

**SUMMARY OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 12 JANUARY 2004**

PRESENT: Mr Hamilton, Mrs Angus, Ms Bunting, Ms Flanagan,
Mr Gray, Mr Grimason, Mr Jardine, Mr McCartney,
Mr McConnell, Mr Sweeney

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Higgins (Secretary),

APOLOGIES: Dr Smyth

The Board welcomed Mr Sweeney to his first Departmental Board meeting.

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The summary of the Departmental Board meeting on 8 December 2003 was noted and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Mid-Year Career Development Profiles

The majority of updates on Mid-Year Carer Development Profiles had been completed and reminders were issued for the remaining profiles.

3. Standing Items

Assembly Issues

Ms Flanagan updated the Board on a range of post election Assembly matters including the forthcoming Review of the Assembly.

4. Current Issues

(a) Strategic Issues - The Budget

Mr Sweeney reported on the main outcome of the Budget which would result in pressures on administrative costs across all public services for the

following 3 financial years and reprioritisation in the forthcoming Spending Review in February 2004.

4. (b) Public Administration

The Board discussed a paper compiled by Economic Policy Unit that summarised the position of the four main political parties in relation to reform of public administration including reform of and proposed actions in respect of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

4. (c) Update on Mid-year Career Development Profiles

The above item was dealt with under Matters Arising.

5. Papers

a) Equality Scheme Progress Report

Ms Bunting tabled a progress report to 31 December 2003 on implementation of the Department's Equality Scheme. The Board noted the progress on implementation of the Equality Scheme and agreed that the Progress Report is forwarded to the responsible Minister.

6. Tour de Table

- a) Mr Gray reported on progress on the legislative programme including Orders in Council in respect of water reform and special education needs.
- b) Ms Bunting reported on work associated with New TSN , Single Equality Bill and Community Relations policy.
- c) Mr McCartney reported on further developments in respect of a Judicial Review case.
- d) Mr Jardine reported on the launch of the new Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland.
- e) Ms Angus reported on the latest position in respect of the proposed industrial action by the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance.
- f) Mrs Angus reported on the latest staff absenteeism figures for sick

leave in the Department which showed a lower percentage absence when compared to the service-wide figure. Further guidance for line managers on absenteeism is planned. It was agreed that absenteeism would be included for discussion at a future Board meeting. **Action : Corporate Services Division**

- g) Mr Sweeney reported on developments in respect of the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative, including the Ilex Urban Regeneration Company Ltd.
- h) Ms Flanagan reported on the forthcoming Holocaust Memorial Day Events and the high level of interest it has generated.
- i) Mr McConnell updated the meeting on the latest position in respect of the consultation exercise for the Review of Public Administration.

7. Any Other Business

It was agreed that the start time for future Departmental Board meetings would be 9.15 a.m. and that senior management meetings would be rescheduled to the third Wednesday of each month. **Action: Corporate Services Division.**

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Departmental Board will be on Monday 9 February 2004 at 9.15 a.m.

Mark Higgins

26 January 2004