

**SUMMARY OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING – FRIDAY
21 NOVEMBER 2003 IN STORMONT CASTLE, GD.10, AT 8.45 am – 11.10 am**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
John Hunter
Andrew McCormick
Gerry McGinn
Stephen Peover
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Pat Toal
Carol Moore (for Aideen McGinley)
Paul Simpson (for Clive Gowdy)
Chris Thompson

Apologies: Aideen McGinley
Clive Gowdy
Will Haire
David Watkins

In Attendance: Nigel McCormick
Katrina Godfrey
Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Grimason
Kathryn Menary (Secretary)

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of 14 November were agreed.

2. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

3. **Presentation on Reform**

Mr Hamilton introduced Mr McCormick and Mrs Godfrey inviting Mr McCormick to make a presentation on reform. He explained that PSRU had been actively working with all Departments on refining the reform and modernisation agenda since PSG last considered reform on 24th June.

Mr Haire had circulated a paper to PSG members on 18th November and Mr McCormick's PowerPoint presentation built on this paper outlining the challenges and structure of the programme of reform.

Mr Hamilton expressed his personal commitment and support for the reform agenda, opening discussion on the issue. Following comments from all

members, Mr Hamilton summarised the discussion highlighting that leadership for improving public services must come from PSG. He asked that PSRU consider the comments of the meeting and report back again to PSG.

4. **Purdah and Elections Update**

Mrs Flanagan advised PSG on the Election Business Committee and the purdah period. Mr Hamilton asked that all members pass on thanks to their staff for their efforts during the purdah period.

[Action: All members]

Mr Toal asked about the recalling of Assembly staff and it was explained that a small number would be required to make preparations for the Assembly's return. It was requested that Mrs Flanagan should investigate what staff that were not seconded have done over the last year and report back to PSG.

[Action: Mrs Flanagan]

Members were advised that guidance to Departments was currently being drafted and would be issued on the Monday following the elections.

Mr Grimason advised that it was likely to be Friday lunchtime before the results of the election would be available.

It was agreed that members would prepare First Day Briefs and have papers up-to-date for next week.

[Action: Members]

5. **N+2 Update**

Mr McCormick reported that there had been no developments further to the previous week's discussion, but that further consideration was underway particularly with DEL.

6. **Herdmans Mill**

Mr Peover observed that PSG members had seen his note of 17 November and reported that he had visited the Mills last week and felt this was an interesting project especially from an environmental/ heritage point of view.

It was agreed that all members with an interest were supportive in principle and due to the involvement from more than one Department it was accepted that a single point of contact should be established. Stephen Peover agreed to remain as this contact.

[Action: Mr Peover]

7. **HOCS Submission of 17/11 – HCS/1622/03**

All members indicated that they were content with contents of Mr Hamilton's submission and the proposed post.

8. **Tour de Table**

NI Hospice

Mr Simpson updated PSG members on progress surrounding the Hospice issues.

Costello

Mr McGinn reported that the Costello Group report would be completed by Friday 28th November.

Derry City Airport

Mr Quinn reported that Ministers John Spellar and Ian Pearson had a useful discussion on 19th November regarding Derry City Airport. He noted that the Economic Appraisal of the project had not yet been received.

Selection and Training Issues

Mr Hunter remarked on a good response to the graduate recruitment applications despite having raised the criteria from a 2:2 to a 2:1 degree.

Phoenix Gas

Mr Robinson reported that Phoenix Gas were to sell 75% of shares to East Surrey Holdings and this transaction would be announced in today's press. He also noted that Sir Gerry Loughran would be taking over as Chairman of Phoenix Gas following the retirement of Patrick Montgomery.

Lord Laird

Mrs Moore highlighted that Lord Laird was currently responsible for 27% of House of Lords Questions, many of which were repetitive. Several related issues were discussed.

Review of National Lottery

Mrs Moore commented that the draft reply to this review was currently being circulated and asked for all responses by 28th November. She outlined that the thrust of the reply gave a broad welcome to the review whilst asking the organisation to ensure that Northern Ireland aspects were taken into account.

Further Education Strategy

Mr Shannon pointed out that the draft FE Strategy paper would be circulated shortly to the 6 Departments involved. He highlighted that the main recommendation would be that the 16 FE colleges should be primarily about economic development.

Business in the Community Organisation

The meeting briefly discussed membership of and relationships with BIC. Mr Hamilton agreed to send out a note to colleagues asking that no further subscriptions should be made or action taken until the item was tabled for discussion at PSG.

**[Action: Secretary (to place on agenda)]
[Mr Hamilton (to send note)]**

National Training Awards Ceremony

Mr Shannon reported that Northern Ireland sent 9 people to the finals at Guildhall in London this year and out of the 16 finalists, 3 were from Northern Ireland, including St Anne's in Derry and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

Special Ministerial

Mr Hamilton reported that he would be meeting with the Secretary of State and Ministers with the exception of Mr Pearson on Monday 24 November.

Date of next meeting- 28th November 2003.

KATHRYN MENARY
21 November 2003