

**SUMMARY OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD / SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT MEETING ON 9 JULY 2003**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Mr Hamilton</b>	<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	<b>Mr Haire</b>
	<b>Mr Grimason</b>		<b>Mr Jardine</b>
	<b>Ms Bunting</b>		<b>Ms Flanagan</b>
	<b>Dr Smyth</b>		<b>Mr McConnell</b>
	<b>Mr McCartney</b>		<b>Mrs Angus</b>
	<b>Mr Stewart</b>		<b>Mr May</b>
	<b>Mr McKervill</b>		<b>Mr Vincent</b>
	<b>Mr Rooney</b>		<b>Dr Mulligan</b>
	<b>Mrs Devlin</b>		<b>Dr Smith</b>
	<b>Mr Jackson</b>		<b>Mr Shannon</b>
	<b>Mr Johnston</b>		
	<b>Mrs McAuley</b>		
	<b>Mr Simpson</b>		

**IN ATTENDANCE:**       **Mrs Rooney**  
                                  **Miss Menary (Secretary)**

**1. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the Departmental Board meeting on 16 June 2003 were noted and agreed. Mr Rooney suggested that the 10<sup>th</sup> point in the Tour de Table section of the minutes of the Senior Management meeting on 11 June 2003 should be amended to read European Unit instead of Economic Policy Unit.

**2. Matters Arising**

Mr Hamilton thanked all involved with the announcement on 24 June 2003 by the Secretary of State on the Programme for Government and Budget.

It was noted that there would be no team brief until September and therefore no input was required at this meeting.

### **3. Standing Items / Current Issues**

#### **a) Political Developments**

Mr Johnston explained the current status of issues relating to suspension such as: MLA salaries; travelling expenses; financial assistance to political party; retention of Special Advisors; redeployment of Assembly staff and; future concerns for directly recruited Assembly staff.

Mr Hamilton asked those attending the meeting to be aware of the continuing security threat from dissidents.

### **4. Papers**

#### **a) Suspected Fraud – Water Service**

Mr Hamilton reported that this paper had been circulated to the group due to its interesting content and potential impact on the Department, the Strategic Investment Board and external organisations such as the Community Relations Council. He highlighted that it was useful to note the detail provided on handling arrangements of suspected fraud and the need to initiate an independent investigation at an early stage.

#### **b) Government Accounts – Consolidation Officer**

Mr Hamilton asked those in the meeting to note in particular paragraphs 5 and 6 of this paper and circulate to other colleagues if necessary.

#### **c) Service Delivery Agreement Outturn Report**

Mr Simpson described this paper as self-explanatory noting that this outturn paper had used the same indicators of progress as the PfG Annual Report. He explained that out of the 117 SDA targets, 71 were achieved, 4 substantially achieved and 42 likely to be achieved with some delay. The main factor leading to the delay of targets being completed in OFMDFM was seen to be suspension.

It was noted that this report should have been placed on the OFMDFM website before the end of June in line with the publication of the PfG Annual Report. However, there had been some delay in making both these commitments and the SDA outturn report was still to be cleared by Ministers. Miss Menary was asked to check which departments had already placed their reports on websites.

Mr Hamilton requested that the report should be placed on the website after Ian Pearson MP and John Spellar MP had had sight of the document.

## **5. Tour de Table**

- Mr Johnston reported that Parliamentary Questions continue to be received on North/South issues. Mr Hamilton commented that there had been a large amount of Parliamentary Questions in relation to devolved issues.
- Mrs Devlin outlined areas of difficult legislation that would be addressed in the forthcoming programme of legislation. It was observed that Belfast had been chosen to host the UK Holocaust Memorial Day next year. Mrs Devlin also highlighted that the issue of Derry/Londonderry was once again likely to arise in the near future and concern was shown at the lack of a central policy on this issue.
- Mr Smyth reported that a timetable had been produced to resolve the issues raised in the Corporate Governance exercise. Mr Smyth was concerned at the lack of cooperation, communication and working projects with Irish colleagues. He noted that Ian Pearson's meeting with Bertie Ahern on green policies was the only recent development.
- Mrs McAuley observed that BDS had completed a draft report looking at the management roles and structures within the Equality Commission and recommendations had been made.
- Mrs McAuley raised the issue of the support and service provided from the Departmental Solicitors Office and was supported by several other colleagues. Mr Hamilton agreed

- to speak with Robin Cole to resolve this issue and reported that a new Grade 5 post had been allocated to the DSO.
- Mr Grimason reported that EIS had obtained IIP accreditation on which a detailed report would be available next week.
  - Mr Grimason explained that the May monitoring allocations had been broadly agreed and although there were some popular allocations such as £10 million for schools, the substantial amount set aside for Water Reform Plans may attract some adverse comment. It would also highlight the underspend issue once again.
  - Mr Grimason commented that EIS would be pushing ahead with the development of the corporate identity.
  - Mr McKervill reported that a booklet and CD Rom were being produced on improving Northern Ireland's image abroad. The booklet will have a positive tone and is expected to be launched in September.
  - Mr Jackson explained that the RPA team would be commencing consultation in the Autumn on the basis of a paper agreed by SoS a few weeks ago. It was also highlighted that Ian Pearson MP had been given Ministerial responsibility of this area.
  - Mr Rooney reported that a brief review of PPPs would progress over the summer and that a request for PfG/Budget inputs had been commissioned and all returns should now be back.
  - Mr Simpson updated the meeting on a final date of 24 September 2003 for the second departmental conference. Mr Hamilton asked Mr Simpson to circulate an e-mail highlighting this fact to all senior staff in OFMDFM.
  - Mr Stewart asked those attending the meeting to note that there was likely to be some concern over a resignation from the NI Human Rights Commission, as this is the third resignation from the Commission in two years. He highlighted the need to reconvene a community interface group.

- Ms Bunting reported on a suggestion that a group should convene to address racist attacks in NI. It was also explained that discussions were currently ongoing to determine how Victims Liaison in NIO and the Equality Unit could work more closely together.
- Mr Hamilton requested that any outstanding SCS career development profiles from last year (around 60%) should be sent in as early as possible. This was necessary for PSG to consider the skills available within SCS and possible training required, and for career development considerations.
- Mr Hamilton informed the attendees that he was conscious of grievances arising from the strict security regulations for entrance to Stormont Castle and he hoped to address this issue as soon as possible.

**6. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

**7. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Departmental Board will be on Monday 11 August 2003 at 10.45 am.

July 2003.