

**SUMMARY OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING, FRIDAY  
4 JULY 2003 IN STORMONT CASTLE, ROOM GD10, AT 08.45 AM – 10.15  
am**

**Present:** Nigel Hamilton (Chair)  
Pat Carvill  
Clive Gowdy  
John Hunter  
Aideen McGinley  
Stephen Peover  
Stephen Quinn  
Alan Shannon  
Pat Toal  
David Watkins  
Eddie Rooney DENI  
Murray Power DOE

**In Attendance:** Bernie Rooney (Secretary)

**1. Agenda Item 1 – Minutes and Summaries of Meetings**

The Minutes of the last three PSG meetings were considered.

(i) Minutes of 13 June Meeting

It was agreed that the minutes of the 13 June discussion on “Peace II N+2 Progress Report and Next Steps” should read as follows:

(a) Underspend at 31 March

Members noted that recent media reports raised concern about apparent high underspend and the need for members to continue to monitor delivery of targets and securing outcomes.

After discussion PSG:

- (i) noted the points arising from the discussion
- (ii) noted that DFP will be following up in more detail with PEFO’s on 24 June.
- (iii) noted that DFP will submit recommendations to the Minister Ian Pearson for follow up action to address the longer term issues arising.

(b) PEACE II N+2 Progress Report and Next Steps

Members were updated on the latest N+2 position and the actions currently underway.

Following discussion Members:

- (i) noted the current position;
- (ii) endorsed the work in DFP and DARD on the actions to reduce the targets and the need for this to remain as a priority area;
- (iii) noted that some key areas of Departmental expenditure, may be reclassified to PEACE II and that this will need to proceed immediately, subject to formal approval by The Monitoring Committee and Ministers;
- (iv) noted the range of actions being explored, and recognise that there were financial and legal implications for Departments.

(ii) Minutes and Summary of 23 June meeting

The Minutes of the meeting were noted and agreed.

(iii) Minutes and Summary of 27 June meeting

The Minutes of the meeting were noted and agreed.

It was agreed that the final minutes of all three meetings would be circulated to all members.

**[Action: PS/HOCS]**

**2. Agenda Item 2 – Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising

**3. Agenda Item 3 – N+2 PEACE II – Update**

Further to Mr Carvill's paper of 2 July, members agreed to;

- (i) continue to take action to maintain spending levels, particularly during the summer months;
- (ii) noted the progress in Strand 2 of the Plan but that increasing spend and co-operative actions are insufficient to solve the problems;
- (iii) noted the areas to be brought into the Programme;

- (iv) noted that this Programme of action, can, if followed through, resolve this issue, and
- (v) noted that DFP have written to NIAO to outline their plans.

#### **4. Agenda Item 4 – Accounting Services Programme (ASP)**

David Thomson, DFP, joined the meeting for this item.

The Chair reminded the Group that at the PSG meeting on 13 June, David Thomson mentioned the Accounting Services Programme. Members, in view of the importance of this subject, sought a substantive discussion on the issue.

Members noted that the Accounting Services Programme is an NICS wide project which has important consequences for financial systems, processes, finance organisation and financial skills within Departments: It was noted that work is ongoing and the project will require the continued commitment from all Departments.

It was agreed that the Group would continue to monitor the progress of this project.

#### **5. Agenda Item 5 – European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages**

Eddie Rooney outlined the background to this issue and highlighted the further work which had been undertaken by the Interdepartmental Working Group.

PSG acknowledged and re-affirmed their commitment to the Charter. Members considered the wider issues related to meeting Charter commitments. The latest version of the Guidance was agreed and that it should now be issued to all Departments.

The Group thanked the Interdepartmental Group for the work undertaken and agreed the way ahead.

PSG noted the need for the Interdepartmental Group to consider how best to carry forward the further implementation of the Charter, not least in those areas where it was desirable to have consistency of approach across the NICS.

#### **6. Agenda Item 6 – Tour de Table**

- (i) Equal Opportunities Training for Recruitment and Selection Panels

The HOCS reminded members that the Office of the Civil Service Commissioner had requested that refresher training should be arranged for members of Selection and Recruitment



(b) Leaders in a Changing World

It was noted that 35 members of the SCS attended the information seminar, arranged to promote the Leaders in a Changing World Programme. A further 16 apologies were recorded and there is also an expression of interest from within the NIO.

The Programme is due to run in Harvard from 8-14 September with 30 places, two of which may be taken up by colleagues from the Scottish Executive.

(v) Ministerial Diaries

Members suggested that during the summer period EIS may wish to liaise closely with Private Secretaries and Diary Secretaries to co-ordinate events and announcements. The Chair agreed to raise the issue with the Director of EIS.

**[Action HOCS]**

**7. Agenda Item 7 – Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of PSG will take place on Friday 25 July in Stormont Castle – 08.55 am to 10.15 am.

**BERNIE ROONEY (MRS)**  
**11 July 2003**