

**SUMMARY OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETINGS  
ON 18 and 21 OCTOBER 2004**

- PRESENT:**
- 18.10.04: Mr Hamilton, Mrs Angus, Ms Bunting, Mr Cushnahan, Mr Gray, Mr Grimason, Mr Jardine, Mr McCartney, Mr McConnell, Dr Smyth, Mr Sweeney.**
- 21.10.04: Mr Hamilton, Mrs Angus, Ms Bunting, Mr Cushnahan, Ms Flanagan, Mr Gray, Mr Grimason, Mr Jardine, Mr McCartney, Mr McConnell, Dr Smyth, Mr Sweeney.**
- IN ATTENDANCE:**
- 18.10.04: Mr Higgins (Secretary), Mrs Armstrong, Mr Henry, Mr Johnston, Mr Losty, Mr Playfair, Mr Shannon.**
- 21.10.04: Mr Higgins (Secretary), Mrs Elliott, Mr Playfair**
- APOLOGIES: 18.10.04: Ms Flanagan,**

The meeting paid tribute to Mr Jardine for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Department, as Director of Economic Policy and Public Service and conveyed their best wishes on his transfer to the post of Deputy Secretary and Principal Establishment and Finance Officer, Department Of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

As there was insufficient time to cover items 4(d) and 5(b) and fully discuss items 3 (c) and 5 (a), at the 18 October meeting, the Board agreed to reconvene on 21 October to complete those items.

**1. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The summaries of the Departmental Board meeting held on 13 September were agreed as amended.

**2. Matters Arising**

Matters arising were dealt with under the appropriate agenda items below.

**3. Standing Items**

**(a) Assembly Issues**

Mr Johnston reported on the latest position in respect of the political Review Talks, restoration planning in the event of a devolved administration and related matters, including the legislative dimension, assembly and private office staffing matters. It was agreed that consideration would be given to arranging restoration planning meetings with Directors and linking that work into the senior management group meetings. **Action: Executive Secretariat.**

**(b) Departmental Board Forward Plan**

It was agreed that the focus in January and February 2005 should be on business planning and monitoring and the Forward Plan would be updated accordingly. **Action: Corporate Services Division.**

**(c) Finance, Accountability and Risk**

Mr Sweeney tabled an updated paper on (a) Outturn information which detailed expenditure against budget for April to August 2004; (b) In-Year September 2004 monitoring; (c) Budget 2004 financial allocations; and (d) the Department's Resource Accounts for the 2003-2004 financial year. The paper emphasised that the finalised Budget in December could give rise to further pressures within the

Department. Due to insufficient time further discussion on the paper was deferred to a reconvened meeting on 21 October Board.

At the 21 October meeting Mr Sweeney tabled a paper which provided a summary of draft budget efficiency savings and the primary resource areas for each Directorate. With regard to the Budget 2004 a further £1million per annum in 2005/06 and 2006/07 would have to be found in terms of efficiencies. It was agreed that a round of bi-lateral meetings would be arranged between the PEFO and certain Directors, to discuss efficiency savings. The outcome of the bi-laterals would be discussed at the next Departmental Board meeting at which Finance and Resource Management matters would be tabled as the first item on the agenda. **Action: Directors and Finance Branch.**

#### **4. Current Issues**

##### **(a) NI Bureau Washington**

Mr Losty provided an update on the strategy for the NI Bureau in Washington which outlined the purpose of the Bureau, its objectives, and future plans and working practices. Mr Losty explained that the Bureau's main objective was to present Northern Ireland as a confident, outwardly looking region and to develop a relationship with the United States that would be mutually beneficial.

Mr Losty provided detail on the working practices, influence, added value and the way forward for the Bureau. The Board noted and fully endorsed the Bureau's strategy for the way forward and congratulated the work of the Bureau which had earned an excellent reputation for the positive impact and added value of its work.

##### **(b) Internet Usage Monitoring**

Mr Henry provided the Board with an update on the purpose of monitoring Internet usage and the threats imposed by incorrect use of the internet. Threats included security (e.g. viruses and spy ware), legal (e.g.

inappropriate or illegal material), productivity (i.e. non work related use) and the disruption to networks and Information Technology resources.

His presentation covered implementation of "Surf Control", a monitoring facility which enables exclusive Departmental access reports on Internet usage. It was agreed that advice should be issued to all departmental staff on the use of the OFMDFM Internet and the purpose of Surf Control.

**Action: Personnel.**

### **(c) Redevelopment of the OFMDFM Website**

Mr Grimason tabled a paper on the redevelopment of the Department's website. A presentation was made by Mr Shannon and Ms Armstrong on improving the OFMDFM Web presence. The paper and presentation outlined deficiencies in OFMDFM's websites, summarised the new standards now being set for government websites, the work already underway to meet these standards, work still to be undertaken and offered some design and layout proposals for consideration by the Board.

The Board noted the new standards for NICS websites and approved the proposals for the development work to be taken forward by a Project Board led by Executive Information Service and Information Services Unit.

**Action: Executive Information Service and Information Services Unit**

### **(d) North South Issues**

It was agreed to defer an update by Dr Smyth on North South issues to the next meeting of the Board. **Action: Dr Smyth and Board Secretary.**

## **5. Papers**

### **(a) Staffing Position and Workforce Planning**

Mrs Angus tabled a paper which provided the Board with an update on the current staffing position, outlined the implications of the

budget for staffing numbers and arrangements for workforce planning and addressed the associated change management issues. As there was insufficient time for further discussion the paper was deferred to the reconvened Board meeting on 21 October.

At the 21 October meeting it was agreed that Directors would prioritise activities, and continue to review critically staffing needs in their own areas. In addition there would be regular collective review of priorities against workforce planning indicators which take into account the financial resources available and in the context of Budget 2004 and the reform agenda. It was agreed to give further immediate consideration to workforce planning as part of the round of Budget bilateral meetings between Directors and the PEFO. The outcome of the bi-laterals would be discussed at the next Departmental Board meeting. **Action: Directors.**

**(b) Business Plan 2004/05 First Quarter Progress Report**

At the 21 October meeting Mr Sweeney tabled a progress report on performance against commitments made in the Department's Business Plan for the period ending 30 June 2004. The Board noted the position in relation to the Business Plan performance targets for the first quarter of 2004-05.

**6. Tour de Table**

There were no updates from Directors.

**7. Any Other Business**

**(a) 2004 Christmas Card**

It was agreed to that the Blind Centre for Northern Ireland would be the nominated charity for the Department's 2004 Christmas card and that their logo would be included in the card. A supply of cards would be made available to each Directorate. **Action: Central Management Unit.**

**(b) Departmental Organisation Chart**

Mr Grimason presented a Departmental organisation chart which outlines the functional role and responsibilities at senior level for the approval of the Board. The aim of the chart was to provide staff with a clear guide to the Department's functions and responsibilities in the current context.

It was agreed that Directors would arrange for amendments in respect of their directorates to be forwarded to Central Management Unit. Executive Information Service would include the chart in the next edition of the Focus First magazine. **Action: Central Management Unit and Executive Information Service.**

**(c) Monthly Absence Report**

It was agreed that a copy of the Department's, "Sickness Absence Statistics" report would be provided for information and discussion to the Departmental Board on a quarterly basis. **Action: Corporate Services Division.**

**(d) Senior Civil Service (SCS) Performance Management System**

It was agreed that Directors would ensure that mid-year development reviews would take place in respect of SCS colleagues within their Directorates. Mr Hamilton advised that his office would contact Directors about that process and the completion of Career Development Profiles and mid-year reviews for all Directors. **Action: Directors.**

**8. Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday 8 November 2004 in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference room, Castle Buildings.

**MARK HIGGINS**

8 November 2004