

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 10 JANUARY 2008**

PRESENT: Nigel Hamilton (Chair), Mary Bunting
Frank Cushnahan, Rosalie Flanagan George Gray,
Jackie Kerr, Deirdre Kenny,
and Cynthia Smith.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mark Higgins (Secretary) Colm Shannon.

APOLOGIES: Stephen Grimason and John McMillen.

Reconvened Meeting

1. The meeting was held on 10 January to deal with items that were tabled for the 19 December 2007 meeting that it was not possible to cover because of time constraints

Executive Business and Related Matters

2. Rosalie Flanagan provided an update on key Executive business including the Programme for Government, Victims Commissioner and Devolution of Justice. George Gray advised that there are significant challenges in terms of the timetable for the current legislative programme. Sir Nigel Hamilton advised that the programme would be discussed at Permanent Secretary Group.

Resource Planning

3. The Board noted that the Department was on course to achieve its Fit for Purpose target of 389 full time equivalent posts by 31 March 2008. It was agreed that monitoring of the current 24 vacancies should continue and closely reviewed over the next few months. The Board also noted the current position in respect

of the administration budget for 2007-08 which indicated a positive position for the year end. Jackie Kerr reminded emphasised the importance of the February monitoring round and the continuing need to declare easements as early as possible. Financial outturn reports are being redesigned to facilitate good financial management.

Financial Performance

4. The Board noted the summary financial outturn information to the year to date including variance analysis and performance to date at December 2007. The report also included a summary of Departmental Reserve levels, December 2007 Monitoring Round proposals, 2008-11 Budget allocations, an update on the go-live timetable for AccountNI in OFMDFM and DFP date with the portal now accessible to all staff and a summary information on prompt payment performance.
5. Jackie Kerr advised that Draft Budget allocations for 2008-11 have been issued to Budget Holders as a first step to finalising allocations for the CSR period.
6. The Board noted that OFMDFM's prompt payment performance for the month of November was 89% against a target of 95% and that average performance for the year to date is 88%. Sir Nigel Hamilton stated that a drop in performance to those levels was not acceptable, to which the Board concurred.

7. It was also agreed that recent problems that staff were experiencing with AccountNI in a range of areas was not helping to improve performance and that the Board's serious dissatisfaction in that area would be raised in a planned forthcoming meeting that Jackie Kerr had arranged with the AccountNI Chief Executive, Diarmuid McLean. **Action: Jackie Kerr.** It was agreed that the Board's finance sub-committee and the Audit Committee would continue to take a robust approach to issues concerning AccountNI.

Budget 2007 Efficiency Measures

8. Jackie Kerr tabled a draft submission to Ministers on proposed measures for the delivery of OFMDFM's Budget 07 efficiency targets which the Board were asked to approve. Mrs Kerr advised that there were some developments since the submission was drafted.
9. The submission detailed the requirements for Departments to publish details of their efficiency measures alongside the publication of the final Budget '07 document. Current plans assume that the Budget document will be released in late January 2008, so Ministerial agreement to a package of efficiency measures for OFMDFM is required by mid to late January 2008.
10. The submission recommended that Ministers note a range of matters including the terms of reference of the sub-group established by the OFMDFM Board to review the efficiency

measures agreed under Direct Rule; the conclusions and recommendations of the sub-group, which have been endorsed by the OFMDFM Board; the forecast administration cost shortfall across the three years of Budget 07; and the need to address this shortfall through the identification of further efficiency proposals. Ministers are also asked to confirm that they are content that the proposed efficiency measures set out in the submission are pursued, and that these measures are published on the OFMDFM website following the publication of the final Budget 07 document, currently scheduled for late January 2008.

11. The Board agreed a number of changes to the submission, to meet on the 15 January to focus on Budget 2007 Efficiency Measures. The latter would also be covered with special advisers who would be invited to attend the morning session of the Board's business planning day on 16 January 2008.

AccountNI – Restructuring of Finance Division

12. The Board noted the revised role and functions of the retained finance function and reorganisation of OFMDFM Finance Division as a result of the implementation of Account NI on 3rd December 2007. It was agreed that Directors would communicate the change to staff within their areas of responsibility. **Action: Directors.**

Longer Term Liabilities

13. It was agreed to defer discussion on a review of Resource Accounting requirements in handling longer term liabilities as the

matter would be included in a meeting of the Board's finance sub-committee in early January 2008. The item would then be tabled at the next Board meeting.

Any Other Business

Business in the Community

14. The Board approved a suggestion by Deirdre Kenny to invite Martin Howell, Business in the Community to a Board meeting to advise about that organisations employee volunteering initiative.

Action: Board Secretary.

Learning and Development Strategy

15. Deirdre Kenny advised that a sub-group of the Personnel Directors Group (PDG) has been looking at learning and development priorities for the NICS, and the work of the PDG group has informed the development of OFMDFM priorities. As a result a Departmental Learning and Development Strategy and priorities for 2008/09 has been developed and Deirdre advised that she will issue a paper on the strategy to Directors, in the next few weeks, to request that they discuss it with their management teams and advise her if they are content to approve the strategy and priorities for 2008/09. **Action:**

Deirdre Kenny/ Directors.

Performance Appraisals

16. Sir Nigel advised that he would be contacting Directors shortly to bring forward the timetable for their performance appraisals.

New Year Honours

17. Frank Cushnahan offered his congratulations on behalf of the Board to Sir Nigel on the award of his knighthood in 2008 New Years Honours List. Sir Nigel responded that he viewed the award as a great honour and also as recognition of the dedication and professionalism of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Date of Next Meeting

18. It was agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for the 30 January meeting and the next Board meeting would be held on 27 February 2007.

Mark Higgins

21 February 2008