

Colm Shannon - Speaking note for presentation to Advertising Agencies Friday
23rd November

- Welcome and good afternoon. If you don't know me my name is Colm Shannon. I am Deputy Director of Communications for the Executive Information Service.
- Before I set out the purpose of today's briefing I would like to introduce my colleagues – Lorna Armstrong, Manager of the Government's Advertising Unit and Tom Gilgunn from the Central Procurement Directorate.
- Today's meeting is in preparation for the new framework and to take you through the changes to the protocol.
- We plan to cover the following areas:

Colm Shannon – Introduction and purpose

Tom Gilgunn – What a framework is

Colm Shannon – Overview of Protocol

Lorna Armstrong – Changes to the Protocol

Questions and Answers

- Present here today are agencies on the current framework. Given that we are about to embark on a new framework process, a number of other agencies interested in doing business with government are also in attendance. This is in line with procurement guidelines.
- For the agencies that are not used to doing business with government it might be useful if I explain a little bit about how we operate.
- All central government advertising is managed through Lorna Armstrong's team – the government-advertising unit (some of the staff are here today). They manage the advertising for the 11 government departments and their executive agencies. Although we work with the Central Procurement Directorate to develop the advertising framework it is important to stress that we only directly manage contracts on behalf of central government. For example, we don't directly manage District Councils, however we do have a role in promoting best practice across the wider public sector and this is firmly on our agenda.
- Government advertising in Northern Ireland is procured through a framework contract. This is a European wide procurement exercise. The agencies which are successful in this exercise, then have the opportunity to tender for government advertising through secondary competitions. Perhaps at this point it would be helpful for Tom to explain

what a framework is and take you through that and then I will pick up on the issue of the protocol.

Tom Gilgunn

- Thank you Tom. Back to how we operate in Northern Ireland. Tom has taken you through how a framework works. Everyone on the framework is entitled to tender for the secondary competitions which we run. At present we have a protocol in place which governs secondary competitions. This was introduced to create a greater level of consistency and this afternoon we will take you through some of the changes to the protocol.
- Lorna will take you through the detail of the changes however, before she begins I would like to take you through some of the high level issues which have been raised by agencies and the IPA and tell you how we are addressing them.
- The points you raised broadly fall into the following areas
 - Briefing
 - Objective setting
 - Timescales
 - Evaluation
 - Costs

- Taking the first of these the issue of briefing and the comments we have received. We have been working closely with our departments on the issue of briefing to ensure that you are provided with as much information as is possible. The approach we use is the approach advocated by the IPA briefing template. Since 1st April when the advertising unit was established it has been working with business areas in government to ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken to the issue of briefing. It is part of a process of change and it is our aim to ensure that you receive the maximum amount of information that you need.
- In relation to objective setting, I think we have made significant improvements in this area. One of our key aims is to address and improve the objectives that are set for campaigns. Establishing measurable objectives for government campaigns is challenging – trying to establish objectives for a government campaign on mental health is a bit more difficult than a campaign to get people to fly to Barcelona on Easy Jet..
- But it is not impossible. We are determined to deliver on the progress we have made in this area. Clear measurable objectives will be set for all government campaigns

- On the issue of timescales, the protocol sets out minimum times. With one or two exceptions, no brief coming from central government has set timescales outside these guidelines. It is our intention to keep to the timescales and, if possible, allow longer.
- You also raised the issue of timescales for implementation of campaigns. I have said before I am well aware that on occasions it is too short. The issue of forward planning is something we are trying to address, indeed this week Lorna and I have started a series of meetings with senior officials in departments to identify advertising requirements for 08/09 and beyond so that we can begin planning these earlier than would previously have happened. It is about changing the culture of the public sector, which takes time.
- The final issue on timescales was that you felt the time for stage 2 presentations was too short. We have changed this and Lorna will have some good news on this point both in terms of the length of time for your presentation and additional time for discussion.
- Under evaluation you raised the issue of understanding the creative process and lack of skills of the panel. One of the fundamental reasons for creating the central advertising unit was to ensure that there would always be someone on a panel with the necessary knowledge and

experience. We will always have a senior official from the advertising unit on the panel.

- However I would stress that there is also an onus on an agency to be able to sell their creative concept. When you are presenting your creative at presentation stage you must be able to demonstrate your thinking and rationale behind the creative approach.
- You also raised concerns about the balance of marks between creative media and the rest of the protocol. We taken this into account and Lorna will take you through the changes.
- Finally, before I pass over the Lorna I will cover the issue of costs. Tom in his presentation has made it clear that cost must be assessed. I have had some discussions with a number of you over the last couple of months about the issue of moving to a fee-based model. We have also examined the IPA remuneration guide and conducted wider research into potential models.
- At this stage, we do not propose to move to a fee based approach, we have however made some changes to the cost model. These changes are based on some modelling undertaken by the unit and reflect the way many of you are presenting your cost information.

- Lorna will take you through the changes in a moment but would I would say is that we will keep the idea of a fee based approach on the agenda for future frameworks. I am happy to discuss this issue further when we get to the Q&A but I would now like to hand you over to Lorna who will take you through the detail.
- Thank you Lorna
- Today's meeting is part of a process, which started a number of years ago with the purpose of delivering a more consistent approach to the procurement of government advertising. We asked for your views on how we could fine tune and improve our approach and I would like to thank you for the positive and comments you made. The revised approach has been developed exclusively by Lorna's team and we believe that the changes reflect the comments we received.
- Happy to take questions. If you could give your name and your company.