

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY
15 OCTOBER 2004 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE,
AT 8.45 am**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Clive Gowdy
Will Haire
Wilfie Hamilton
John Hunter
Gerry Lavery
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Stephen Peover
Nick Perry
Stephen Quinn
Alan Shannon

In Attendance: Colin Jack } Agenda Item 3
Helen Osborn }
Edgar Jardine } Agenda Item 4
Bill McCluggage }
Stephen Grimason
Debbie Sweeney (Secretary)

Apologies: Bruce Robinson
Pat Toal

Mr Hamilton welcomed Mr Perry to his first PSG meeting.

1. Minutes and Summary

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October were agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Budget

Dr McCormick reported on the coverage and reaction to the Budget announcement.

Mr Peover said he intended holding sessions on the 'Fit for Purpose' document with staff and was considering how to lead the consultations with so many staff in different locations.

Mr Hamilton asked PSG to consider their proposed Departmental approach and would discuss at PSG on 22 October.

[Action: PSG]

3. **Public Library Service Presentation**

Dr McGinley introduced Mr Colin Jack, DCAL, and Ms Helen Osborn, Head of Libraries and Information, Western Education and Library Board. Ms Osborn outlined the development of libraries over the years with the advancement of technology and the contribution libraries make to Government Departments. There are currently 126 libraries and 33 mobile libraries, and Northern Ireland is the first region of the UK to establish electronic library services via a single network across all library authorities. Through the NI-libraries net, people have the opportunities to learn independently and take up courses. They include Internet clinics, computer courses and accredited IT courses. Ms Osborn emphasised the need for continued investment in libraries to research, develop and implement improved features and services which will benefit everyone.

Mr Hamilton thanked Mr Jack and Ms Osborn for their presentation and their offer of assistance to Departments to talk to groups of staff on the contribution to Government by the library service.

4. **Update of Sub-Group E and e-Government Project Update**

Mr Haire introduced PSG(e)'s progress report. The paper invited PSG endorsement of further work which PSG(e) considered should be taken forward collectively in support of the modernisation and reform agenda.

Mr Hunter endorsed the approach from PSG(e) but felt that Gateway Reviews should be built in to the Terms of Reference. Concern was expressed on the collective monitoring of reform projects and the resulting reports to Ministers.

Mr Hamilton acknowledged concerns and agreed that the methodology would be re-visited.

[Action: Mr Jardine]

5. **Manpower Planning**

Mr Hunter reported that PDG had met last week and would meet again in November.

6. **Tour de Table**

Flooding at Rasharkin

Mr Lavery reported on the blocked grill which had caused flooding in Rasharkin.

Education Boards

Mr McGinn updated PSG on the Minister's meeting with the South Eastern and Belfast Education Boards.

Ulster History Park

Mr Peover reported on the media interest of the sale of the Ulster History Park.

FOI

Mr Quinn enquired about policy charging. Dr McGinley said she would circulate her note of the FOI seminar she attended in London, to PSG.

[Action: Dr McGinley]

PAC Report

Mr Quinn informed PSG that the PAC Report on Industrial Absenteeism in the Water and Roads Service would shortly be published.

Retail Sector Reception

Mr Shannon informed PSG that Mr Spellar would be hosting a reception for the retail sector in London on Wednesday 20 October.

Best Practice Seminar

Mr Hunter reported on the Best Practice Seminar held in Lisburn. There had been a large turnout and the Seminar had been very positively received.

Political Update

Mr Perry updated PSG on the current political situation.

Suicides

Mr Gowdy reported on the latest incidence of suicides.

Culloden Forum

Mr Hamilton updated PSG on the forthcoming Culloden Forum.

DEBBIE SWEENEY
19 October 2004