

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 6 JANUARY 2006 IN ROOM BD20, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Robson Davison
Will Haire
John Hunter
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Stephen Peover
Nick Perry
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Pat Toal

In Attendance:	Denis McCartney	-	OFMDFM	}	RPA discussion only
	Paul Sweeney	-	OFMDFM		
	Stephen Grimason				
	Greg McConnell				
	Jim McKeown				
	Neill Jackson				
	George Gray				
	David Sterling	-	DRD		
	John Ritchie	-	DOE		
	Denis McMahan	-	DHSSPS		
	Linda Brown	-	DFP		
	Edgar Jardine	-	DCAL		
	Eddie Rooney	-	DE		
	Derek Baker	-	DSD		
	Debbie Sweeney	-	Secretary		

1. **Apologies:** Rosalie Flanagan

2. **RPA Implementation**

Nigel Hamilton explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to update PSG on implementation arrangements and address some outstanding issues.

(i) Structural Arrangements

PSG agreed the revised Terms of Reference which were suggested at the 9 December PSG meeting.

PSG discussed the involvement of independents on the Steering Group and it was agreed that the Central Unit would consider nominations. In relation to involvement of independents to oversee equality, New TSN and good relations, it was agreed that in-house

experience should be drawn upon and PSG were content that the Equality Unit would oversee.

(ii) Structural Arrangements in Departments

PSG noted the structural arrangements in Departments. It was agreed the issue needed prioritisation and resources.

Neill Jackson updated PSG on the implications for the Legislative Programme; currently there are 30 Orders in Council scheduled for completion in the remainder of the current Session.

Neill drew attention to the latest assessment of likely Second Session Bids and asked PSG to assess whether Departments would have the resources to progress other pieces of legislation in light of the priority to be given to RPA.

George Gray said OLC had never said no to any pieces of legislation as is the practice in Whitehall but due to the increased demand for Orders, there would have to be a re-prioritisation. Denis McCartney said that the DSO had 80 professional staff; he was confident that his staff could meet requirements.

(iii) Financing/Cross-Cutting Issues

There was general agreement on lead roles which Departments had nominated.

Equality and Good Relations would be led by the Equality Unit. Financing/Funding of Councils and New Bodies would be considered by John Hunter, Bruce Robinson and Stephen Peover, with help from the Centre, possibly splitting responsibility between budgetary and technical issues.

Models of Governance and Accountability – OFMDFM would provide some general principles.

Community Planning – DOE would lead.

Local Government – lead was discussed and it was agreed that Nigel Hamilton, Greg McConnell and Jim McKeown would consider again when the quango announcement was made.

(iv) Timeframe to May 2009

The draft Good Government paper asking Minister to note and endorse the implementation arrangements and initial indicative timeframe was discussed with emphasis made to resourcing the RPA, the prioritisation of the legislation programme and the ambitious timeframes.

(v) Public Service Commission

John Hunter said since the last RPA PSG there had been a meeting with the LRA and receipt of a paper from NIC/ICTU.

The LRA recommended the establishment of an Appeal Board; a follow-up paper has been promised but has not been received.

NIC/ICTU were disappointed that PSG would not be established on a statutory basis.

PSG agreed in principle to the establishment of an informal Appeals Board whose decisions would be non-binding and that the PSC would operate at a strategic level, providing advice on the guiding principles and steps necessary to ensure the smooth transfer of staff to new organisations.

It was agreed that the submission to the Secretary of State on the PSG may need altered on receipt of the LRA paper; it would be re-circulated if this was the case.

[Action: John Hunter]

Robson Davison agreed to follow-up through ACAS experience on the handling of staffing matters how successful alternative dispute mechanisms were in reducing the number of industrial tribunal appeals.

[Action: Robson Davison]

(vi) AOB

(a) Update on Legal View

George Gray confirmed that appointments can be made to a shadow body before legislation.

Nigel Hamilton asked Denis McCartney and George Gray to submit legal advice on the nature of a shadow body, what it can and cannot do, staffing issues, monies and Chief Executive status as a helpful guide to Departments.

[Action: Denis McCartney/George Gray]

(b) Quangos

Greg McConnell said the Quango announcement would be made at the beginning of March.

Greg said returns from Departments with radical proposals for a reduction in the number of Quangos and for the transfer of functions to Local Government were due by 13 January.

[Action: PSG]

(c) Communication

PSG agreed the need for corporate communication throughout Departments. John Hunter, Stephen Grimason and Linda Brown would discuss the way forward and report back to PSG on 20 January.

[Action: John Hunter, Stephen Grimason, Linda Brown]

DEBBIE SWEENEY
9 January 2006