

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING ON  
20 FEBRUARY 2004 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE AT 8.45 am – 10.45 am**

**Present:** Nigel Hamilton  
Will Haire  
Andrew McCormick  
Aideen McGinley  
Stephen Peover  
Stephen Quinn  
Bruce Robinson  
Eddie Rooney (on behalf of Gerry McGinn)  
Alan Shannon  
Pat Toal

**Apologies:** John Hunter  
Clive Gowdy  
Gerry McGinn  
David Watkins

**In Attendance:** Linda Brown } Agenda Item 3  
Stephen Grimason }  
Catherine Bell - Agenda Item 4  
Nigel McCormick - Agenda Item 5  
John McGrath - Agenda Item 6  
Pauline Boyle - Secretary

Nigel Hamilton welcomed Eddie Rooney and John McGrath to the meeting.

**1. Minutes and Summary**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February were agreed.

**2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**3. Industrial Action Update**

PSG reviewed the current situation and Mrs Brown updated PSG on strike action.

#### 4. **Review of Further Education**

Catherine Bell gave a presentation on the Review of Further Education. She gave a full read-out of work done so far in preparing a document which will be launched on 3 March 2004 with consultation until 30 June 2004.

PSG gave very strong and warm support to this Review and acknowledged Catherine's involvement. They welcomed the diverse range of areas for consultation and also suggested Jane Kennedy's launch speech and Press Release could emphasise that further education is enjoyable and fun.

#### 5. **Customer Service Standards**

Nigel McCormick gave an update on work to date on customer service standards and invited PSG to endorse these 9 key standards with a view to implementing throughout Departments. After roundtable discussion, PSG agreed with the approach which colleagues were asked to take back to their Departments for discussion. Nigel McCormick would write again to Permanent Secretaries asking for further comments.

**[Action: Nigel McCormick]**

#### 6. **Pathways for Change**

John McGrath, Chair of the Taskforce on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector, joined the meeting for this item. A position paper had been circulated in December 2003 inviting comment and promote debate. He reported the view of Taskforce members that Government were key players and needed to be engaged in the consultation process. He offered individual presentations to each Department. After discussion, PSG agreed the best way forward would be a collective Departmental response. The Taskforce would give a presentation to an inter-Departmental group and Nigel Hamilton suggested that Paul Sweeney, OFMDFM, chair this group and co-ordinate a corporate response.

#### 7. **Tour de Table**

##### PQs – Performance

Nigel Hamilton circulated Deirdre Griffiths' memo of 19 February to colleagues and noted the continued work across Departments on answering PQs properly. PQ co-ordinators met on 13 February and Departmental performance was discussed.

##### Fallen animals

Pat Toal reported on the position of fallen animals.

##### Avian Influenza

Pat Toal reported further on Avian Influenza in Thailand.

## Public Appointments

Will Haire reported that a working group would be set up on how to deal with public appointments. Dame Rennie Fritchie is willing to be a member of this group and Will Haire will write to Nigel Hamilton.

**[Action: Will Haire]**

## POBAL

DCAL officials had previously offered to meet POBAL to discuss the courses and will follow up. The matter of training to meet Charter regulations is on the Agenda for the next meeting of the inter-departmental group.

## Architecture

DFP have seconded an architect to DCAL to develop architectural policy across government and DCAL will write to Permanent Secretary colleagues to invite nominations to a working group.

## Budget

Andrew McCormick gave an update on Budget allocations. He would report at next week's PSG the repercussive issues of policy developments.

Eddie Rooney reported that Katrina Godfrey will take up post in March as Head of Resource Allocations in DE.

HOCS highlighted the need to strengthen the system of notifying staff of senior appointments – HOCS to speak to John Hunter.

**[Action: HOCS]**

## Victoria Square

Alan Shannon gave a read-out of the recent court case, in relation to the Victoria Square development.

## West Belfast

Alan Shannon reported on the West Belfast event which the Taoiseach attended recently.

## Herdman's Mill

Bruce Robinson reported on the Herdman's Mills redundancies.

## 8. **Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 27 February 2004