

**SUMMARY OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 8 MARCH 2004**

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Simpson (Secretary).

APOLOGIES: Mrs Bunting, Mr Grimason.

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The summary of the Departmental Board meeting on 9 February 2004 was agreed as amended.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

3. Standing Items

Assembly Issues

Ms Flanagan updated the Board on arrangements following the retirement of the Lord Alderdice as Speaker of the Assembly.

4. Current Issues

a) Appointment of Non Executive Directors

Mr Sweeney reported on the latest position regarding the appointment of Non-Executive Directors to the Departmental Board. It is hoped that a recommendation can be put to the Board within the next few weeks.

Action: Mr Sweeney

b) Special Bonus Scheme

Mrs Angus provided an update on the Special Bonus Scheme and advised that an options paper had been prepared. It was agreed that the paper should be copied to Board members for their consideration and a discussion at the next meeting.

Action: Mrs Angus.

5. Papers

a) 2004/2005 Business Plan

The Board discussed the draft Business Plan for 2004/05 and agreed that:

- 1) The introduction should say more regarding the context in which the Department operates in supporting the institutions of Government;
- 2) Section 1 should be expanded to reflect as far as possible the work that is being done across the Department to introduce new and more effective ways of working; and
- 3) A short preamble should be prepared for Sections 2 and 3.

Action: 1 & 3 – Corporate Services Division

Action: 2 – Directors through Mr Sweeney

The Board also considered proposals from Mr Sweeney regarding the business planning process. It was agreed that an away day around the end of May or early June would provide a useful basis to review the role, aims and objectives of the Department within the context of the Spending Review 2004 and in good time for the beginning of the planning process for 2005/06. Directors are to provide suggestions for the structure and content of an away day (including names for a preliminary planning group) to Mr Sweeney.

Action: All Directors.

b) Finance and Accountability Issues

Mr Sweeney introduced a paper setting out new financial management arrangements for the Department. It was agreed that Finance, Accountability and Risk would become a standing item at future Departmental Board meetings.

Mr Sweeney also expressed his appreciation to the staff in Central Management Branch and Finance Branch for the preparatory work they did on the Business Plan and Finance and Accountability papers.

Action: Central Management Unit

c) Forward Year Planner: Agenda Items

The Board endorsed a draft Forward Year Planner for Board meetings and agreed that work on the following policy issues/topics should be added for consideration at appropriate points throughout the year:

1. Community Relations Strategy (April).
2. Review of Public Administration (May).
3. Reinvestment and Reform Initiative Sites
4. Strategic Investment Board
5. Single Equality Bill.
6. North/South issues.

The Board noted that this should be rolling programme of updates and that others issues/topics would be added in due course as appropriate.

Action: Central Management Unit

d) Sponsorship of Non Departmental Public Bodies

The Board endorsed a proposal from Mr Sweeney to establish a network forum to support those staff engaged in the sponsorship of the Department's Executive Non Departmental Public bodies.

Action: Mr Sweeney.

6. Tour de Table

- (a) Mrs Angus provided an update on the relocation of staff from Stormont Castle. She also reported that the recent "Change Matters" paper, providing an update on some departmental initiatives, appears to have been welcomed by staff. Mr Hamilton

recorded the Board's appreciation for the work of Office Services personnel with regards to the relocation of staff and for the support and understanding of those having to move.

- (b) Mr Gray updated the Board on a meeting with Legislation Liaison Officers from all departments to inform and update the legislative programme and advised of some Northern Ireland input to the Civil Partnerships Bill and the Constitutional Reform Bill. Mr Gray also stressed the importance of his office being kept up to date on legislative proposals arising in the Northern Ireland Office.

Action: Mr Hamilton to raise with NIO

- (c) Mrs Flanagan reported on work her Directorate are doing with the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure on a range of issues relating to the use of Irish Language and North/South bodies.
- (d) Mr McConnell advised that the consultation period for the Review of Public Administration has now closed, with 151 responses having been received.
- (e) Mrs McAuley updated the Board on the latest developments in the work of the North Belfast Community Action Unit and the consultation exercises arising from the Community Relations Strategy, New TSN and Single Equality legislation.
- (f) Mr Sweeney reported on work he is engaged on with the Department of the Environment to develop working relationships between Central and Local Government. He also suggested that, in future, Central Management Branch should represent OFMDFM at the Departmental Representatives meetings. This was agreed by the Board on the basis that others should attend meetings, as necessary, to provide a central perspective on specific policy issues.
- (g) Mr Jardine updated the Board on progress with applications to the Integrated Development Fund.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Departmental Board will be on Monday 5 April at 11.30 a.m. in the 4th Floor Conference Room, Castle Buildings.

GEOFFREY SIMPSON

8 March 2004