SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 8 JUNE 2012 AT 10.05AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Nuala Dunwoody** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch** **Hugh Widdis**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Peter McCallion (Agenda item 6)** **Shauna Mageean (Agenda item 13)** **Ruth Roberts (Agenda item 14)** **Karen Martin (Agenda items 15 - 19)** **Tony Logue (Agenda items 20 - 23)** **Robin Ramsey (Agenda item 23)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Gareth McGrath. Nuala Dunwoody deputised on his behalf.

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 11 May 2012 had been approved and published on 24 May 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 has cleared the Directorate Business Plans and these will be monitored quarterly.

6 Strategic Work Strands

6.1 Business Efficiency Update

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 10.15 am and updated SMG on recent progress. A number of briefings, including individual briefings to the Commission, were held in relation to the recent report on Clerking and the TUS's written response is expected soon. The Project Board will next meet on 22 June and will consider a revised draft of the Clerking report. A number of other reports are in various stages of completion. Eddie Kelly will take up his new role of Team Leader in September 2012. A trawl for Deputy Leader closes on 8 June 2012.

6.2 Institutional Review

There were no further developments.

6.3 Organisational Development

Gareth McGrath is currently working on a draft paper.

6.4 Organisational Redesign

The draft Terms of Reference have been signed off by the Commission. Staff will be advised accordingly.

7. Co-ordination

Richard Stewart is taking this forward. Business Plans will be monitored in July and a report brought to the Commission in September 2012.

8. Consultation, communication and engagement

There has been significant consultation with TUS on the Business Efficiency reports, including a number of meetings of the Employee Relations Group.

9. Performance against 2011/12 Corporate Plan

SMG noted the substantial level of delivery over the past year and recognised the valued contributions from staff. Richard Stewart revised the budget underspend to 1.7%. A summary was attached to the Annual Accounts and this paper will be referred to the Commission for information.

10. Staff Survey

Stephen Welch has met with representatives from the Assembly Leadership Forum (ALF) about taking forward the development of an Action Plan for the recent Staff Survey. ALF is to meet on 29 June 2012 to discuss this issue. The Clerk/DG urged Directors to meet with staff to discuss issues relevant to their Directorate.

FACILITIES

11. Autism Initiative

11.1 Stephen Welch spoke to his paper on this issue.

11.2 Work has been ongoing with the National Autism Society to develop a number of standards for accommodating visitors with autism to Parliament Buildings – it is proposed that these will be known as the ‘Stormont Standards’. Implementation will focus on staff awareness, training and the appointment of a number of ‘champions’ who will be able to assist both visitors and staff.

11.3 Stephen Welch will liaise with others within the Stormont Estate.

11.4 SMG agreed that the paper should be referred to the Commission.

12. Visitor Behaviour Policy

12.1 Stephen Welch spoke to the paper on this issue.

12.2 This policy has been developed following a request to provide guidance on standards of behaviour, outlining responsibilities and advising all visitors to Parliament Buildings of what is/can be expected. The draft policy also outlines the Assembly's position in relation to uniforms, flags, music and emblems.

12.3 SMG discussed the paper. In light of the number of issues raised it was agreed that it was crucial for Directors to forward any comments to Stephen Welch as soon as possible to allow any necessary discussions. It was also agreed that subject to progressing comments, the paper would be referred to the next Commission meeting.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

CLERKING AND REPORTING

13. EU Issues Update

13.1 Shauna Mageean, European Project Manager, joined the meeting at 10.56am and spoke to her paper on this issue.

13.1 The post of European Project Manager was created to produce a report and proposed action plan on the future role of the Assembly in a European context. A project plan has been developed with four key stages of (a) Scoping and Research, (b) Consolidation and Identification of Priorities, (c) Enhancement of EU Scrutiny and (d) Draft Report and Action Plan. Stage one is now complete.

13.2 A number of meetings have already taken place including a visit to Brussels. Shauna is to visit the Scottish Parliament in June to shadow the work of the European and External Relations Committee – the post of the Scottish representative in Brussels is currently unfilled. Shauna will make a presentation to the OFMDFM Committee in September 2012.

13.3 SMG recognised the good work done to date and what has still to be done and suggested that the final report should include a number of options with costs/benefits to assist decisions on the way forward.

CORPORATE SERVICES

14. Procurement Compliance Report

14.1 Ruth Roberts joined the meeting at 11.15 and spoke to the paper on this issue. This paper is produced annually following the end of the financial year and prior to signing off the annual accounts. It is expected the implementation of the ‘Purchase to Pay’ project will include automatic production of future reports.

14.2 A detailed analysis of transactions was done on the basis of ‘Red, Amber and Green’ relating to risk. It was noted the number of ‘Red’ transactions had decreased from 1069 in 2010/11 to 92 in 2011/12. Only four such transactions continued to be considered as high risk.

14.3 There are currently 18 Procurement cards in use with an expenditure of £289,369.97 in 2011/12 – this represented a decrease of almost 35% on the previous year.

14.4 SMG noted the continuing progress in this area. Following clarification of some figures within the report, it was agreed that the report can now go to the NI Audit Office.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

15. Child Protection Policy

15.1 Karen Martin joined the meeting at 11.37am and spoke to the paper on this issue.

15.2 This draft has been prepared in response to concerns about the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults when visiting Parliament Buildings and will provide guidance to all staff.

15.3 It is planned to deliver training at a later stage as well as to recruit Child Protection Officers to act as specialists.

15.4 After discussion, SMG agreed that the draft should be referred for formal consultation.

16. MLA/Staff Protocol

16.1 Karen Martin told SMG that this draft protocol has been developed to provide a fair and equitable means to resolve situations of conflict that may arise between staff and MLAs, hopefully at an early stage. It was pointed out that other legislatures do not have guidance as detailed as this proposes.

16.2 After discussion, SMG agreed that more internal consultation was required before referring to the Commission.

17. Aide Memoires after Management Development Programmes

17.1 Karen Martin explained that a recommendation within the 2012/16 People Strategy refers to the development of aide-memoires to support the embedding of management techniques highlighted within the recent Management Development Programmes. After discussion with Bray Leino some samples had been prepared for SMG to consider how they wished to progress.

17.2 SMG discussed the best format for the aide-memoires and suggested a number of options. It was agreed that these should be done in-house without the need for external consultancy.

17.3 It was agreed that HR would continue to develop aide-memoires and bring further options and costs back to a future SMG meeting.

18. (a) Dignity at Work Policy
(b) Grievance Policy

18.1 Both draft policies had been before SMG previously and these versions included the suggestions recommended by SMG.

18.2 As a final point, SMG agreed that a short paragraph should be inserted in each policy to emphasise the circumstances when/which each policy would apply. Subject to this, the drafts were agreed.

19. HR Management Absence Information

19.1 SMG considered the absence information for April 2011 to March 2012 and was concerned at the increasing levels of absence.

19.2 HR is working to develop a policy to meet the circumstances of the NI Assembly – the current polices are based on Civil Service procedures.

19.3 SMG will consider this issue at its next meeting.

20. Draft Language Guidance

20.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 12.25 and spoke to the paper on this issue.

20.2 This issue had been considered previously by the Commission and members asked for some further work to be done. This has now been completed.

20.4 In its discussions SMG recognised the sensitivity of the issues around the use of languages both within and without the Assembly and the importance attached to language issues.

20.5 SMG members agreed to provide Tony Logue with their detailed comments in writing as soon as possible. In the interim, the Clerk/DG will meet with interested parties to seek views.

ACTION: DIRECTORS

21. S75 Annual Progress Report

21.1 Tony Logue explained that the Assembly Commission is required to monitor progress achieved in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties and regarding the implementation of Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. The Assembly Commission is then required to submit an annual review to the Equality Commission detailing the progress achieved against each of the targets.

21.2 SMG noted the contents of the report and thanked everyone for their contribution to the progress made. The report will now go to the Commission for consideration.

22. Resources

22.1 Discussion on this issue was deferred to the next SMG meeting.

23. Future Commission/SMG Business

23.1 Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 12.40pm and advised SMG that the next meeting of the Commission was being postponed to 3 July 2012. SMG considered the proposed agenda for the next Commission meeting:-

- Clerk/DG Update Report

- S75 Annual Progress Report
- Autism Initiative
- Outstanding legislative matters following appointment of the Commissioner for Standards

23.2 SMG noted the future workplans for the Commission and SMG.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

24. Directors' Updates

24.1 There were no updates to report.

25. Items dealt with by Correspondence

25.1 Papers in respect of the following topics were dealt with by correspondence:-

(a) Employment Equality Plan

(b) Award of Contract for Legislative Drafting Software

26. AOB

26.1 There were no items raised under this heading

27. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Friday 6 July 2012 in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 12.53pm.