SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)

FRIDAY, 7 AUGUST 2026 at 9.30 AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:

Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive
Steven Baxter, Director of Corporate Services
Tara Caul, Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services
Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services

In Attendance:

Janet Hughes, Clerical Supervisor
Scarlett Healey, Executive Assistant
Robin Ramsey, Adviser to the Speaker/Head of Corporate Support (Items 5 and 6)
Paula McClintock, Head of Finance (Item 7)
Billy Mahoney, Deputy Head of Finance (Item 7)
Diane Lamont, Senior HR Manager (Item 8)
Catherine McIntosh, Organisational Development and Learning Manager (Item 9)
Patrick McIlwee, Learning Facilitator (Item 9)
Terri Quigley, Head of Facilities Management (Item 10)
Dan Hull, Chairperson of the Internal Communications Group (Item 13)

The meeting commenced at 9.32 am.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

It was noted that the minutes from the meeting on 6 July 2026 had been published.

4. SMT Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

SLT noted that lead responsibility for the action arising from the meeting on 27 March 2026, relating to the ‘Options for the Provision of a Visitor Centre’, had transferred from Steven Baxter to Gareth McGrath.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 9.36 am for agenda items 5 and 6.

5. Political Update

SLT noted that, following the return to business in September, a busy legislative period was expected in the lead-up to the end of the Mandate in March 2027.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

6. Draft Assembly Commission Agenda

Proposed agenda items for the next Assembly Commission meeting were considered.

Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 9.43 am.

Paula McClintock and Billy Mahoney joined the meeting at 9.43 am for agenda item 7.

CORPORATE SERVICES

7. Management Accounts June 2026

Paula McClintock presented the Management Accounts for June 2026.

SLT noted the forecast outturns for Resource DEL, Capital DEL and the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (WFDSC) costs.

In relation to WFDSC costs, Paula advised that, following a request from the Department of Finance (DoF) for notification of any easements within this category of expenditure, an easement had been notified and would be surrendered formally at the earliest opportunity.

Paula referred to emerging Resource DEL and Capital DEL pressures, noting that these would continue to be managed within the existing 2026-27 budget envelope and that budget managers would be reminded that no new discretionary expenditure would be approved unless it could be funded from within that envelope.

Paula confirmed that, although the Assembly Commission’s budget had been agreed by the Assembly in February 2026, the overall Executive budget for

2026-27 had still not been agreed or received Assembly approval and, as a result, no formal monitoring exercises had been scheduled.

In relation to wider budget issues, Paula noted that DoF had confirmed that the Permanent Secretary would assume powers under Section 59 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 on 1 August 2026 to allocate up to 95% of the closing 2025-26 total Northern Ireland budget. She stated that DoF had confirmed that, as the Assembly had agreed the Assembly Commission's 2026-27 budget, this would be met in full.

Lesley requested that, in light of the current budget position, future Management Accounts include a table showing spend against the 95% allocation. Steven agreed to provide this information at a high-level.

Paula also referred to Section 7 letters issued by DoF to the Comptroller and Auditor General and SLT asked that she draft a communication for the Assembly Commission outlining the current budget position.

Action: Paula to draft a communication for the Assembly Commission on the current budget position.

Lesley referred to the Decision Authorisation System (DAS) report and re-iterated the importance of budget managers reviewing it to ensure all expenditure remained within approved DAS limits.

SLT recorded its thanks to Deputy Head of Finance, Karen Steele, for her work over the past 11 years and wished her well for the future.

Paula McClintock and Billy Mahoney left the meeting at 10.11 am.

Diane Lamont joined the meeting at 10.11 am for agenda item 8.

8. HR Management Information

Diane Lamont presented the monthly HR Management Information as at 1 July 2026.

Diane advised that the Staff in Post (SIP) figure on 1 July 2026 (including agency and inward seconded staff) was 392.1 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) against a staff complement (including complement plus) of 416.9 FTE.

SLT noted the temporary promotion/deputising arrangements and agency worker assignments currently in place.

Diane updated SLT on recruitment activity.

Sickness absence information was provided and Diane advised that, during June 2026, the overall average number of days lost per FTE member of staff was 9.9.

Diane Lamont left the meeting at 10.17 am.

Catherine McIntosh and Patrick McIlwee joined the meeting at 10.17 am for agenda item 9.

9. People and Culture Strategy: Update on the Key Projects Delivered During 2025/26 and the Planned Programme of Work for 2026/27

Catherine McIntosh presented a paper updating SLT on the key projects being delivered under the three pillars of the People and Culture Strategy, namely Leading, Engaging and Learning.

Catherine noted that work was progressing on a number of projects, highlighting in particular, the move to Phase Two of the Leadership Development Programme, the Executive Coaching Programme, the launch of Phase Two of the Inter-Parliamentary Mentoring Programme and the Management in Practice course. She advised that positive feedback had been received on these projects.

SLT also noted the significant progress made in implementing the Assembly Commission's three linked frameworks on Leadership, Performance and Wellbeing, and Wellbeing.

Catherine highlighted the amount of work involved with the Review of Performance Management and Implementation of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework. She noted that the Organisational Development (OD) and Learning Team was exploring the possibility of developing an app to support managers with Performance and Wellbeing conversations, although this was still at a very early stage.

Catherine referred to the Good Ideas Scheme and noted that 31 ideas had came from this, with roughly 50% of these being progressed. Lesley suggested that Catherine arrange for these ideas to be summarised and communicated to staff, along with the status of implementation.

Action: Catherine to arrange with Liz Beaton to communicate updates on the Good Ideas Scheme with staff.

SLT noted the challenges of delivering the full scope of People and Culture projects with the existing OD and Learning Team resources. SLT thanked Catherine and her team for the significant work undertaken to progress the projects to date, particularly the Leadership Development Programme, where tangible changes had been recognised.

Lesley emphasised the importance of sharing the positive work undertaken with staff and asked Catherine to consider the most appropriate way to communicate this.

Action: Catherine to arrange for staff to be provided with an update on the work undertaken.

Catherine McIntosh and Patrick McIlwee left the meeting at 10.53 am.

Terri Quigley joined the meeting at 10.53 am for agenda item 10.

10. Conservation Management Plan Business Case

Terri Quigley presented and sought approval of a business case, to enable Building Services to complete the surveys required to establish the evidence base for a 10-year maintenance plan, supporting lifecycle profile and develop a Conservation Management Plan for Parliament Buildings.

Terri noted that SMT (Senior Management Team) had considered an initial proposal in December 2025, but stated that since then, following further engagement with Construction Division, specialist consultants and internal stakeholders, the scope and structure of the survey programme had been reviewed and refined. As a result, Terri advised that the business case now provided greater clarity and a more transparent breakdown of costs and deliverables.

Terri also highlighted a number of risks associated with not proceeding with the survey programme as outlined in the business case.

SLT noted that the final outputs would provide:

- A prioritised 10-year maintenance plan;
- Quantified backlog maintenance liabilities;
- Estimated maintenance and capital investment requirements;
- Asset condition information;
- Lifecycle replacement forecasts extending up to 30 years; and
- A Conservation Management Plan to guide future works to a Grade A listed building.

SLT raised concerns about the level of costs involved and asked for more detail regarding the associated CPD fees. However, in light of the advice received and the assurance that a long-term rolling maintenance plan would be developed, SLT approved the business case, based on the assumption that the necessary funding was available within the existing building maintenance budget, and on receiving assurance that the above outputs would be delivered.

Terri confirmed that all the final outputs outlined would be delivered before the end of the financial year.

Terri Quigley left the meeting at 11.08 am.

11. Business Case for the Provision of Building Maintenance Services for 2026-2027

Paper to be circulated for approval via correspondence.

The meeting suspended at 11.08 am and resumed at 11.38 am.

Change to agenda running order.

Dan Hull joined the meeting at 11.38 am for agenda item 13.

OTHER

13. Staff Survey 2026: Questions

Dan Hull noted that SMT had agreed in September 2025 that the Assembly would participate in a joint staff survey along with the Senedd Cymru and the Scottish Parliament.

Dan advised that the survey would run from 21 September to 2 October 2026 and would include a core set of engagement questions structured around six themes. He explained that each parliament would also have the opportunity to include stand-alone questions, while retaining, where possible, a consistent core to enable useful comparison across the three organisations, notwithstanding their different contexts.

Dan further advised that the stand-alone questions proposed by the Internal Communications Group (ICG) retained a strong degree of continuity with the 2024 Staff Survey question set, enabling the Assembly to compare results and identify any areas of change.

Dan subsequently sought SLT's views on the proposed 2026 Staff Survey question set and the approach to post-survey analysis and action planning phase.

Following discussion, SLT approved the proposed 2026 Staff Survey question set, subject to some minor amendments.

SLT also endorsed the proposed approach to the post-survey analysis and action planning phase, and agreed that staff who complete the survey would be entered into a prize draw for one of ten additional days of annual leave.

Dan Hull left the meeting at 12.01 pm.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

12. Roll-out of the Public Engagement Brand Treatment Across All Business Areas, Including New Applications in Appropriate Business Areas

Gareth noted that SMT had previously considered Public Engagement Branding at its meeting on 27 February 2026, when it was requested that engagement take place with the Head of Communications to facilitate roll-out across the organisation.

Gareth confirmed that this engagement had taken place and referred to proposals for the organisation-wide roll-out of the Public Engagement brand treatment as the basis for a wider Assembly brand framework.

Gareth advised that four individual brand treatments were being spearheaded by individual business areas, and he stated that the work previously carried out on the development of a brand treatment for Public Engagement had provided a very strong platform for this project and that the recommendation was to build on this work rather than seek to re-examine it extensively.

Following consideration, SLT approved the proposals on the organisation-wide roll-out of the Public Engagement brand treatment as the basis for a wider Assembly brand framework, subject to the addition of a further category in relation to the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

SLT noted that Parliamentary Services has sufficient budget to fund the roll-out.

OTHER ITEMS

14. SMT papers Cleared via Correspondence

SMT Paper Seeking Approval to Add Three Complement Plus Posts to the IS Office Complement to Support the Replacement of the Finance, HR, and Payroll Systems.

15. Directors' Updates

Corporate Services

Steven provided an update on the work undertaken across all business areas within the Corporate Services Directorate, referring in particular to the closure of the lower east car park to facilitate the installation of a new automatic barrier and progress on Phases 1 and 2 of the roof project.

Steven also referred to a request from the Northen Ireland Public Sector Alliance (NIPSA) to regrade the Trade Union Side (TUS) Seconded Officer post, following an assessment carried out by NIPSA. He asked whether SLT was content with NIPSA's assessment. SLT considered the request and was content with the assessment, but advised that the post would need to be re-advertised in order to implement the change.

Parliamentary Services

SLT noted the work undertaken by all business areas within the Parliamentary Services Directorate.

Legal, Governance and Research Services

Tara Caul provided an update on litigation and asked SLT to note that a significant number of FOI response deadlines had not been met.

16. AOB

There was no other business.

17. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 23 September 2026.

18. Proposals for Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Strategic Review of the Finance Office
- Business Case for the Provision of Building Maintenance Services 2026-2027
- Blue Flax Refurbishment Post-Project Evaluation
- Budget (if Budget Act not passed)
- Review of Decision Making Protocols
- Quarterly Review of the Corporate Risk Register
- Review of Fraud and Bribery Self- Assessment Checklists, Bribery Risk Assessment and Action Plan
- Review of the Data Protection Policy
- Review of FoI Procedures
- Renewal of Internet Connectivity
- Procurement of a Sign Language Service
- Internal Communications Quarterly Update
- Broadcasting Contract Post-Project Evaluation
- Strategic Communications Update
- Update on the Work of the Internal Communications Group April to September 2026

The meeting ended at 12.31 pm.