SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 6 JULY 2012 AT 11.07AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Peter Hall** **Damien Martin** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch** **Hugh Widdis**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Peter McCallion (Agenda item 6)** **Patricia Casey (Agenda item 13)** **Eilis Haughey (Agenda item 13)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Gareth McGrath and John Stewart. Damien Martin and Peter Hall deputised respectively.

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No member declared an interest.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2012 had been approved and published on 2 July 2012. There were no further comments.

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

4 SMG Action Points

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

CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

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

5.1 The Clerk/DG said that it was still early to assess progress within the business planning year and quarterly monitoring would begin during the summer recess.

5.2 Richard Stewart will write to all Heads of Business to seek feedback on the business planning process this year.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

6 Strategic Work Strands

6.1 Business Efficiency Update

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 10.13am and updated SMG on recent progress. Final reports of Clerking and a review of Contracts were agreed by the BEP Project Board on 22 June 2012. A draft report on the review of Outreach and Education was also agreed on 22 June 2012. The workshop phases for the reviews of Hansard and Human Resources have concluded and it is expected to have draft reports for the Project Board meeting in September. Trevor Allen (Clerking) and Sean Gallagher (seconded from BSO, DHSSPS) will join the Project Team in August and Eddie Kelly will take over from Peter McCallion as Team leader from 1 September.

6.2 Institutional Review

A report from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee has been discussed in the Assembly without a final agreement on key elements. It was agreed that there should be a review of the working of Committees and the scheduling of Plenaries. SMG noted the progress to date.

6.3 Organisational Development

Gareth McGrath is currently working on a draft paper.

6.4 Organisational Redesign

The draft Terms of Reference have been agreed and an outline timetable prepared. An external resource is being sought to take this forward and more information should be available in September.

7. Co-ordination

7.1 There was no progress to report.

8. Consultation, communication and engagement

8.1 SMG acknowledged the considerable range of work on-going at present, eg, BEP, ERG and various policy consultations. The effectiveness of some communications was discussed, especially the links between the various strands/offices. It was agreed that the Clerk/DG would complete a review of planned staffing levels in the autumn and inform staff.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

9. Corporate Risk Register

9.1 Hugh Widdis spoke on this issue. Following a recent workshop two papers had been developed and were before SMG - a draft staff guide and a revised risk register.

9.2 The lack of detailed guidance had been seen as a weakness in itself along with a lack of appropriate training. SMG agreed that the production of the draft guidance was a positive step and directors will forward any additional comments to David Johnston by 31 July.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

9.3 It was agreed that further development work on the guidance could be taken forward by the Assembly Leadership Forum.

9.4 At the earlier workshop SMG had identified five key corporate risks to replace those in the previous register. SMG considered the five proposed risks and how they were presented in the new register. In commending the work which had been done, SMG agreed a further risk relating to the allocation of reducing resources which should be included.

9.5 Responsibility for each risk was allocated to individual directors.

CORPORATE SERVICES

10. HR Management Information

10.1 SMG noted that the rolling annual figures show that the average working days lost per employee for the period May 2011 to April 2012 was 9.8 days which remains above the absence benchmark of 7.5 days.

10.2 SMG agreed to give this issue further consideration at its meeting September which will provide time for HR to continue its work in ensuring that all absences are properly managed.

11. Future Commission/SMG Business

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

CLERKING AND REPORTING

12. Procedural and Operational Review – Bill Office

12.1 Eilis Haughey and Patricia Casey joined the meeting at 12.25pm.

12.2 SMG was told that a review of the processes within the Bill Office had been carried out following the end of the last mandate. An unprecedented number of Bills had been dealt with in a relatively short period and it was considered necessary to assess as to how these had been handled and the consequent impact on the office.

12.3 The outcome of the review found a need for a co-ordinated cross-directorate response to future pressures and the need to begin planning and preparing now – this would include beginning additional skills training promptly.

12.4 The review also highlighted the need for the Assembly to consider the legislative process as a whole – our current processes are largely based on those within the House of Commons but these may not best suit the legislative arrangements within NI. Two particular areas were identified which should be addressed, namely, legislative competence and admissibility and amending bills after the Further Consideration Stage.

12.5 The Clerk/DG commended the work of the Bill Office at a time of exceptional demand and highlighted the need for a more co-ordinated cross-directorate approach to deal with these types of pressures across the organisation.

12.6 SMG noted the review and the plans for procedural and operational changes.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

13. Directors Updates

13.1 Peter Hall spoke of the good work carried out during the recent power outage. The website development project is ongoing.

13.2 SMG recorded its recognition of all those who had worked so well during the power outage and the manner in which essential business needs were met.

13.3 Stephen told SMG that the PSNI based in Parliament Buildings had moved to a new location. Work will begin on the front ramps during the summer recess. The winners in the recent Children's' Art Competition will have their entries incorporated into the Mo Mowlam playground within the estate.

13.4 Damien Martin informed SMG that it was likely that some committees would meet during the summer recess.

14. Items dealt with by Correspondence

14.1 A paper in respect of the following topic was dealt with by correspondence:-

(a) NIA Audit Update

15. AOB

15.1 Hugh Widdis noted that some FOI descriptors on cover pages of submissions to SMG and the Commission were falling away from the relevant tests in the FOI Act and, if in doubt, authors should seek advice from the Information Officer and through her, if necessary, Legal Services.

15.2 Stephen Welch told SMG that volunteers would be sought to assist in delivering the summer tours within Parliament Buildings.

16. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 2.00pm on Friday 7 September 2012 in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 1.23pm.