

**SUMMARY OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT MEETING  
ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2004**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Mr Hamilton (chair) Ms Bunting Mrs Cummins Mr Finegan Mr Gamble Mr Johnston Mr McCartney Mr McCluggage Mr McCormick Ms McGivern Dr Mulligan Mr Rogers Mr Simpson Mr Stewart Mr Sweeney Miss Wilson</b>	<b>APOLOGIES: Mrs Angus Ms Flanagan Mr Gray Dr Griffith Mr Grimason Mr Jackson Mr Jardine Mr McConnell Mr Shannon Dr Smyth</b>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	<b>Mr Higgins (secretary)</b>	

**1. Summary of last meeting**

The summary of the Senior Management Group meeting held on 16 August was noted and amendments agreed.

**2. Assembly Issues**

A general discussion took place on the inter-party talks in Leeds Castle in Kent, between 16 and 18 September. The talks had been businesslike and productive and the challenge now is to produce a set of proposals that will command general acceptance from the Parties. The Board would discuss any emerging issues for the Department at future meetings.

**3. Budget 2004**

Mr Sweeney tabled a paper for the information of the senior management group which outlined potential efficiency savings and bids for all spending areas of the Department for the planning period,

2005-06; 2006-07 and 2007-08. Mr Sweeney emphasised that Departments were required to provide efficiency savings of 2 ½ % in each year of the planning period and 1% of the Department's annual budget would be identified as potential options for reductions, as requested by DFP for all Departments, and with due regard to areas where there may be budgetary discretions. A further £1m per annum in 2005/06 and 2006/07 would have to be found in terms of efficiencies. In the first instance this will be identified on a pro rata basis.

#### **4. OFMDFM Equality Scheme Progress Report & 2003-04 Annual Report to the Equality Commission NI (ECNI)**

Ms Bunting provided an update on the above reports which had been finalised. The 2003-04 Annual Report to the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) had been cleared by the Minister and the Departmental Board and the final version forwarded to the ECNI. The Equality Scheme Progress Report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2004 was noted by the Departmental Board who agreed that equality obligations should be reflected in the business objectives of key staff particularly those with policy/ strategy development responsibilities.

#### **5. Tour de Table**

- a) Mr McCluggage advised that a Cabinet Office group has been established under the Central Sponsor for Information Assurance (CSIA) to examine information risk management issues and each Department has nominated a Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) for coordinating departmental information risk management activities. Mr McCluggage is the nominated Northern Ireland Civil Service SIRO.
- b) Miss Wilson updated the board on the draft Priorities and Budget 2005 -2008 document which would be published for consultation

on 6 October and ongoing work by the Strategic Investment Board.

- c) Mr Finnegan provided an update on the Review of Public Administration and advised that Minister Ian Pearson has been working with the main political parties and other key stakeholders towards achieving a broad consensus on the new shape of public administration in Northern Ireland with a view to publishing firm proposals for consultation in autumn 2004.
- d) Mr Mulligan reported that public consultations were ongoing in respect of an Older People strategy, New Targeting Social Need policies and had been completed for a Gender Equality strategy. He also updated the meeting on disability issues and new disability legislation introduced by the Irish government which may generate interest in Northern Ireland.
- e) Ms McGivern updated the meeting on the current position in respect of a Disability Order in Council which has been delayed and explained that a series of regional seminars has been organised as part of the ongoing public consultation on the Single Equality Bill.
- f) Mr Stewart updated the meeting on developments with the Maze Reinvestment and Reform Initiative site and the build heritage of the site.
- g) Mr McCormick gave an update on progress in the Electronic Data Records Management (EDRM) systems Infrastructure Project which has now selected a product. This will enable the lead implementations (including OFMDFM) to proceed shortly. He also gave an update on the ongoing work in respect of preparations for the introduction Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation in January 2005. It was emphasised that the Departmental Board has stipulated that attendance at FOI training sessions would be mandatory for key staff.

- h) Mr Simpson provided some information about a series of FOI information seminars being organised by the Information Management Unit and advised that the Departmental Board had agreed that attendance for all staff should be regarded as mandatory. He updated the meeting on the Review of the Office of the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints and explained that preparatory work had begun on a consultation exercise which could then proceed following restoration of a devolved administration. He also advised that the Department's draft Public Service Agreement (PSA) had been submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel for inclusion in the draft Priorities and Budget 2004 document and that this marked the starting point for the development of the Department's 2005-2006 business plan.
- i) Mr Rogers updated the meeting on a tracking system which the Machinery of Government division has introduced to monitor the progress made by Departments in answering Parliamentary Questions.
- j) Mr McCartney updated the meeting on a Judicial Review case in respect of nationality.
- k) Mrs Cummins reported on progress on Phase 2 of the development plan for the Crumlin Road Gaol site and further work on the Community Capacity Building programme for North Belfast.

## **5. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 26 October 2004 commencing at 9.30 a.m. in the Conference Room E4.18 Castle Buildings.

MARK HIGGINS

30 September 2004