

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 9 APRIL 2008**

- PRESENT:** John McMillen (Chair), Mary Bunting,
Rosalie Flanagan, George Gray, Stephen Grimason,
Jackie Kerr, Deirdre Kenny and Eddie Rooney.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mark Higgins (Secretary) and Jim Sutherland (for
Sustainable Development Strategy)
- APOLOGIES:** Frank Cushnahan and Nigel Hamilton

Minutes of Last Meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 27.2.08 and the special Board meeting of 6.3.08 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 9 April 2008 meeting. **Action: Board Secretary.**

Sustainable Development Strategy

3. Jim Sutherland, Sustainable Development Unit provided a synopsis of a paper he tabled for Board approval on a statement on behalf of OFMDFM for inclusion in the second Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan (IP2). Jim explained that the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) was published in May 2006 and the first Implementation Plan (IP1) in November 2006. IP2 is now in preparation in OFMDFM to run alongside and complement the Executive's new Programme for Government (PfG) for the

period 2008-2011. Statements have been commissioned from all Departments setting out a brief summary of the ways in which each Department will contribute towards achievement of targets within IP2.

4. The statements are intended to give an introduction to the role of each Department in delivery of the SDS and are arranged under five headings, i.e. **coordination** within and across Departments and across sectors; **delivery** of major actions in the Department in the period of IP2; the Department's **responsibilities and roles** in the sustainable development agenda, and how responsibility for delivery is assigned within the Department; **monitoring performance and planning** arrangements; and finally **risk management** in terms of significant risks and mitigation measures.
5. The Board discussed the draft OFMDFM statement for the Sustainable Development Implementation plan and made suggestions for amendments which, it was agreed, Jim Sutherland would incorporate into the statement along with an Executive summary. An amended statement and Executive Summary would be circulated, by correspondence, to Board members before submission to Ministers and subsequently as part of the IP2 document to the Executive. **Action: John McMillen.**

Executive Business

6. Rosalie Flanagan provided an update on the work of the Executive and related Assembly and OFMDFM Committee matters, including the agenda for the 10.4.08 Executive meeting and the delivery framework for the Programme for Government. Members discussed the key current issues being

considered by the Executive and planning for the new incoming First Minister including the preparation of a First Day Brief.

7. Rosalie Flanagan also advised that her Directorate was undergoing re-structuring and colleagues would be notified of details, shortly.

Devolution of Justice OFMDFM Implementation Plan

8. The Departmental Board noted a paper tabled by John McMillen, Senior Responsible Officer for the project to consider OFMDFM in the event of devolution of policing and justice powers. Mr McMillen explained that the paper represents the conclusions of the Project Board who are taking the work forward on those implications and the main output of the project, initiated in March 2007. The Board endorsed the provisional plan, noted the further cross-cutting work in relation to wider NICS preparations for devolution as described in the paper and congratulated the excellent work to date of the Project Board.

OFMDFM Organisational Review

9. John McMillen and Jackie Kerr presented several options for the Board's consideration on the outcome of the Departmental exercise involving Directors and their proposals for restructuring and to identify efficiency plans. Jackie Kerr emphasised that all Departments were required to produce efficiency savings proposals to DFP as soon as possible. The Board discussed the options and proposed amendments which, it was agreed, Jackie Kerr would include in a further paper to OFMDFM special advisers for their consideration, and

subsequently table the item at the next Board meeting for the Board to finalise and approve for submission to Ministers and DFP. **Action: Jackie Kerr.**

Operational Plan 2007-08: Quarterly Report

10. The Board noted the third quarterly report of performance against the 2007-08 Operational Plan expected outcomes/output for quarter ending December 2007. It was noted that an annual report will be provided for the 2007-08 year at the next Board meeting.

Departmental Business Plan 2008-09

11. The Board approved a draft submission, from John McMillen, to Ministers which sought their approval to the draft Departmental Business Plan for 2008-09.

Forward Plan

12. The Board noted an updated Forward Plan and members provided further items for inclusion in the plan to December 2008.

Resource Planning

13. Deirdre Kenny and Jackie Kerr tabled a joint Corporate Services/ Finance paper which stated that the Fit for Purpose target has been achieved, detailed the staff in post and vacancy position, the administrative budget surplus, administrative reserve figures after February monitoring for 2007-08 estimate and that the resource reserve after February monitoring is £0.2 million.

Financial Reports

14. Jackie Kerr tabled a financial report which detailed the key issues in financial performance for 2007-08. The Board noted the summary financial outturn information to February 2008 including variance analysis; performance to date; forecast Departmental Spend; summary Departmental Reserve levels; February 2008 Monitoring Round Proposals; 2008-09 Profiled Budget and Opening Reserves; update on Prompt Payment performance monitoring; and the Faster closing position.

15. Jackie Kerr explained that all OFMDFM's February Monitoring proposals had been accepted and approved and that Budget allocations for the 2008-09 financial year as provided to budget holders continued to require rigorous budget management.

Prompt Payments

16. Jackie Kerr explained that technical difficulties caused by the transition to AccountNI means Finance Division are unable to provide a figure for prompt payments, as for the previous Board meeting. AccountNI are currently reworking reports to provide the information required by Departments for prompt payment monitoring.

Faster Closing

17. Mrs Kerr reported that DFP have been advised that OFMDFM will not meet the 2 June Faster Closing deadline for the submission of resource accounts to NIAO due to the ongoing problems with AccountNI. Finance Division are working to an

agreed revised deadline with DFP of 30 June 2008. A copy of the 2007/08 OFMDFM resource accounts plan and timetable was also tabled for the Board's information.

Management Accounts

18. The first set of accruals based management reports/accounts from Oracle were tabled with an analysis of the accounts for the Board to note. Jackie Kerr explained that these accounts were prepared for 9 month review purposes and as an exercise to assess the Department's capability to prepare the annual Resource Account to the 2007/08 Faster Closing Timetable, given the recent change of accounting system. The paper outlines the main problems in preparing the accounts and anticipates that the Department will meet the 30 June deadline, as outlined at paragraph 17, above.

2007-08 Resource Accounts Timetable

19. A copy of the 2007/08 OFMDFM resource accounts plan and timetable was included for the Board's information.

Fraud Policy and Procedures

20. John McMillen explained that Damian Prince's report was the outcome of his review on the current Departmental policies and procedures on fraud and was tabled for the Board's consideration. The Board approved the main conclusions of the report with some minor caveats, i.e. that the Department should:
 - update its guidance to reflect introduction of the Fraud Act, 2006;
 - commission a Fraud survey of the Department's sponsored organisations;

- commission a fraud risk assessment of all of its branches;
- formalise its means of securing its fraud investigation services;
- following the fraud risk assessment, proposed above, consider the commissioning of twice-yearly or quarterly stewardship statements from managers; and
- develop a communication strategy to support its anti-fraud culture.

Jackie Kerr would lead on the development of a process to address the above proposals. **Action: Jackie Kerr.**

Managing Attendance

21. Deirdre Kenny updated the Board on the latest absenteeism figures which showed that the Department continues to have one of the lowest rates in the Northern Ireland Civil Service with an overall absence rate of 4.3%. The latest available statistics for February 2008 also showed a fall in the number of staff on long term sick and that 86.9% of staff have no absence.

Business Change Programme: Highlight Report

22. The Board noted the monthly report on the various priority 1 projects within the Business Change Programme. Deirdre Kenny reported that an update would be provided at the next Board meeting on the forthcoming releases in the HRConnect project. Deirdre also reminded Directors of the need to ensure that all staff log on to HRConnect as a small minority of staff have failed to do so.
23. The Board concurred that the implementation of RecordsNI, including the training and follow-up service provided by floor

walkers had worked well and conveyed their thanks to the Information Management Unit who have responsibility for RecordsNI implementation in the Department.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Legislative Programme 2008-11

24. 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. Central Management Unit (CMU) are co-ordinating the Department's response and the Board would be required to prioritise those bids and markers, against set criteria, for the composite response to this exercise. Members confirmed their commitment to meet the timescale for responses to CMU to meet the May deadline for Departmental responses. **Action: Directors/Deirdre Kenny.**

Audit of Public Appointments Competitions

25. Mary Bunting proposed that, as a result of an audit of the competition for the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors, a checklist is drawn up by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (OCPANI) to assist Departments ensure compliance with the OCPANI code of practice. The proposal was noted for OCPANI to consider.

Board Venue

- 26 John McMillen advised that invitations were open to visit the Metro Building, Belfast for a tour of the HRConnect shared service centre. It was agreed that the secretary would check availability of a room in the Metro Building for the next Board

meeting and combine that with a tour of the HRConnect facilities. **Action: Board Secretary.**

Review of Meeting

27. Members agreed that the items covered were extensive and that following Ministerial approval of the 2008-09 Departmental Business Plan the Board would re-focus on business structures and key priorities.

Date of Next Meeting

28. At the time of drafting the minutes the Board meeting scheduled for 1 May was postponed to 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 13 May 2008, in the 2nd Floor Conference Room (233) Dundonald House.

Mark Higgins

24.4.08