

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING  
ON 7 MARCH 2005**

**PRESENT:** Nigel Hamilton (Chair –Items 1, 2, 3 and 4), Dorothy Angus, Mary Bunting, Frank Cushnahan, George Gray, Stephen Grimason, Denis McCartney, Greg McConnell (Chair – Agenda Items 5, 6, 7, and 8), Peter Smyth, Paul Sweeney.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Alison Coey, Ken Fraser, Mark Higgins (Secretary), Neill Jackson, Alan Maitland, Chris Stewart, Linda Wilson.

**APOLOGIES:** Rosalie Flanagan

**Minutes of Last Meeting**

1. The minutes of the Departmental Board meeting on 14 February 2005 were agreed as amended.

**Matters Arising**

2. There were no matters arising from the 14 February 2005 meeting.

**Standing Items**

**Assembly Issues**

3. Neill Jackson provided an outline on the latest position in respect of the political situation and it was agreed to include an update on political issues in the March 2005 Departmental Brief. **Action: Central Management Branch.**

**Departmental Board Forward Plan**

4. The Board reviewed the new 2005 plan and agreed changes to the scheduling of items and Central Management Unit would amend the plan. **Action: Central Management Unit.**

## **Finance, Accountability and Risk**

5. Paul Sweeney tabled a paper on (a) Outturn Information, for April to January 2005 and (b) Budget 2004 including an OFMDFM Efficiency Delivery Plan (EDP).
  
6. Budget holders had indicated that they will substantially meet their expenditure targets. It was agreed that business units with undeclared significant underspends in the current financial year would incur reduced allocations by the same amount in the 2005/2006 financial year subject to plausible explanations and exigencies. It was also agreed that the Departmental Board would be provided with a full report for their May 2005 meeting on projected and actual spend for the current financial year with comparative information for the previous two financial years. **Action: Finance Branch.**
  
7. Paul Sweeney explained that the purpose of the OFMDFM Efficiency Development Plan (EDP) is to supply additional background information and provide an overview on how the Department is taking forward the delivery of its efficiency targets. In particular it covers such areas as programme governance, measuring and reporting, risk and key stakeholder information. The EDP will remain a "live" document which will be reviewed and amended as necessary in light of progress in delivering the Department's efficiency targets. The draft EDP was discussed and minor amendments approved by the Board for issue to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

## **Freedom of Information (FOI)**

8. Dorothy Angus provided a synopsis on FOI requests received to date, including the type of requests being made. The Board noted that requests are dealt with on a case by case basis and that the Department's FOI systems were working well and meeting Cabinet Office guidelines.

### **Strategic Investment Board (SIB)**

9. Linda Wilson provided an update on the establishment of the SIB and progress to date in terms of key processes, the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, major projects, current key issues and the strategic agenda of the Economic Policy Unit.

### **Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI)**

10. Alan Maitland and Alison Coey presented an outline of the launch of the Maze Consultation Panel's Report on the way forward for the former Maze/Long Kesh site and the latest position in respect of the Crumlin Road Gaol, Ebrington Barracks and Ilex Regeneration Company and other smaller sites gifted to OFMDFM. The Board acknowledged the progress that had been achieved to date and noted the Panel's proposals for a strategy to develop a programme and Master Plan.

### **Race Equality Strategy**

11. Ken Fraser reported on the Race Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland including the origin, updating and context of the strategy which emanates from successive Programmes for Government, "to tackle racial inequalities". He explained the vision, key principles, seven shared aims and the proposed implementation of the strategy.
12. Implementation of the strategy will involve the Department co-ordinating the development of an Action Plan across all departments in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Race Forum which has a key role in the development and implementation of the strategy. The strategy is linked to the Good Relations Policy and Framework and other strategies to recognise multiple identity and multiple discrimination. Mr Hamilton emphasised his personal commitment to the strategy and its importance to Ministers and the wider community.

### **Papers**

#### **Equality and Diversity in OFMDFM**

- 13.** Dorothy Angus tabled a paper on Equality and Diversity in the Department. The Departmental Board endorsed the proposal to establish a working group of Staff Officers to take forward the diversity agenda in the Department and made a commitment to promote a culture of diversity in all aspects of the Department's business.

### **Audit of Policy Making and Legislation Capacity**

- 14.** It was agreed to defer the item to a future Board meeting.

### **Team Brief**

- 15.** The Board agreed a number of amendments to the March Departmental Brief for the purposes of initiating the Team Briefing process within the Department.

### **Tour de Table**

- 16a.** Denis McCartney reported on developments in respect of a judicial review case concerning nationality issues and the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
- 16b.** Neill Jackson outlined the ongoing work to progress the Legislative Programme and advised that a meeting of the Inter-Departmental Group on Organised Crime was taking place on 7 March 2005.
- 16c.** Mary Bunting reported that "A Shared Future - Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relation" would be launched within the next few weeks.
- 16d.** Paul Sweeney reported that the Chairman of the Ilex Regeneration Company had announced his resignation and Mr Sweeney advised that he would keep the Board informed of related developments.
- 16e.** Greg McConnell advised that a consultation document on the Review of Public Administration was planned for publication by the end of March 2005 with firm proposals for health and education structures, as well as options for the reform of local government and public bodies.

## **Any Other Business**

### **Mentoring**

- 17.** Dorothy Angus reported that the Department would make use of the senior civil service mentoring scheme and not other schemes that may be available.

### **Pay Round 2005**

- 18.** The Board agreed that there were no management issues of impact for the Department in the 2005 pay round.

### **Date of the next meeting**

- 19.** The next meeting of the Board is on Monday 11 April in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, Castle Buildings

**Mark Higgins**

1 April 2005