

DRAFT

HCS/594(a)/03

**SUMMARY OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING –
FRIDAY 11 APRIL 2003 in STORMONT CASTLE**

Present:

- Nigel Hamilton (Chair)**
- Pat Carvill**
- Gerry McGinn**
- Will Haire**
- John Hunter**
- Andrew McCormick**
- Aideen McGinley**
- Stephen Peover**
- Bruce Robinson**
- Alan Shannon**
- Pat Toal**

Apologies:

- David Watkins**
- Clive Gowdy**

In attendance:

- Angela Dullaghan**
- Bernie Rooney (Secretary)**

1. Agenda Item 1 – Minutes and Summary of 4 April meeting

The Minutes and Summary were noted and agreed.

2. Agenda Item 2 – Matters Arising

(i) Dame Rennie Fritchie

HOCS has written to Dame Rennie thanking her for the presentation to Permanent Secretary Group, and welcoming a central pool of independent assessors for use by Departments in making public appointments.

(ii) PSG Sub Committees

The HOCS reported that PSG Sub Committees have all now met. It was agreed that the Chairs would provide **verbal reports** at the PSG Strategic Planning Day scheduled to take place on 9 May at Stormont Castle.

**[Action: Chairs of PSG]
Sub Groups]**

It was further agreed that the PSG Sub Committee Reports would be tabled at the Human Resource PSG meetings and this will be noted in a forward planner.

[Action: PS/HOCS]

(iii) PSG Forward Planner

The HOCS advised members that in order to bring a more structured approach to PSG meetings a forward planner and guidance on PSG papers is being prepared.

The planner will identify regular slots for discussing key issues. The first draft will be circulated with papers for the 2 May meeting.

[Action: PS/HOCS]

3. Agenda Item 3 – An Outline Reform Strategy

Katrina Godfrey joined the meeting for this item. The HOCS summarised the discussion as follows;

- (i) need to emphasise the continuity in this work from the earlier work on Response to Devolution.
- (ii) work is not starting from scratch on this but Departments have been undertaking work within the Reform Agenda.
- (iii) should aid to produce a Reform Framework, rather than a Reform Strategy.
- (iv) Political imperative is evident both from direct rule Ministers and from former devolved Ministers but Civil Servants need to take this work forward irrespective of a particular political philosophy.
- (v) the framework should clearly differentiate between the **external** dimension and the **internal** dimension.
 - **Externally** we are talking about service to the public, delivery, linkages to expenditure resources, and outcomes.
 - **Internally** we are talking about business drivers, how we deliver, opportunities for innovation and – very significantly – how this relates to our Human Resource Agenda.
- (vi) need to ensure ownership by the wider NICS, especially the SCS.

- (vii) need to ensure that our Reform Agenda adds value.
- (viii) need to ensure that our work is transparent, possibly with external challenges and also,
- (ix) need to ensure that the language we use and that our approach is understood, sensible and pragmatic.

4. Agenda Item 4 – SCS Seminars

- (i) Members noted that the Senior Civil Service Seminars have been arranged to take place as follows;

- Tuesday 6 May 2003 @ Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor
- Tuesday 13 May 2003 @ Ramada Hotel, Belfast
- Tuesday 20 May 2003 @ Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor
- Tuesday 27 May 2003 @ Malone House, Belfast

The Seminars will begin at 09.00 am and conclude with lunch at 1.30 pm.

- (ii) Presentation

It was agreed that the Comptroller and Auditor General should be invited to give a presentation to remind colleagues of the context that the NICS must work within.

[Action: HOCS/Will Haire]

5. Agenda Item 5 – Human Resource Issues

Senior Civil Service Vacancies at Grade 3/Deputy Secretary level were discussed and are noted separately.

6. Agenda Item 6 – Tour de Table

- (i) Contingency Planning

The HOCS reported that there are no new developments to report.

- (ii) Planning for Restoration

The HOCS reported that he understood that intensive negotiations were ongoing and that there was nothing further to report at this time.

(iii) Integrated Development Fund

Members noted the new Integrated Development Fund.

(iv) Departmental Solicitors Office

Concern was once again expressed over the DSO's capability to respond to the needs of Departments. It was acknowledged that there was a resource problem and members noted that a recruitment competition has been completed and vacant posts are being filled as a priority.

(v) Essential Skills

Members noted that the Department for Employment and Learning are about to embark upon a major PR campaign to promote the essential skills programme.

(vi) West Belfast Task Force

Members were updated on the Minister, Ian Pearson's recent meeting with the West Belfast Task Force.

(vii) Victoria Square Retail Development

Members noted that the Minister for Environment issued a note of opinion to grant planning approval for Victoria Square Retail Development in Belfast City Centre.

(ix) International Conference on organised crime. Members noted that the International Conference on Organised Crime is to be held in Belfast in June this year.

7. Agenda Item 7 - Date of Next Meeting – 2 May 2003

The HOCS explained that due to Easter Leave arrangements the meetings of 18 and 25 April are cancelled.

The next meeting of PSG will take place on Friday 2 May.

BERNIE ROONEY (Mrs)
April 2003