

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING  
ON 9 MAY 2005**

**PRESENT:** Nigel Hamilton (Chair), Dorothy Angus,  
Mary Bunting, Frank Cushnahan,  
Rosalie Flanagan, George Gray, Stephen  
Grimason, Denis McCartney, Greg McConnell,  
Peter Smyth, Paul Sweeney.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Aubrey Playfair, Chris Stewart, Mark Higgins  
(Secretary).

**APOLOGIES:** None

Mr Hamilton chaired the meeting for items 1 to 3 (d) and Mr McConnell chaired the remainder of the meeting in Mr Hamilton's absence on other business.

**Minutes of Last Meeting**

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 April were agreed as amended.

**Matters Arising**

2. There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

**Standing Items**

**Assembly Issues**

3. Rosalie Flanagan advised that following the General Election the Prime Minister had appointed a new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Peter Hain MP who remains Secretary of State for Wales. An announcement was expected shortly on a new junior Ministerial team and new Ministerial portfolios.

**Departmental Board Forward Plan**

4. The Board noted the latest updates on the Forward Plan and agreed changes to the scheduling of two items, from June to September, i.e. (a) Protective Security in the NICS and (b) North Belfast. The Plan would be updated accordingly. **Action: Central Management Unit.**

### **Finance, Accountability and Risk**

5. Paul Sweeney tabled a paper with (a) a report detailing outturn against expenditure, split by Directorate, between administration and resource costs for the full financial year 2004-05; (b) a report detailing, for comparison purposes, expenditure against budget for the last three financial years; and (c) Priorities & Budget 2006-08 and In-year Monitoring 2005-06. The Board discussed outturn information and noted that the overall percentage of underspend for the current year was an improvement over previous years. The Board also noted a paper from Central Finance Group, DFP on their assessment of the Priorities and Budget 2006-08 exercise and In-Year Monitoring for the 2005 – 06 financial year.
6. Nigel Hamilton advised that the Permanent Secretary Group had approved the appointment of Jackie Kerr as Director of Finance for the Department with effect from the 24 May 2005.

### **Freedom of Information**

7. Dorothy Angus provided a brief analysis of FOI requests received and processed to date by the Department. Mrs Angus advised that requests were being processed in line with legislative guidelines and timescales and that the department's performance compared favourably with the performance of other Departments.

### **Current Issues**

#### **Business Plan 2005-06**

8. Paul Sweeney advised the Board that a final draft of the 2005-06 Business Plan was being tabled for ratification by the Board. It was agreed that minor amendments should be provided as soon as

possible to ensure that the Plan could be submitted for Ministerial approval, probably within the next week. The Board discussed the business planning process and the Department's input to the preparation of the Priorities and Budget 2005-08 document. It was agreed that a sub-group of members would review those business planning processes before the 13 June Departmental Board meeting. **Action: Business Plan Sub-Group and Central Management Unit.**

### **International Issues**

9. Paul Sweeney provided an update on the work of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive, Brussels and Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington DC. He outlined the core mission, strategic objectives and key issues for each office. The Board noted the work being undertaken in both offices to ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are fully represented and productive relations are developed with key stakeholders.

### **Audit of Policy Making and Legislation Capacity**

10. Chris Stewart presented a summary of a report which represents the Department's input to a Northern Ireland Civil Service policy audit exercise being taken forward by the Policy Innovation Unit on behalf of the Permanent Secretary Group (D). Mary Bunting advised that while the report's recommendation to amalgamate the work of the Department's researchers and economists to form an 'analysis unit' would be acceptable in the context of the Department developing a high level policy/strategy unit, at this stage the current research workload was fully stretched and amalgamation of those functions would not be feasible. The Board also took account of a paper submitted by Dorothy Angus which addressed the audit report recommendation concerning staff development and the greater interchange of staff between OFMDFM and other departments.

11. The Board endorsed the report's recommendations and, taking account of Dorothy Angus' paper and the points outlined above, agreed that it should be submitted to Permanent Secretary Group (D) as the Department's input to the audit exercise. **Action: Chris Stewart.**

## **Papers**

### **Team Brief**

12. The Board agreed a number of amendments to the May Departmental Brief for the purposes of initiating the Team Briefing process within the Department. It was agreed to include material for the, "Political Developments " section of the Brief as soon as the new Secretary of State's Ministerial team and Ministerial portfolios were known.

### **Tour de Table**

13. Dorothy Angus provided an update on the progress on the Electronic Human Resource (eHR) programme and the Electronic Document Record Management (EDRM) system. A repeat of the EDRM breakout session provided at the 2005 Staff Conference would be available to staff in the near future.
14. Paul Sweeney provided an update on the current position regarding the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI) Maze site. He also referred to a review of interfaces between the role of OFMDFM, DFP and DSD.
15. Mary Bunting referred to a number of Equality Directorate key policies and strategies which would be included in the First Day Brief for a new Minister, including New TSN/Anti Poverty Strategy; Disability Discrimination Order; strategy for children and young people; A Shared Future; Racial Equality Strategy; policy on Victims and Survivors including proposals for a Victims Commissioner; and the Single Equality Bill.
16. Greg McConnell advised that the Review of Public Administration

Directorate would be assessed for Investors in People accreditation later in the week.

17. Rosalie Flanagan provided an update on North/ South issues and related matters.

#### **Any Other Business**

18. No items were raised under Any Other Business.

#### **Date of Next meeting**

19. The next Departmental Board meeting on Monday 13 June 2005. would be extended to 4.00 p.m. to discuss the Department's approach to business planning. It would follow immediately after the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting scheduled to commence at 9.15a.m and a venue for both meetings would be notified to Board members.

**Mark Higgins**  
**17 May 2005**