

**SUMMARY OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING  
ON 5 APRIL 2004**

**PRESENT:** Mrs Angus, Ms Bunting, Ms Flanagan, Mr Gray, Mr Jardine, Mr McCartney, Mr McConnell, Dr Smyth, Mr Sweeney.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr Higgins (Secretary) Mr Simpson.

**APOLOGIES:** Mr Hamilton, Mr Grimason.

Mr McConnell chaired the meeting for items 1 to 6 and Mr Sweeney chaired for the remaining items.

**1. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The summary of the Departmental Board meeting on 8 March 2004 was agreed as amended.

**2. Matters Arising**

**(a) Sponsorship of Non Departmental Public Bodies**

Mr Sweeney reported on the latest developments to establish a network forum to support those staff engaged in the sponsorship of the Department's Executive Non Departmental Public bodies. The first meeting was scheduled for 27 April 2004.

**(b) Accommodation**

Mrs Angus outlined the completed and planned relocations of staff to Castle Buildings. Those Board members affected by the relocations advised that their staff had indicated their contentment with the accommodation provided and the way the relocation had been handled.

**3. Standing Items**

**(a) Assembly Issues**

Ms Flanagan reported on a range of Assembly issues including special advisers, the Independent Monitoring Committee report, the transfer of Minister Jane Kennedy MP to the Department of Works and Pensions and the arrival of a new Northern Ireland Office Minister, Barry Gardiner, MP. As a result of those Ministerial changes the Northern Ireland Office had issued a press release on 5.4.04 detailing the revised Ministerial portfolios.

**(b) Departmental Board Forward Plan**

The Board agreed a number of changes to the current plan and it was agreed that a revised version would be circulated to Directors in advance of the next Board meeting. The plan would be included as a standing item at Board meetings. **Action: Central Management Unit.**

**(c) Finance, Accountability and Risk**

Mr Sweeney outlined the Priorities and Budget 2004 process which coincides with a National Spending Review for 2004. The process will involve establishing spending plans for 2005-06 to 2007-08 within the resource allocations and control framework established by the Government in the Chancellor's Budget. Departments would need to identify key priorities and lowest priority spending areas and provide an evidence-based case for requests for additional resources. Administration cost budgets would be held at the level set for 2005-06 across the planning period. The process is set in the context of improving service through reform and modernisation and efficiency. Guidance would issue shortly on completion of a Departmental submission to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

**4. Current Issues**

**a) Business Planning – Departmental Board Away Day**

Mr Sweeney reported on the latest position on finalising the Department's Business Plan for 2004/05. The Board discussed the

structure and key objectives for a Board Away Day on the 15 June 2004. It was agreed that the focus of the day would be on business planning for 2005/06 and beyond and further consideration would be given to the provision of a suitable facilitator for the event.

**Action: Mr Sweeney.**

**b) Appointment of Non Executive Directors**

Mr Sweeney and Mrs Flanagan reported on the latest position regarding the appointment of Non-Executive Directors to the Departmental Board. The Board accepted the recommendation that Frank Cushnahan be invited to serve as a NED for a two-year period, subject to the final notification of Nigel Hamilton. **Action:**

**Mr Sweeney.**

**5. Papers**

**a) Presentation to MLAs**

Ms Flanagan reported on the Departmental presentations completed to date. The Board agreed an outline structure for an OFMDFM presentation and it was agreed that Board members would be advised of the date and format for that presentation. **Action: Ms**

**Flanagan.**

**b) Departmental Brief**

The Board agreed a number of amendments to the April Departmental Brief. The amended Departmental Brief was approved for the purposes of initiating the Team Briefing process within the Department.

**c) Special Bonus Scheme**

Mrs Angus presented an options paper for a Special Bonus Scheme in the Department. The general consensus of Board members was to approve option (iv) which delegated the decision to Directors to make awards from their own budget on the basis of guidelines outlined in the paper. It was agreed to progress this matter on the basis that option (iv) was the preferred method and to take account

of comments to be forwarded by Mr Jardine. **Action: Mrs Angus/Mr Jardine.**

## **6. Tour de Table**

- (a) Mr Jardine updated the Board on plans to schedule two to three meetings per year for a newly created Institute of Directors liaison officer for the Department.
- (b) Ms Flanagan advised that, due to Elections to the European Parliament on 10 June, detailed guidance would be issued by the Cabinet Office in due course covering the actions of civil servants during the likely "purdah" period between 20 May and 10 June 2004.
- (c) Mr McCartney reported on a request from the Civil Service Commission for advise on a nationality case.
- (d) Mr Gray provided an update on the key recommendations of a Business Development Service review of Legal Grades in the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
- (e) Ms Bunting reported on developments in respect of New TSN and the Review of Section 75 of the NI Act.
- (f) Mrs Angus provided an update on Review of the Offices of the Assembly Ombudsman for NI and the NI Commissioner for Complaints and the completion of the review of security vetting.
- (g) Mr McConnell updated the meeting on the latest position in respect of the Review of Public Administration.

## **7. Any Other Business**

### **(a) Secretary of State's Meeting**

The Board agreed an outline format for the Secretary of State's meeting with the Departmental Board on 10 May 2004. It was agreed (a) to contact the Secretary of State's office to identify other issues for discussion and (b) to circulate a template of the format of the meeting to Board members. **Action: (a) Ms Flanagan/ (b) Mr Sweeney.**

**(b) Update of Corporate Risk Register**

Mr Sweeney advised Board members of the requirement to send proposed amendments of the Corporate Risk Register to the Secretary to the Board to facilitate discussion and approval for an updated register at the 10 May Board meeting. **Action: Directors/Secretary to the Board.**

**(c) Departmental Mentoring**

It was agreed to (a) examine the possibility of identifying a mentor within the Northern Ireland Civil Service for the senior manager who had requested an external mentor and (b) to commission a paper, on a departmental mentoring policy, for the Board's consideration. **Action: (a) Mr Jardine (b) Corporate Services Division.**

**8. Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday 10 May 2004 at 9.15am in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference room, Castle Buildings.

**MARK HIGGINS**

9 April 2004