

**SUMMARY OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 9 FEBRUARY 2004**

PRESENT: **Mr Hamilton, Mrs Angus, Ms Bunting, Ms Flanagan, Mr Finegan, Mr Gray, Mr Jardine, Mr McCartney, Mr McKervill, Dr Smyth, Mr Sweeney**

IN ATTENDANCE: **Mr Higgins (Secretary),**

APOLOGIES: **Mr Grimason, Mr McConnell**

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The summary of the Departmental Board meeting on 12 January 2004 was noted and agreed.

2. Standing Items

Assembly Issues

Ms Flanagan updated the Board on the arrangements for the commencement of the Review of the Assembly including an outline of the structure for Strands 1, 2 and 3 of the Review.

3. Current Issues

Mr Sweeney highlighted the requirement for easements to be declared for the February 2004 monitoring round and outlined the key points in relation to the forthcoming Spending Review. Mrs Angus advised the Departmental Board that requests for additional staff would not be considered pending the delegation of budgets in the 2004/05 financial year. Directors would then consider the deployment of staff in the light of available financial resources

4. Papers

Departmental Brief

The Board agreed a number of amendments to the February Departmental Brief, including updates to information on accommodation and in a reference to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages guide. In relation to that it was agreed that a verbal report would be provided for the next Senior Management meeting on the best practice in the handling of requests from members of the public who wish to conduct business in Irish or Ulster-Scots. The amended Departmental Brief was approved for the purposes of initiating the Team Briefing process within the Department.

5. Tour de Table

- (a) Mr McKervill reported on the final drafting of a new booklet, entitled "Northern Ireland – take a closer look" to be launched in March 2004 and to be available on the web and a television advertising campaign for the OnlineNI portal.
- (b) Ms Bunting reported on developments on equality and human rights matters and the success of two recent conferences, i.e. Sharing the Future, Civic Society conference and a conference on disability access, entitled Breaking the Barriers.
- (c) Dr Smyth reported on a seminar planned for 26 March 2004 on Corporate and Business Planning for North/South bodies and being facilitated by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- (d) Mr Finegan provided an update on the February 2004 deadline for responses to the consultation process for the Review of Public Administration.
- (e) Mrs Angus provided an update on developments in respect of the Knowledge Network and progress on the Security Review.
- (f) Ms Flanagan provided an update on a meeting with the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, preparation of briefing

for the Secretary of State's new special adviser, Mr Higgitt and on the recent success of the Holocaust Memorial Day events, which had received praise from a range of eminent people.

- (g) Mr McCartney reported on matters concerning the Civil service the restrictions which apply in relation to UK citizenship.
- (h) Mr Jardine provided an update on recent developments in relation to the Strategic Investment Board, public private partnerships and a meeting of the Board of the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland.

6. Any Other Business

(a) Non-Executive Directors

Mr Sweeney reported on advice prepared by Central Appointments Unit in relation to Non-Executive Director appointments to the Departmental Board. It was agreed to hold a meeting of the Board on 20 February to discuss and agree the way forward. **Action: Corporate Services Division.**

(b) Improving Services through Reform Conference

Mr Hamilton requested that information on the above forthcoming conference on 4 March 2004 should be disseminated to appropriate staff to encourage their attendance.

(c) Industrial Action

Mrs Angus provided an update on the latest position in relation to industrial action by the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance.

(d) Accommodation

Mrs Angus provided an update on the proposed refurbishment in Block B, Castle Buildings and the subsequent relocation of services between Stormont Castle and Castle Buildings and which involved the Northern Ireland Office. It was agreed to provide information on the latest position in the February Team Brief. **Action: Corporate Services Division.**

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Departmental Board will be on Monday 8 March at 9.15 a.m.

Mark Higgins

20 February 2004