SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 09 MARCH 2012 AT 10.05AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Simon Burrowes** **Gareth McGrath** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Peter McCallion (Agenda item 5.2)** **Sinead McDonnell (Agenda item 6.1, 6.2, 6.3)** **Paula McClintock (Agenda item 6.4)** **Martina Dalton (Agenda item 7.4)** **David Johnston (Agenda items 8.1)** **Tony Logue (Agenda item 9, 10)** **Robin Ramsey (Agenda item 10)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Hugh Widdis and John Stewart. Simon Burrowes deputised on behalf of Mr Stewart.

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 10 February 2012 were approved subject to some amendments.

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.

5 Corporate Strategy Implementation Framework

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

5.1.1 The Clerk/DG has received most draft Directorate Business Plans and spoke of the initial points arising from his review of the Plans.

5.1.2 Richard Stewart updated SMG on the on-going budget bid process. Some information is still outstanding before he will be able to produce final figures for the Financial Management Group, SMG and the Commission.

5.1.3 The Clerk/DG, in acknowledging the progress made to date, re-iterated the need to maintain efforts to reduce expenditure over the coming years.

5.2 Strategic Work Strands

5.2.1 Business Efficiency Update

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 10.23am and spoke to his paper. He has already received some feedback on the RaISe and Security/Usher reports. The next step will be a formal consultation exercise from 16 April to 3 July 2012 and SMG discussed how best to take this forward. SMG agreed that the consultation exercise should proceed and will consider allocation of the resources required.

A further 3 business areas will be completed by August 2012.

A member of the BEP team is due to return shortly to the NIAO and discussions are on-going about a replacement.

5.2.2 Institutional Review

The Clerk/DG is due to give evidence to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on the future structure and size of the Assembly.

5.2.3 Organisational Development

Jennifer Pleavin, Communications, will assist Gareth McGrath in taking this forward. Meetings will be arranged with SMG members and they will later produce a PID for consideration.

5.2.4 Organisational Redesign

The Clerk/DG is preparing a paper on draft Terms of Reference for presentation to the Commission.

5.3 Co-ordination

5.3.1 There was no progress to report at present.

5.4 Consultation, communication and engagement

5.4.1 The Clerk/DG has spoken to Susie Brown about holding future staff briefings as a means of keeping staff informed. It was agreed that these also fall within the wider remit of ICWG in helping to ensure that staff are kept informed.

5.4.2 The importance of all staff seeing the agreed business plans was emphasised.

6 Corporate Services

6.1 Draft People Strategy

6.1.1 Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 10.45am.

6.1.2 The current HR Strategy expires on 31 March 2012 and it is planned for this paper to replace it. The revised People Strategy covers the period 2012 – 2016, the same period as the Corporate Strategy.

6.1.3 Costs of delivering the strategy are not included as the means of delivery have yet to be determined and alternative and more efficient means of delivery may be available.

6.1.4 SMG discussed the proposed strategy, especially how best to link this within plans for organisational development and the HR office resources needed to deliver.

6.1.5 SMG agreed a number of amendments which HR will incorporate within the paper before beginning a consultation exercise. The paper will then come back to SMG.

6.2 Secretariat Vetting Procedures

6.2.1 This has been an on-going issue and had been discussed by both SMG and the Commission previously. The paper seeks to codify procedures that have been in place for a number of years.

6.2.2 SMG discussed the proposals and agreed some amendments. The Clerk/DG will advise the Commission of these within his Update Report.

6.3 Monthly Absence Information

6.3.1 SMG noted the latest absence figures.

6.3.2 The current 8.9 average working days lost per annum per employee exceeds the 7.5 target and although not proposing specific action, SMG agreed that the Clerk/DG should advise staff through the staff briefings and directors should inform HoBs so that every effort is made to return below the target.

6.4 The Bribery Act

6.4.1 Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 11.27am and spoke to her paper.

6.4.2 During the consultation, comments had been received from Legal Services and HR and these would be addressed within the final paper. A need for additional staff training had been identified and this will be taken forward with HR.

6.4.3 SMG noted the paper.

7 Information and Outreach

7.1 Information Strategy and ICT Strategies

7.1.1 Gareth McGrath spoke to his paper on this issue.

7.1.2 The paper before SMG is the first stage in a process to achieving what is a vision for 2016 and suggests how that may be achieved through a significant number of individual projects. The next stage would be to prepare Programme Definition Document.

7.1.3 Subject to any comments from John Stewart, SMG endorsed the document and its vision. Some amendments were agreed and it will now go to the Commission.

7.2 ICWG Update

7.2.1 SMG noted the completion of the Action Plan in respect of the 2010 Staff Survey.

7.2.2 Simon Burrowes updated SMG on the current Staff Survey exercise. 224 responses had been received - an increase on the 2010 response – and these had been sent to RaISe for analysis. It is planned to have a final report by 27 April 2012.

7.3 Revision of the Information Assurance Policy

7.4.1 Martina Dalton joined the meeting at 12.01pm.

7.4.2 Although the Commission already has an Information Assurance Policy which sets out protective markings and procedures on the use, storage and transfer of information by the Secretariat, some changes are now considered necessary following additional procedures identified by the Clerking and Reporting Directorate. These changes address handling sensitive papers in order to prevent unauthorised disclosure of such material. The issue of a ‘clear desk’ policy was also raised. It was noted that relevant recommendations may emerge from work currently being undertaken by the Interim Commissioner for Standards.

7.4.3 SMG discussed the current use of security markings within Secretariat processes and the need for changes. Subject to some clarification, the proposed ‘clear desk’ policy was agreed.

7.4.4 SMG was told the National School of Governance has produced online training on information assurance and it was recommended that this should be mandatory for all staff. This was agreed.

7.4.5 It was also recommended that an audit should be carried out to ensure that all personal information is held in compliance with the Data Protection Act. The audit would be done by Directorate FoI officers. This was agreed.

7.4.6 It was agreed that Damian Martin should be consulted to ensure that the proposed changes took on board the specific concerns relating to Committees.

8 Corporate Risk Register

8.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 12.32pm and recommended some amendments to the Risk Register. These were agreed.

8.2 It was agreed that the Risk Register should be reformatted to reflect the new Corporate Strategy although this may result in changes to the risks. This will be considered at the next SMG meeting.

9 Equality Screening

9.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 12.38pm and spoke to the paper on this issue.

9.2 It was recommended that submissions to SMG should include a new heading to ensure that policies or proposed/developing policies have been subjected to the screening process as required by S75 of the NI Act 1998. It is intended that this would mainstream the screening process throughout the organisation.

9.3 After discussion, SMG agreed this change. Submission templates will be amended when guidance is completed.

10 Future Commission/SMG Business

10.1 Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 12.50pm.

10.2 SMG considered the proposed agenda for the next Commission meeting:

- Clerk/DG's Key Update Report
- ICT Pilot – Committees
- Ormiston House – cost reductions
- Workplace Pension Reform: Auto-enrolment
- Historic Anniversaries – Titanic
- Information Strategy and ICT Strategies
- Corporate Strategy Implementation Framework – Organisational Redesign

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

11 Directors' Updates

11.1 Trevor Reaney told SMG that the management group would meet in response to the potential for a strike on Wednesday, 28 March 2012.

11.2 Gareth McGrath said that he would he would accompany the Speaker, Judith Cochrane MLA, David McClarty MLA and Robin Ramsey to Kosovo at the end of March 2012. The purpose of the visit was to formalise links between the legislatures in relation to research and IT.

11.3 Stephen Welch updated SMG on the roof design project tender process.

12 Items dealt with by correspondence

12.1 SMG noted the following items dealt with by correspondence:-

- Audit Update
- Litigation Update
- Open Government Licence for Public Sector

13 AOB

13.1 In order to enhance the timeliness of internal communications, SMG agreed to clear meeting Minutes by correspondence and to post them on AssISt no later than 2 weeks after the meeting.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 2.00pm on Thursday, 29 March 2012 in Room 21.

The meeting adjourned at 1.10pm.