

# **SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)**

**FRIDAY, 31 JANUARY 2025 at 9.30 AM  
ROOM 21, 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  
Gary Browne, Senior Accountant (Item 7)  
Karen Martin, Deputy Head of HR (Items 8 and 9)  
Richard Anderson, Health and Safety Officer (Item 10)  
Donna-Marie Clark, Data Protection and Governance Officer (Items 11 and 12)  
Mary-Ellen Nutt, Head of IT (Item 13)  
Michael Cairns, Acting Head of Communications (Item 14)**

The meeting commenced at 9.34 am.

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **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 17 December 2024 were in the process of being published.

### **4. SMT Action Points**

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

## **5. Political Update**

Lesley Hogg noted that Assembly business had resumed after the Christmas recess and there were no significant matters to consider.

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

Lesley advised that the date of the next meeting of the Assembly Commission had yet to be agreed.

Proposed items for the meeting included:

- Clerk/Chief Executive's Report
- Repairs to Roof of Parliament Buildings
- Potential Implications of the Increase in Employers' National Insurance for Funding Under the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme 2024
- Request for the Assembly Commission to Display a Portrait of His Majesty The King

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

*Gary Browne joined the meeting at 9.44 am for agenda item 7.*

## **7. Management Accounts December 2024**

Gary Browne presented the Management Accounts for December 2024.

Gary advised of the forecast outturns for Resource DEL, Capital DEL and the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (WFDSC), noting potential year end underspends in Resource DEL and in WFDSC costs. SMT noted that the Capital DEL forecast had remained unchanged from the January Monitoring position.

Gary sought SMT approval on a capital bid from Usher Services for cameras, which he advised was being funded by a surrender from another project within Usher Services. SMT was content to approve the bid, subject to the appropriate business case being developed and approved.

Gary advised that the capital spend to date was very low, however, it was noted that there were a number of projects ongoing which Directors confirmed were on target to complete before the end of the financial year.

Gary informed SMT that a number of the December management accounting returns from Budget Managers were not received and some were incomplete. In light of this, Gary asked that Directors remind their Budget Managers of the need to adhere to the monthly deadline and the importance of accurately completing returns. SMT agreed that going forward, the Finance Office should advise Directors of any issues with returns.

*Gary Browne left the meeting at 10 am.*

*Karen Martin joined the meeting at 10 am for agenda items 8 and 9.*

## **8. HR Management Information**

Karen Martin presented the monthly HR Management Information as at 1 January 2025.

Karen advised that the Staff in Post (SIP) figure on 1 January 2025 (including agency and inward seconded staff) was 372.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) against a staff complement (including complement plus) of 389.9 FTE.

Karen sought approval of a complement change application for a permanent increase of 0.4 at AG7 within the Finance Office. Following consideration, SMT approved the increase.

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

Karen updated SMT on recruitment activity.

On reviewing the Recruitment Schedule, Karen referred to a request from the Acting Head of Communications, to prioritise the posts of Deputy Communications and Digital Content Officer. Following discussion, SMT agreed that the priority of these posts would be re-considered following the recruitment of the new Head of Communications.

Sickness absence information was provided and it was noted that for the period January 2024 to December 2024, the average sickness absence per FTE member of staff was 11.3 days, which represented a reduction of 4.2 days when compared to 15.5 days for the period January 2023 to December 2023.

Karen referred to an interim report that had been produced on the initial findings from the recent Hybrid Working Survey. SMT noted the findings and agreed that they should be shared with staff.

Karen advised that the full report on the Hybrid Working Survey results was expected by the end of February/early March 2025.

## **9. Equal Pay Review 2024**

Karen presented the Equal Pay Review 2024 Report and stated that the overall results did not give cause for concern.

SMT noted the content of the Report and agreed that there was nothing highlighted that required any further action.

SMT approved a further review in approximately three years' time.

**Action:** Karen to arrange for a copy of the SMT paper on the Equal Pay Review 2024 to be forwarded to Trade Union Side.

*Karen Martin left the meeting at 10.21 am.*

*Richard Anderson joined the meeting at 10.26 am for agenda item 10.*

## **10. Health and Safety Management Report 2024**

Richard Anderson presented the Health and Safety Management Report, providing SMT with a detailed account on accidents, other health and safety issues and training undertaken during 2024.

Richard provided an update on accidents and near misses that had occurred and confirmed that these had been considered by the Health and Safety team and that any lessons learned had been actioned.

SMT noted that there were a healthy number of trained first aiders and mental health first aiders.

Richard advised that no major recommendations had been made following the annual Fire Risk Assessment of Parliament Buildings carried out in August 2024.

In relation to the emergency evacuation of Parliament Buildings, SMT noted a potential concern regarding the number of fire wardens available due to hybrid working or other absence, and asked for a Risk Assessment to be carried out.

**Action:** Health and Safety team to arrange for a Risk Assessment to be carried out in relation to fire wardens and the emergency evacuation of Parliament Buildings.

Richard noted that the Health and Safety Sub-Committee continued to meet on a regular basis and advised that a Health and Safety Risk Register had been created, which would support the Directorate and Corporate Risk Registers.

SMT thanked Richard for the comprehensive report.

*Richard Anderson left the meeting at 10.52 am.*

*Meeting suspended at 10.52 am and resumed at 11.06 am.*

## **LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES**

*Donna-Marie Clark joined the meeting at 11.06 am for agenda items 11 and 12.*

## **11. Biennial Review of Corporate Governance Framework**

Tara Caul presented the latest version of the Corporate Governance Framework (CGF), which had been revised following its biennial review.

Following consideration, SMT approved the content of the CGF for publication following its presentation to the Assembly Commission Audit and Risk Committee (ACARC) on 19 February 2025.

Lesley thanked Tara for the work done in updating the CGF.

## **12. Quarterly Review of the Corporate Risk Register**

Donna-Marie presented and sought approval of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) for December 2024.

Following consideration, SMT approved the CRR for publication, subject to a minor amendment.

Lesley thanked Donna-Marie and the Directors for all the work that had gone in to updating the CRR following a zero-base review.

*Donna-Marie Clark left the meeting at 11.16 am.*

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

*Mary-Ellen Nutt joined the meeting at 11.20 am for agenda item 13.*

## **13. Business Case for the Procurement of Replacement Monitors and Accessories for Members**

Mary-Ellen presented and sought approval of a Business Case to replace monitors and accessories for Members and their staff.

Following consideration, SMT approved the Business Case, but noted that it would be more appropriate to record the expenditure against General Admin Expenditure, as opposed to Capital as referenced in the paper.

*Mary-Ellen Nutt left the meeting at 11.23 am.*

*Change to agenda running order.*

## **OTHER ITEMS**

## **15. Directors' Updates**

### **Corporate Services**

SMT noted the work undertaken by all business areas within the Corporate Services Directorate, since last reported at the SMT meeting on 17 December 2024.

Lesley noted her concern in relation to a proposal from the Learning and Development team to provide SMT with an annual People update paper as opposed to the current bi-annual update, as she felt the timing was too

infrequent and would not enable SMT to consider mitigating actions should progress not be as planned.

Steven stated that the current bi-annual update to SMT on Learning and Development budget/activities was a low-level operational paper and that an annual paper setting out progress against the People and Culture Strategy and other major People related projects was considered more appropriate. SMT was content with the change in focus of the paper, but agreed that it should be presented on a bi-annual basis.

Steven also provided SMT with an update on the Systems Review Project and the approach being used in the current phase of the project.

*Michael Cairns joined the meeting at 11.42 am for agenda item 14.*

## **14. Strategic Communications Update**

SMT received a communications update from the Acting Head of Communications.

Lesley acknowledged the work of the Communications Office and thanked Michael and the team for their efforts.

*Michael Cairns left the meeting at 11.58 am.*

## **OTHER ITEMS CONTINUED**

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

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

Tara Caul provided an update on all business areas within the Legal, Governance and Research Services Directorate, since last reported at the SMT meeting on 17 December 2024.

In particular, Tara highlighted the work being undertaken by the Artificial Intelligence sub-group to develop draft guidance; the ongoing preparations for the Procurement Act 2023 implementation which is planned to go-live on 24 February 2025; and the work being undertaken to help inform future resumption of the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series in 2025.

#### **Parliamentary Services**

SMT noted the work undertaken by all business areas within the Parliamentary Services Directorate, since last reported at the SMT meeting on 17 December 2024.

### **16. AOB**

SMT noted that the Assembly Commission had reached a full and confidential settlement of the legal proceedings in relation to the Parliament

Buildings roof project and recorded its thanks to David Lynn (Roof Project Manager) and Alice McKelvey (Legal Adviser) for all their work in support of the roof litigation.

## **17. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 28 February 2025.

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

- Fraud Prevention Anti-Bribery Policy and Response Plan
- Annual Plan 2024-2025 Quarterly Update
- Implementation of the New Procurement Act
- Sensitivity Review
- Internal Communications Quarterly Update
- Strategic Communications Update

The meeting ended at 12.19 pm.