

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2008
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Bruce Robinson - Chair
Will Haire
Gerry Lavery
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Leo O'Reilly
Stephen Peover
Paul Priestly
Stephen Quinn
Alan Shannon
Paul Sweeney

In attendance: Bob Collins
Evelyn Collins
Lisa King
Gerry Mulligan
Steve Hare -
Oswyn Paulin
Neill Jackson
Stephen Grimason
John McMillen
Tony Canavan
Pauline Boyle – Secretary

Item 5
Item 6

1. **Apologies:** Malcolm McKibbin
Rosalie Flanagan

2. **Minutes of Meetings held on 14 November 2008**

The minutes of the meeting have been circulated. Any comments/
amendments to Pauline.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Executive & Assembly Update**

Neill Jackson updated on the Executive meeting which took place on
Thursday 20 November 2008. The next meeting of the Executive is
scheduled for 27 November. It is envisaged that the Executive will also meet
in sub-group format on 4 December and full Executive on 8 December to
review proposals and progress to consider measures which might be taken to
address the impact of the economic downturn. The timescale for December
Monitoring returns has been shortened to fit this timetable.

5. **Review of Section 75**

Bruce Robinson welcomed Bob Collins, Evelyn Collins and Lisa King. Gerry Mulligan said as OFMDFM has a sponsorship role for the Equality Commission they have been actively involved with other NICS departments and the Commission in discussing the draft revised guidance on the Review of the Effectiveness of Section 75. The draft revised Guide is currently subject to a 12 week public consultation exercise.

Bob Collins thanked PSG for the opportunity to join them today. The intention of Section 75 was to radically overhaul the process of policy-making and to create profound change in the administration of government and public authorities. The Section 75 provision was introduced to ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations were placed at the core of public policy-making. In carrying out this strategic review, the Commission assessed the effectiveness of the legislation in terms of its impacts and outcomes on individuals. A shift now needs to take place within public authorities away from concentrating primarily on the process of implementing Section 75, towards achieving outcomes. The Commission has therefore been consulting on changes to the statutory guidance on implementing Section 75, aimed at helping achieve this. Bob noted a number of Permanent Secretaries had replied to their consultation document and the Commission are taking these into account.

Bruce Robinson said it was valuable for PSG to learn of the goals and objectives of the Commission in revising the guidance. He acknowledged that some Departments had responded to the consultation and he asked what the timetable was. Evelyn Collins said work would continue with a group of practitioners with an aim to finish around the end of March. Bruce Robinson thanked Bob, Evelyn and Lisa for their presentation.

6. **Centre for Applied Learning**

Aideen McGinley introduced this item and said CAL was owned by all 11 Government Departments and Steve Hare would cover what CAL is doing and its future focus.

Steve Hare said the Centre for Applied Learning was established in 2005 and moved fully into operational delivery in 2006. CAL is recognised as being at the forefront for all generic training and development within the Northern Ireland Civil Service and has the strategic capability to support reform. Steve said CAL was keen to confirm that this was still the PSG vision on how to take forward training and development. Bruce Robinson felt comfortable giving a reaffirmation of commitment to this. He was keen to have CAL move more fully into supporting the work to transform our culture that underpinned the Reform programme. He confirmed all the early CAL work was of benefit to the reform programme and he felt CAL should move fully into this sphere of training and development and that this development would enjoy full endorsement at PSG. Leo O'Reilly said this role in reform was discussed at the DFP Oversight Board on Thursday and the importance of benefits realisation and better methodology was raised. Lessons learned also needed to be taken on board. Steve Hare said the CAL Board are having a strategy

day on 16 December and the PSG discussion would be considered as part of this also. Departments will be invited to suggest nominees to the CAL Board as CAL moves to the next phase of development. Aideen McGinley said the PSG Sub-Group on People Management would be brought into the strategic rethink following the strategy day.

7. **NICS Policy Skills Training Programme**

Paul Priestley's paper provided an update on progress made in developing a pilot policy skills programme for NICS. He sought PSG agreement to pilot the proposed programme in January 2009 and the assistance of PSG colleagues in the selection of candidates. PSG endorsed the launch of the pilot programme which attracts accreditation at level 7 (Masters level) on the national Qualification and Credit Framework. PSG also endorsed the arrangements for the selection of candidates.

8. **Tour de Table**

Rathlin Island Ferry

Paul Priestly updated on recent developments.

Conflict Transformation Initiative

Alan Shannon updated on the judicial review of the Conflict Transformation Initiative.

Payroll

Leo O'Reilly reported the Programme Board for HRConnect have decided to go live with the new payroll in November.

Planning

Stephen Peover said the PEDU Delivery Review would be presented to Ministers on Tuesday 25 November.

PPS21

Stephen also reported on PPS21.

Planning Reform Consultation Paper

Stephen said the Planning Reform Consultation Paper is ready to go to the Executive.