICT Asset Management during Election Period

16.1 John Stewart updated SMG on the current position.

17 SAN and Virtualisation Business Case

17.1 Brendan O'Neill spoke to his paper on this issue. An earlier paper had now been revised and Mr O'Neill highlighted the benefits of replacing old servers, providing a centralised data storage system and migrating to a virtualised environment with multiple systems running on a single physical box.

17.2 After further discussion, the business case was approved.

It was agreed to defer discussion on the remaining items to the next SMG meeting.

18 AOB - Circulation of Papers

18.1 Mr Reaney spoke about the security markings and circulation restrictions on papers and asked SMG members to circulate meeting papers whenever possible to HoBs prior to SMG meetings, particularly those papers relating to policy issues.

18.2 If necessary papers could be restricted to SMG and HoBs only for consultation purposes so as to ensure the widest input to policy development.

19 Date of Next Meeting

Friday, 18 February 2011 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 1.00pm.