

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING  
HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE  
AT 8.45 am**

**Present:** Nigel Hamilton  
Clive Gowdy  
Will Haire  
John Hunter  
Noel Lavery  
Andrew McCormick  
Aideen McGinley  
Gerry McGinn  
Stephen Peover  
Stephen Quinn  
Alan Shannon  
Pat Toal

**In Attendance:** Rosalie Flanagan  
Stephen Grimason  
David Thomson } Agenda Items 3-7  
Derek Lynn }  
John Dowdall } Agenda Item 3  
Kieran Donnelly }  
Debbie Sweeney – Secretary

**Apologies:** Nick Perry  
Bruce Robinson

**1. Minutes and Summary**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November were agreed.

**2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**3. John Dowdall Visit**

Mr Hamilton invited Mr Dowdall and Mr Donnelly to give an overview of the resource accounts and PAC. Mr Dowdall confirmed that this was the third year in which Departmental accounts had been prepared on a resource basis. The new style accounts now provide more information about Departments and their activities.

Mr Dowdall thanked Mr Hamilton and those involved in the successful PAC visit and dinner.

Mr Dowdall said he had attended a NIO Seminar at which Sir Robert Smith spoke on his experiences both in private and public in the audit field, particularly on a number of Audit Committees. Mr Dowdall said consideration should be given to a NI workshop/Seminar.

#### 4. **Restoration Planning**

Mrs Flanagan updated PSG on the possibility of restoration. She confirmed if an announcement was made, a special Departmental Representatives' meeting would be organised.

Mr Hamilton said that restoration could have a knock-on effect on the Legislative Programme. Mr Hamilton has agreed with Mr Gray that any incomplete instructions received by OLC would be returned to the relevant Permanent Secretary.

#### 5. **Corporate Governance**

Mr Thomson said that HM Treasury had been examining corporate governance issues in government departments. Providing Ministers are content, the code will be issued in Whitehall under a DAO and followed by DFP with a NI version. Mr Thomson suggested an event organised in early Spring along the lines of the NIO Seminar at which audit would be discussed.

**[Action: Mr Thomson]**

#### 6. **Finance Directors**

Mr Thomson referred to his paper on strengthening the finance function in Departments and the role of the Finance Director.

PSG discussed the FD role and it was agreed that Mr Hunter and Dr McCormick would carry out further work on the role and the subject would be discussed at a future PSG meeting.

**[Action: Mr Hunter/Dr McCormick]**

#### 7. **Big Lottery Fund**

Dr McGinley introduced her paper on the Big Lottery Fund Regional Outcomes and Priorities. There were over 150 suggestions from Departments and these have been condensed into four broad outcomes and priorities. PSG were broadly content with the suggested outcomes and indicative priorities, and it was agreed any further comments should be directed to Dr McGinley by Monday 29 November.

**[Action: PSG]**

#### 8. **Tour de Table**

##### Waiting List Report

Mr Gowdy said the Hospital Waiting List Report had been published and had attracted media attention.

### Education Boards

Mr McGinn updated PSG on the Education Boards.

### Herdmans Mill

Mr Shannon said a submission had gone to Ministers and he and Mr Quinn would be meeting with the Trust on Monday 29 November.

### Finance

Dr McCormick updated PSG on finance issues. Mr Pearson would raise the matter at the Good Governance meeting on 1 December.

### ISNI

Dr McCormick said he would ask Mr Pearson to update Mr Spellar on ISNI at the Good Governance meeting.

**[Action: Dr McCormick]**

### Belfast City Council Visit

Mr Hamilton updated PSG on the Secretary of State's visit to Belfast City Council on Monday 22 November.

### PSG 3 and 10 December

PSG on 3 December will not be a SCS Management Issues meeting; this will now take place on 10 December. The meeting on 3 December will cover FOI Update, some budget matters and Honours.

**DEBBIE SWEENEY**  
**29 November 2004**