

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 13 MAY 2008**

PRESENT: John McMillen (Chair), Mary Bunting,
Frank Cushnahan, Rosalie Flanagan, George Gray,
Stephen Grimason, Jackie Kerr and Deirdre Kenny.

IN ATTENDANCE: Joe Beattie (Information Technology Unit; for item on
Business Planning IT application) Mark Higgins
(Secretary) and Gerry Mulligan (deputising for Eddie
Rooney).

APOLOGIES: Sir Nigel Hamilton and Eddie Rooney.

Minutes of Last Meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 9.4.08 were agreed as amended.

Matters Arising

2. Outstanding action points arising from previous meetings were discussed and amendments agreed. An updated action points table would be completed and issued with the draft minutes of the 13 May 2008 meeting. **Action: Board Secretary.**

Business Planning Application

3. Joe Beattie, Head of Information Technology Unit presented a draft business planning IT application, which the Board had asked is considered for monitoring the performance against the Department's 2008-09 Business Plan. Joe explained that the adoption of a DFP model, tailored to meet OFMDFM's requirements, provided the best option for an application, at no cost to the Department.

4. Mr Beattie explained that the application required each Directorate to nominate a business plan co-ordinator to act as single point of contact for the business targets owned by that directorate with a single owner (normally at Director level) and an "individual responsible" for monitoring and reporting performance. For smaller directorates the owner and individual responsible may be the one person. The system can accommodate the balanced scorecard methodology for the 2008-09 business plan and the Department's Corporate Risk Register to assist in the management of risk.
5. The Board discussed the application and the importance of ensuring effective quality assurance to challenge performance reporting for business plan targets. The Board noted the current constraints in finalising the application as the 2008-09 Business Plan had not yet been approved by Ministers and a corporate risk register for 2008-09 had not been completed.
6. Members concurred that an application of the type presented would be beneficial in facilitating the Board's strategic role in business plan monitoring with regularly monthly reports, by exception, to the Board on performance against targets. It was agreed that Joe Beattie would finalise an appropriate application and members would be consulted further before a final option was approved by the Board. **Action: Joe Beattie.**

HRConnect

7. Deirdre Kenny provided an update on HRConnect services and progress to date, forthcoming releases, benefits of that reform project and supporting implementation of the project. Deirdre provided detail on the next phase of releases which

included Performance Management and Learning & Development in May to June 2008; Vacancy Management around the same period; Non-Industrial Payroll and Absence & Absence Management in July to August 2008 and Industrial Payroll & Absence Management around that period also.

8. The Board noted that progress to date on the roll out of the various releases for this project had worked well. Members agreed that it was important for the Board and senior managers to show leadership and ensure the continued successful implementation of HRConnect by releasing staff for relevant training, especially those who acted as "super-users" and to accommodate the planned face to face training for line managers.

Executive Business

9. Rosalie Flanagan reported that Executive meetings had been arranged for the 15 and 22 May 2008. Mrs Flanagan also advised that an analysis of Departmental punctuality in answering Assembly Questions (AQs) has been produced by the Assembly and Sir Nigel Hamilton has commissioned an internal priority review of performance of Northern Ireland Departments in answering AQs. An analysis of the performance of OFMDFM in responding to AQs showed that there was room for improvement.
10. Rosalie Flanagan advised that she has commissioned a detailed analysis of Directorate performance for AQs within the Department. That analysis and the proposals emanating from the report on priority review of AQ performance will be used to identify potential bottle necks and pressure points and so develop solutions to address potential delays.

Transition to New FM

11. The Board noted that Central Management Unit has commissioned returns for a First Day Brief for the new First Minister. The Brief will follow a new format intended to provide a short summary of the key issues which are crucial to the First Minister in his first week in office, and a second more comprehensive document containing background information which he can read within a longer timescale and use as reference material.

OFMDFM Organisational Review

12. Jackie Kerr presented the outcome of the efficiency savings / review of structures and functions exercise which included Directors' proposals for their business areas. Several options were presented for the Board's consideration and it was agreed that Directors would provide feedback to Jackie Kerr on their views for each option. A sub-group to include Jackie Kerr, Rosalie Flanagan, John McMillen and Eddie Rooney would then take this work forward in consultation with Minister's special advisers. **Action: John McMillen to lead.**

Operational Plan 2007-08: Annual Outturn Report

13. The Board noted, for their approval, a draft Annual Outturn Report on the 2007-08 Operational Plan which outlines progress and provides detail on performance for the financial year April 2007 to March 2008. Jackie Kerr advised that the Department's Resource Accounts 2007-08: Annual Report should include, as an NIAO requirement, explanations for those PSA targets that were not achieved or were partially achieved with performance reported through the 2007-08

Operational Plan business targets. It was agreed that Directors would provide final comment on those outputs and outcomes that had not been achieved by the target date and a revised report would be provided to the Board. **Action: Deirdre Kenny.**

Departmental Business Plan 2008-09

14. The Board noted that the draft Departmental Business Plan for 2008-09 had not yet been cleared by Ministers. Deirdre Kenny advised that DETI is seeking confirmation that Departments have fulfilled their commitments to Better Regulation by reflecting that in their business planning. It was agreed that a target on Impact Assessments undertaken in the Department would be reflected in the balanced scorecard objective, BP1.1, "To continuously improve the way we deliver our business".
Action: Deirdre Kenny.

Legislative Programme 2008-11

15. Deidre Kenny advised that the First Minister and deputy First Minister have written to Ministerial colleagues to seek their bids for the introduction of Bills in the 2008/2009 Assembly Session and markers for 2009/2010 with responses due by the end of May. One bid had been provided in respect of the Commissioner for Older People and a marker was proposed for the Race Relations Order. John McMillen advised that the Review of the Ombudsman's Office should be included as a marker. It was agreed that the bid for the Commissioner for Older People bid and markers for the Race Relations Order and Review of the Ombudsman's Office would be included in the submission to Ministers. **Action: Deirdre Kenny.**

Forward Plan

16. The Board noted an updated Forward Plan and members provided further items for inclusion in the plan to December 2008. It was also agreed to include an item in the Plan for the June meeting for members to consider holding a Board strategic planning day later in the year. **Action: Secretary.**
17. The focus of proposed strategic planning day would be on key strategic issues in the context of a new First Minister, Head of the Civil Service /OFMDFM Permanent Secretary and the ongoing organisational review of the Department. The 2008 planning day would also follow on from the strategic planning day held in July 2007 which focused on key issues such as the purpose of OFMDFM, high level targets, performance indicators and the effectiveness of the Board.

Resource Planning

18. Deirdre Kenny and Jackie Kerr tabled a joint Corporate Services/ Finance paper. The paper provided details of the number of staff in post as 393 (380 full time equivalent) and the number of vacancies as 26, along with an update on the position regarding the vacant posts. The paper outlined the resource planning position both after February monitoring 2007 – 08 and within the 2008 -09 financial year. The Board noted the position.

Financial Reports

19. Jackie Kerr tabled a financial report which detailed the key issues in financial performance for 2007-08, including the

most significant areas of variance against profiled budget for administration, resource and capital expenditure. The Board noted the summary financial outturn information for the year to date, at March 2008, including the Departmental reserves at the end of March 2008 after February monitoring adjustments. The Board discussion focused on variances. Further work would be undertaken by John McMillen, Jackie Kerr and relevant business area officials to review variances in capital expenditure.

20. Other key issues covered in the paper, included the AccountNI difficulties in monitoring the Department's prompt payment performance; faster closing which commits the Department to a revised submission date to NIAO of the 30th June 2008; the AccountNI duplicate charging issue; and the new AccountNI arrangements for authorising SCS Travel and Subsistence claims. Jackie Kerr emphasised the need for business areas to use Purchase Ordering when procuring goods and services.
21. Mr Cushnahan reported that he had raised a number of concerns with Bruce Robinson regarding processing and systems problems with AccountNI. It was agreed that John McMillen and Jackie Kerr would consider Mr Robinson's response to Mr Cushnahan and advise Mr Cushnahan accordingly. **Action: John McMillen.**
22. Mr Cushnahan also emphasised the value of historical financial information to identify spending trends and provide lessons to inform and improve financial planning. It was agreed that a paper setting out Departmental outturn performance over the past 5 years would be presented to the Board. **Action: Jackie Kerr.**

Resource Accounts 2007-08: Draft Annual Report

23. Jackie Kerr thanked members for their input to date in drafting the 2007/08 Annual Report which was issued to members to critically review. Members noted that further specific drafting input has been requested to complete the report by an extended deadline of 30 June 2008 for submission of the 2007/08 resource accounts to the Northern Ireland Audit Office. Jackie Kerr advised that the Annual Report must be finalised and first submitted to the Audit Committee for review by 21 May.

Business Continuity Plan

24. Deirdre Kenny referred to the paper she tabled for the Board's consideration on a proposed project to take forward work on Business Continuity Planning, Business Planning and Emergency Planning within OFMDFM. It was agreed to defer consideration of the project until the outcome of the OFMDFM organisational review, referred to at paragraph 12 above, was known. **Action: Deirdre Kenny.**

RecordsNI Project

25. Deirdre Kenny tabled a paper on the Records NI Implementation Project which advised that the project will now be closed and that remaining work to ensure the full benefits of TRIM will be progressed by Information Management Unit (IMU). This work will include guidance on outstanding issues such as access controls and housekeeping issues such as the effective management of e-mail accounts.

26. The Board noted the paper and concurred that this reform project had been very effectively implemented in the Department and expressed their thanks to the IMU team, who led the project, for their contribution in helping to make it a successful project.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

27. Deirdre Kenny summarised a FOI paper to the Board submitted by Ciaran Murphy, Head of IMU which provided a quarterly report on the Department's performance in delivering its statutory obligations to FOI. The paper outlined headline statistical data that indicated an increasing number of requests and a decreasing percentage of responses within the statutory 20 day deadline. The Board noted the ongoing work to address the latter and significant inroads being made to action those requests which have been outstanding.

Business Change Programme: Highlight Report

28. The Board noted the monthly report on the various priority 1 projects within the Business Change Programme.

Departmental Brief

29. The Board approved the May Departmental Brief which would be issued to Directors to instigate the team briefing process in the Department. **Action: Board Secretary.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

HRConnect

30. Deirdre Kenny requested that Directors remind their staff that it was essential for all staff who have not logged on to HRConnect, to do so as soon as possible, particularly as the next important phase of that reform project would roll out shortly (as outlined in paragraph 7 above).

Action Points

31. Frank Cushnahan enquired about previous Board action points that had been signed off, for example a Review of Corporate Governance in the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). It was noted that the Review of SIB would be tabled as an agenda item at the next Audit Committee meeting and that all previous action points are not be signed off until fully actioned.

Review of Meeting

32. The general consensus was that there was a clear focus on financial and other resource issues but that the attendance of all members for the full period of the meeting had been adversely affected by other urgent and unavoidable work commitments.

Date of Next Meeting

33. Due to the unavoidable re-scheduling of Board meetings it was agreed to hold one meeting in June which would replace the scheduled 4 and 26 June meetings. **Action: Secretary.**

Mark Higgins

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