

**MINUTES OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT MEETING  
ON 1 FEBRUARY 2007  
IN ROOM E4.02 CASTLE BUILDINGS**

<b>Present:</b>	Mary Bunting Frank Cushnahan Rosalie Flanagan Deirdre Kenny Neill Jackson Stewart Johnston Alan Maitland Gerry Mulligan Iain McFarlane John McMillen (Chair) Damien Prince Colm Shannon Linda Wilson	<b>Apologies:</b>	Billy Gamble George Gray Stephen Grimason Nigel Hamilton Jackie Kerr Cynthia Smith
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Pat Donaghy, Mark Higgins (secretary), Finula Magowan, Brian McAreavey, Harry McCabe, Diarmuid McLean, Margaret O'Hare, Gerry O'Neill, and Robbie Saulters.		

**Minutes if Previous Meeting**

1. The minutes of the previous Senior Management Group (SMG) meeting held on 29 June 2006 were noted and approved.

**Matters Arising**

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

**HR Connect**

3. Mr McMillen welcomed representatives of the HR Connect programme including Brain McAreavey, Fujitsu Alliance, Margaret O'Hare, OFMDFM Business Change Manager and Robbie Saulters, DFP Central Personnel Group, Client Manager for the programme. The representatives were invited to the meeting to

provide an update on the HR Connect programme and to answer questions from members.

- 4.** Mr McAreavey and Mr Saulters presented the background to the HR Connect programme and outlined the future service delivery model. They explained that at the heart of the model are NICS employees and line managers who will be supported by a Shared Service Centre (SSC) delivering transactional human resources covering payroll, resourcing and employee relations. Underpinning the delivery of this model will be an integrated ORACLE Human Resource (HR) system which will provide a single source of HR data across the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and enable the delivery of high quality HR management information. The SSC will deliver layered services.
- 5.** The presentation included a summary of what HR Connect will mean for staff, including line managers and senior civil servants. Mr McAreavey outlined an illustrative schedule and timetable for the phased introduction of the HR Connect programme for DFP and OFMDFM and the support which will be provided for the successful deployment of HR Connect throughout the NICS.
- 6.** Mr McAreavey explained that the programme's change strategy will create the environment by building willingness and capability to use HR Connect through communications, stakeholder management, training and departmental support.
- 7.** Margaret O'Hare advised that there would be a series of awareness sessions and a variety of information tools used to

ensure effective communication of the programme to staff, including a session at the forthcoming Departmental staff conference on 15 February 2007 and comprehensive internet information facilities. Presentations to business areas at planning days or team briefing sessions will also be available on demand.

- 8.** Deirdre Kenny requested senior management support for the implementation of the HR Connect programme, for example by ensuring that appropriate staff were released to attend relevant training and to act as super users to assist in the testing of systems and as a local source of advice.
  
- 9.** Members raised questions on the recruitment of SSC staff, the cost /benefit analysis of the programme, the communication plan and the roll out of the implementation plan. The HR Connect team agreed to take on board the comments of the members and Mr McMillen thanked the team for their invaluable input and comprehensive update to the meeting.

#### **Account NI**

- 10.** Diarmuid McLean, Chief Executive, Account NI Shared Service Centre (SSC) provided an update on Account NI. He summarised the vision and key attributes of the programme, the role and function of the Account NI SSC and the current position in the design, build and test phase for the implementation of the programme. He explained that the, "go-live" phase would be delayed until October 2007 but that the date for all Departments to migrate to the new system would remain at December 2008.

- 11.** Mr McLean answered a range of questions from members on the risks associated with Account NI, the timescales for its introduction, the use of project accounting and potential savings, departmentally and service –wide. Iain McFarlane advised that the Department is tied into the Department of Finance and Personnel (DPP) in respect of Account NI. Mr McFarlane also advised that it was important for business areas to release relevant staff to act as “super-users”.
- 12.** Mr Cushnahan raised a number of questions concerning potential risks for the programme associated with increasing costs over the initial few years of its introduction and the need to build flexibility into the programme, to take account of Gershon principles and the importance of performance indicators. Mr McLean explained that those potential risks and best practice principles had been incorporated in the design, build and testing stage of the programme.
- 13.** Mr McMillen thanked Mr McLean for his clear and comprehensive update on the Account NI programme and wished him and his team every success with this important reform programme.

#### **Investors in People (IiP)**

- 14.** Mr McMillen welcomed Gerry O’Neill, DFP Delivery and Innovation Division, who had been invited to the meeting to advise members about the work that needs to be completed at Directorate level and corporately to enable the Department to consider an application for corporate accreditation under the new IiP standards.

15. Mr O'Neill provided an outline of the, "plan, do and review" principles behind the new standards, the ten indicators for developing strategies and taking action to improve the performance of an organisation. He explained the main themes which are intrinsic to the IiP standard and the key areas which the Department and business areas needs to focus on for a successful outcome.
16. The meeting focused on several of the IiP indicators concerned with learning and development and the capabilities required of managers to lead manage and develop staff effectively and the areas that require particular focus for OFMDFM.
17. It was agreed to await the outcome of further work being undertaken by Gerry O'Neil with business areas before deciding on the final timetable for applying for corporate accreditation under the new IiP standards.

#### **Tour de Table**

18. Rosalie Flanagan provided an outline of the ongoing preparation work and systems testing being undertaken for possible restoration of a devolved administration and the recent guidance disseminated to all staff regarding the purdah period. Mrs Flanagan also advised that a Departmental Representatives meeting would be arranged for later in February to assist Departments in readiness for possible restoration. Each Department would be asked to send two representatives to that meeting.

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19. Mrs Flanagan added that it was the intention that the First Day Briefs for all Ministers would include an overview of the current financial/CSR position and other major cross-cutting issues, in addition to the usual briefing for their respective portfolios. OFMDFM would co-ordinate this paper.

**Deleted:** incoming Devolved Administration Ministers would need to be provided with an overview of key issues, such the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and briefing should cover all Departments

20. Linda Wilson reported on the new statutory duty which would apply to Sustainable Development and the Strategic Futures Project which included completion of work on Northern Ireland Strategic Audit, that would draw together economic and social comparative indicators across all NICS Departments.
21. Deirdre Kenny reported that a good response had been received for attendance at the 2007 Departmental Conference on 15th February but as some business areas were slow to respond she asked that senior managers encourage their staff to complete the on-line booking form as soon as possible.

### **Any Other Business**

22. John McMillen proposed that members forward suggestions for topics for the next meeting, in 3 months time, to the SMG secretary. It was agreed that those topics could include presentations on key issues from several Directorates to inform and update colleagues on current and forthcoming subjects and suggestions should be forwarded to the secretary at least two weeks in advance of the next meeting. **Action: SMG Members.**

**Date of Next Meeting**

- 23.** The next meeting will be held on Thursday 3 May at 2.00 p.m. in Conference Room, E4.02 Castle Buildings.

Mark Higgins

28 February 2007