

**SUMMARY OF OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 6 JANUARY 2003**

PRESENT: Mr Hamilton, Mr Haire, Mr Gray, Ms Flanagan,
Mr McConnell, Mr Jardine, Mr Grimason, Dr Smyth,
Mrs Bunting, Mr McCartney, Mrs Angus.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss Dullaghan, Mr Ferguson (Secretary).

APOLOGIES: None

Mr Hamilton welcomed members to the first Departmental Board meeting of 2003 and thanked them and all their staff for their efforts during the first three months of his tenure as both Head of OFMDFM and Head of the Civil Service.

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the Departmental Board meeting on 16 December 2002 were noted and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Service Delivery Agreement – Quarterly Return

The Board noted that this issue was being carried forward from the last meeting and was included on the agenda under item 4.

Joint Board meeting – OFMDFM and NIO

The Board noted that a meeting between the OFMDFM and NIO Departmental Boards had been arranged for Thursday 23 January 2003 at 11.30am in the Conference Room on the fourth floor of Block E in Castle Buildings. Mr Hamilton asked that all Directors attend.

[Action: Directors]

3. Standing Items

a) Direct Rule including Assembly Issues

The Board noted the latest position in relation to the appointment of former Special Advisors. Ms Flanagan also updated the Board on a number of North/South issues and on the review of salaries and allowances in the Assembly, which was being put back until the end of February 2003 for further consideration.

b) Staffing and Finance Issues

The Board discussed a position paper circulated by Mr Haire on staffing numbers within the Department. A range of issues and pressures within the Department were considered and it was agreed that Directors would critically examine current staffing levels and forward reports on their respective Directorates to Mr Haire by 20 January 2003.

c) Information Issues

Mr Grimason updated the Board on a number of information issues, such as rating policy and the strategic investment body, which will need to be addressed during the forthcoming months

4. Papers

a) SDA Quarterly Report

The Board had previously noted the contents of a report from Mrs Angus in relation to targets contained in the Department's Service Delivery Agreement for the first and second quarters of 2002/03. It was agreed that the monitoring return for the third quarter would be circulated to Directors and Heads of Divisions and would be used to identify any substantive targets that may not be achieved by 31 March 2003. Position to be reviewed at the Board meeting on 20 January 2003.

[Action: Directors]

b) Public Accounts Committee – NI Tourist Board

The Board noted a letter from the Treasury Officer of Accounts highlighting a number of issues raised by the Public Accounts Committee in its report on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board that are relevant to all Departments. Mr Hamilton asked Directors to note three key points relating to the accuracy of information in NIAO Reports, the disclosure of hospitality expenditure in accounts and appointments to the boards of public bodies and ensure these were brought to the attention of all sponsored bodies.

5. Tour de Table

- Mr Grimason updated the Board on his Directorates application for the Investors in People Award;
- Mr Gray reported that his Directorate was on course to deliver most of the legislative programme by February 2003;
- Mrs Angus reminded colleagues that the draft SDA for OFMDFM was currently with Directors and Heads of Divisions for comment and asked that the deadline for responses be adhered to;
- Mr Jardine advised colleagues that the consultation period on the strategic investment body had been completed and that an order in council was currently with Ministers for approval. Mr Jardine also advised that Ministerial agreement had been received to advertise the post of Head of the Washington Bureau;
- Dr Smyth updated colleagues on management and staffing issues within the North / South Ministerial Council;
- Mr McConnell reported that a submission had been forwarded to the Secretary of State in relation to consultation on the Review of Public Administration;
- Ms Bunting reported that following a series of meetings and discussions several papers, including the Children’s Commissioner Bill, had been cleared with advisers. Ms Bunting also reported that discussions were continuing on the Community Relations consultation paper, which should be cleared soon.

- Ms Flanagan raised concerns that some of the staff seconded temporarily from Private Offices during suspension might not wish to return there upon restoration of devolution and that vacancies In Private Offices following some permanent staff transfers might be difficult to fill. It was agreed that secondee staff would be required to return on restoration of devolution.

6. Any Other Business

Mr Hamilton indicated that he would not be able to attend the Board meeting on 13 January and that Mr Haire would chair in his absence.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Departmental Board will be on Monday 13 January 2003 at 10.45 am.

Michael Ferguson

10 January 2003.