

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

**WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2019 at 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**APPROVED**

**Present:** Lesley Hogg  
Tara Caul  
Gareth McGrath  
Richard Stewart

**In Attendance:** Frances Leneghan  
Janet Hughes  
Robin Ramsey  
Ashleigh Mitford  
Karen Martin  
Sinéad McDonnell

## **Opening/Review**

The meeting commenced at 9.32am.

### **1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting on 16 April 2019 were approved at the meeting. Arrangements to be made to publish them together with unrestricted papers.

**Action:** Corporate Support Unit to arrange for minutes and unrestricted papers from the SMG meeting on 16 April 2019 to be published.

### **4. SMG Action Points**

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

With regards to an action from the meeting on 17 December 2018 on the 'Review of Delegated Procurements', SMG agreed an update to the status and Tara Caul, Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services asked that Directors check with their Heads of Business (HoBs) to ensure that all contract documentation is held in one place and easily accessible.

**Action:** Directors to liaise with HoBs regarding accessibility of contract documentation for contracts below £30k.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 9.42am for agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 8.*

## **5. Political Update**

Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive advised SMG that the new round of political negotiations had led to the establishment of a number of working groups. She confirmed that political parties were engaging positively with the groups which focus on different matters.

## **CORPORATE SUPPORT UNIT**

### **6. Draft Assembly Commission Agenda**

SMG discussed the issue of the appointment of a new Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and agreed that a single item agenda meeting should be scheduled before the next full Assembly Commission meeting.

**Action:** Corporate Support Unit to liaise with Assembly Commission Members and arrange a suitable date.

SMG reviewed the draft agenda for the next Assembly Commission meeting scheduled for 24 June 2019.

Proposed items for the meeting include:

- Clerk/Chief Executive's Report
- Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel by Members
- Future Delivery of Member Development and Support for the Assembly Women's Caucus
- Options Paper on the development of a Youth Assembly
- Options Paper re IFRP EU Technical Fix Issue
- Calculation of Holiday Pay
- Annual Equality Progress Report
- Corporate Plan 2018-19: Year-End Report
- Broadcasting and Related Services Contract Variation
- Members Survey 2016-17 Action Plan – Annual Update
- Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

The draft minutes from the April Assembly Commission meeting in relation to the agenda item on the Support Services Contract require further clarification with Assembly Commission Members and will be raised again at the next meeting.

*Ashleigh Mitford joined the meeting at 10.23am for agenda items 7 and 8.*

## **7. Corporate Plan 2018-19: Year-end Report**

Robin Ramsey, Head of Corporate Support, presented the Corporate Plan Year-end Report for 2018-19.

SMG noted that 85% of the targets were reported as having been either fully or partially achieved. SMG reviewed the status updates provided in relation to the actions within the plan and was content to approve them subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Robin to update the year-end report as proposed, re-circulate to SMG and present to the Assembly Commission at its June meeting.

## **8. Development of the Corporate Plan 2019-23**

SMG considered the development of the Corporate Plan for 2019-23 and agreed:

- to the establishment of Strategy Steering Groups (SSGs) to facilitate cross directorate engagement and collaboration in developing the content for the Corporate Plan 2019-23;
- the Terms of Reference for the SSGs; and
- the guidance document for the Corporate Plan development process.

SMG thanked Robin and Ashleigh for all the work that had gone into preparing the two Corporate Plan papers and organising the recent SSG communication event.

*Robin Ramsey and Ashleigh Mitford left the meeting at 10.56am.*

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **9. Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel by Members**

Following on from discussions at the April Assembly Commission, Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services, presented a draft of a further Assembly Commission paper for consideration by SMG on Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel by Members.

SMG approved the paper for presentation to the Assembly Commission at its June meeting.

*Karen Martin joined the meeting at 11.04am for agenda item 10.*

## **10. HR Management Information**

Karen Martin advised SMG that this month's HR management information also included the biannual update on case management and the annual equality information in relation to community background, gender and age of Assembly Commission staff.

SMG noted the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 May (including agency and seconded staff) was 308.7 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) against a staff Complement of 349.4 FTE (including Complement plus).

Karen Martin advised that there had been no change to temporary promotion/deputising arrangements and agency workers assignments currently in place since last month's report to SMG.

SMG reviewed the latest information on temporary redeployment. Richard Stewart asked that Directors routinely review the continuing activities within their business areas.

Karen informed SMG that two candidates had been selected to take up the 10 week and 51 week IS Office Scholarship placements.

Sickness absence information was provided and it was noted that for the period May 2018 to April 2019, the average days lost to sickness absence per FTE member of staff was 9.0 which compared favourably with the period May 2017 to April 2018 figure of 10.3 days.

SMG reviewed the annual equality information and noted the case management activity during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

SMG agreed with Richard's request to add any cases under the Staff/MLA Protocol to future case management reports.

*Karen Martin left the meeting at 11.38am.*

*Sinéad McDonnell joined the meeting at 11.39am for agenda item 11.*

## **11. Review of Recruitment and Selection and Induction**

SMG noted the work that had taken place regarding the Review of Recruitment and Selection and Induction and the detailed discussions that had been held with the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to develop the paper.

Sinéad McDonnell outlined the four key policy areas and sought approval from SMG for a number of proposals in relation to each area.

Following consideration, SMG was content to approve all the proposals subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Sinéad to update the paper to reflect amendments agreed by SMG and re-circulate.

SMG complimented Sinéad on an excellent and comprehensive paper and thanked her for all the hard work carried out thus far. SMG acknowledged that there was a lot of work to be done to implement the agreed proposals, but that the paper provided a clear direction on the way forward.

*Sinéad McDonnell left the meeting at 12.10pm.*

## **12. Support Services Contract**

SMG noted that there had been a number of meetings with the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to discuss the Support Services Contract and the recent Assembly Commission decisions regarding the Support Services Contract. SMG also noted the need for consideration to be given to the evaluation methodology as part of the preparations for the next contract.

Following discussion, SMG approved the proposed approvals approach to be adopted for the Decision Authorisation System (DAS) and that the forecast costs for 2019 presented to the Assembly Commission be reflected.

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

### **13. Broadcasting and Related Services Contract Variation**

SMG considered an extension to the current Broadcasting and Related Services Contract variation.

SMG was content to recommend an extension to the current variation with approval being sought from the Assembly Commission given current political circumstances. Tara Caul also requested that a further explanatory paragraph be added to the paper and that once the variation was approved by the Assembly Commission that the variation be processed through the Legal Services Office given the resourcing issues in the Procurement Office.

**Action:** Gareth McGrath to prepare a paper for the June Assembly Commission meeting and to progress any agreed variation through the Legal Services Office.

### **14. Members Survey 2016-17 Action Plan – 6 Monthly Update (May 2019)**

SMG noted the 6 monthly update regarding the implementation of the Members Survey 2016/17 Action Plan and the fact that only one of the

outstanding actions could be progressed due to the ongoing political situation.

**Action:** Lesley Hogg to provide the Assembly Commission with an update at its June meeting in her Clerk/Chief Executive's Report.

**Action:** Gareth McGrath to provide SMG with a further 6 monthly update at the November 2019 SMG meeting.

## **DIRECTORATE UPDATES**

### **15. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

#### **Legal, Governance and Research Services**

Tara confirmed that the vacant AG5 Procurement Manager post had been filled on a temporary basis.

#### **Parliamentary Services**

Gareth advised that there would be a Plenary rehearsal on 7 June.

#### **Corporate Services**

Richard advised that a business case for capital expenditure in relation to the emergency lighting system within Parliament Buildings would be brought to a future SMG meeting for consideration.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

### **16. AOB**

There was no other business.

### **17. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 June 2019 at 9.30am.

### **18. Proposals for Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

- Staff Travel Policy
- Recruitment Competitions and Merit Lists
- Annual Review of Learning and Development Activities in 2018/19
- Annual Equality Progress Report
- Options Paper re IFRP EU Technical Fix Issue
- Calculation of Holiday Pay

- Development of an Apprenticeship and Placement Framework
- Quarterly Review of Corporate Risk Register
- Options Paper on the Development of a Youth Assembly
- Future Delivery of Member Development and Support for the Assembly Women's Caucus
- Library Staffing Capacity

*The meeting ended at 12.55pm.*