SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 29 MARCH 2012 AT 2.14PM
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Peter Hall** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch** **Hugh Widdis**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Peter McCallion (Agenda item 6.2.1)** **Sinead McDonnell (Agenda item 7.1, 7.2)** **Paula McClintock (Agenda item 8)** **David Johnston (Agenda item 9)** **Tony Logue (Agenda item 10)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Gareth McGrath. Peter Hall deputised on his behalf.

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No member declared an interest.

3 Revision of SMG Minutes 10 February 2012

3.1 Following a discussion on the amendments suggested by Peter McCallion to SMG Minutes of 10 February 2012 it was agreed to make some amendments to the Minutes of the meeting.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

4.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 10 February 2012 had been approved and published on 23 March 2012.

4.2 All issues within Matters Arising will be dealt with through the Action Points or discussed as substantive agenda items.

5 SMG Action Points

5.1 The outstanding Action Points were reviewed. Members were asked to advise Jim Beatty of further updates and amendments.

6 Corporate Strategy Implementation Framework

6.1 Business Plans 2012/13 – updates on Directorate Business Plans

6.1.1 The Clerk/DG has reviewed all Directorate Business Plans for 2012/13 and asked Directors to review a number of points. He spoke of the need for increased focus on monitoring progress on Directorate Business Plans at SMG and the Commission.

6.1.2 SMG discussed the need for consistency in content across the Business Plans. It was recognised that some issues would be addressed within multiple Directorates, eg, PMS. It was agreed that the lead Director on each of these issues would write and share wording to improve consistency.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

6.2 Strategic Work Strands

6.2.1 Business Efficiency Update

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 2.18pm and provided SMG with a verbal update. The Project Board has approved the reports on the Security and Ushering Service and the Research and Information Service. These will now proceed to consultation. The draft reports on Clerking and Reporting and the Contracts Review should be available on 4 May 2012. The scoping phases have begun for a number of further areas, eg, Education. SMG was told that the NIAO is not able to provide a replacement for the team member returning to NIAO shortly.

6.2.2 Institutional Review

Trevor Reaney has made a presentation to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee and answered questions from the Committee members.

6.2.3 Organisational Development

Gareth McGrath has begun work on this project and recently met with representatives from HR.

6.2.4 Organisational Redesign

The draft Terms of Reference are currently out for consultation. Trevor Reaney held a ‘drop-in’ session on 29 March 2012 to provide an opportunity for managers to ask questions and present their views as part of the consultation process.

6.3 Co-ordination

There was nothing to report under this heading.

6.4 Consultation, communication and engagement

Trevor Reaney held a staff briefing on 28 March 2012 and discussed plans for further sessions in April 2012. An ERG meeting was held on 29 March 2012 and included a discussion on future consultation processes regarding Business Efficiency.

7 Corporate Services

7.1 Whistleblowing Arrangements

7.1.1 Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 2.40pm and spoke to her paper on this issue.

7.1.2 SMG discussed the proposed processes and links with external complaints. It was agreed that the process of dealing with external complaints should be considered further.

7.1.3 It was agreed that training would be required and will be combined with training for the Bribery Act and Fraud Prevention.

7.1.4 The paper was agreed.

7.2 Monthly Absence Information

7.3.1 SMG noted the latest absence figures and expressed concern at the increasing absence trend. Sinead McDonnell outlined the various actions HR office are taking in respect of absence, eg, reviewing individual cases monthly, OHS involvement, etc. SMG discussed if further action was necessary.

7.3.2 It was agreed that the Clerk/DG would raise this as an issue at the next staff briefing session.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/GARETH McGRATH

8 Finance

8.1 Budgets 2012/13

8.1.1 Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 3.00pm and spoke to her paper on the issue.

8.1.2 The figures represent the budgets needed for the coming year and SMG noted the on-going reductions. There is a need to carry forward some projects on capital expenditure to 2012/13. The potential impact of capital expenditure on longer term plans (eg, the roof projects) was noted. It was also noted that additional IT-related capital expenditure may arise in 2012/13.

8.1.3 Although the proposed figures were endorsed by SMG, it was agreed to maintain scrutiny through the forthcoming monitoring rounds.

9 Corporate Governance

9.1 Corporate Risk Register

9.1.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 3.30pm and assisted Hugh Widdis in presenting the paper.

9.1.2 In accordance with an earlier SMG agreement, the Risk Management Policy has now been reviewed.

9.1.3 The principal changes are;-

- reflection of the new requirement for a Governance Statement;
- an increased focus on Risk Appetite;
- an annual presentation of the Corporate Risk Register to the Assembly Commission;
- expansion of the description of the risk management process to be followed by more detailed guidance in due course; and
- some focus on ‘closely connected bodies’.

9.1.4 SMG agreed the revision, subject to inclusion of reference to the Bribery Act in stewardship statements, and regular review of stewardship between the Clerk/DG and Directors, including the changes to the Risk Register. It was agreed that Directors would consider the ‘risk appetite’ descriptions within the Corporate Risk

Register and the categorisation of risks in line with the Corporate Strategy. Directors will inform David Johnston of any changes.

ACTION: DIRECTORS

10 Future Commission/SMG Business

10.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 3.52pm and SMG considered the proposed agenda for the next Commission meeting.

10.2 As the Commission has already agreed to meet on 19 April 2012 for a single item agenda, it was agreed to approach the Speaker with a recommendation to deal with urgent items at that meeting and to defer other items to the meeting in May.

10.3 SMG noted the future work plans for the Commission and SMG.

Hugh Widdis left the meeting at 4.20pm.

11 Directors' Updates

11.1 Stephen Welch told SMG about the Charter Mark award from the Soil Association – the Assembly is the first in Ireland to achieve this standard.

12 Items dealt with by correspondence

12.1 No items were dealt with by correspondence.

13 AOB

13.1 There were no items under this heading.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Friday 11 May 2012 in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 4.30pm.