

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 25 JANUARY 2007**

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Alan Burton (Fujitsu Alliance), David Gavaghan
(Strategic Investment Board), Mark Higgins
(Secretary), Iain McFarlane, (Finance Division)
Margaret O'Hare (OFMDFM, Business Change
Manager), Robbie Saulters (DFP, Central Personnel
Group), Martin Spollen (Strategic Investment Board)
and David Thompson (Fujitsu Alliance).

APOLOGIES: Stephen Grimason and Jackie Kerr.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2006 were agreed as amended.

MATTERS ARISING

2. Matters arising were covered under the relevant agenda items.

CURRENT ISSUES

HR Connect

3. Nigel Hamilton welcomed representatives of the HR Connect programme including Robbie Saulters, DFP Central Personnel Group, Client Manager for the programme; representatives for the programme's contractors, Fujitsu Alliance, i.e. Alan Burton,

Programme Director and David Thompson, Communications Team.

4. Robbie Saulters introduced the team, explained the background to the HR Connect programme and outlined the future service delivery model. Mr Saulters 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. David Thompson presented a summary of what HR Connect will mean for staff, including line managers and senior civil servants and he provided an example of the electronic staff handbook. Mr Thompson also 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 Thompson 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. Nigel Hamilton proposed that the HR Connect communications team may wish to consider providing practical examples when communicating the programme to staff and it was agreed that this would be included in future demonstrations including the HR Connect session at the forthcoming Departmental Conference in February 2007.

8. The Board thanked the HR Connect team for their invaluable input to the meeting and Mr Hamilton emphasised the full support of the Board for this important part of the NICS Reform Agenda, which would impact positively on all staff.

Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI)

9. Nigel Hamilton welcomed David Gavaghan, Chief Executive, Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and Martin Spollen, Strategic Adviser, SIB. Mr Spollen presented a synopsis of the ISNI (2) and explained that it is a new framework for investment as an affordable and deliverable 10-year rolling programme setting out Ministerial priorities for public infrastructure renewal across Northern Ireland. Mr Spollen explained the process for developing the strategy and proposed oversight and delivery arrangements which included fresh thinking in a new framework for strategic planning and supporting delivery.

10. The Board discussed the key elements of Mr Spollen's presentation in the context of competing priorities for the various infrastructure investment pillars covering the 11 Departments and including 23 sector measures. Mr Cushnahan highlighted the importance of SIB performance indicators and the Board noted

that the SIB Board had discussed that matter and would be taking it forward. The Board thanked Mr Garvaghan and Mr Spollen for their informative and helpful update on ISNI (2).

STANDING ITEMS

Assembly/ Restoration Issues

11. Rosalie Flanagan provided a summary of the work being addressed by the Programme for Government Committee and referred to a recent paper on Departmental activity in the pre-election period and pre-devolution periods. The Board noted the paper and that work, including systems testing, was ongoing in preparation for the restoration of devolution.

Forward Plan

12. The Forward Plan was noted and no further amendments were proposed but it was agreed that it would be subject to review in the context of a possible local election on 7th March 2007 and restoration of a devolved Assembly.

Resource Planning

13. The Board noted a joint paper from Deirdre Kenny and Iain McFarlane which advised that the Department was on track to achieve its Fit for Purpose target of 391.5 full time equivalents by the end of March 2008. The paper also advised that re-assurance on funding support, should restoration occur, would be required.

Financial Report

14. Iain McFarlane summarised the papers tabled by Finance Division on financial outturn information to December 2006, Departmental reserve levels, the outcome of December 2006 monitoring and prompt payment performance. The paper also outlined the initial outcome of Ministerial bilaterals on the management of 2007-08 budget issues.

15. The Board discussed key issues regarding administration cost and resource variance against profiled budgets. Emphasis was placed on the need to continually address and review budget profiles to ensure a positive outcome at the end of the financial year and to manage the Department's administration cost reserve. The Board also noted that the issues identified in the recent Ministerial bilaterals for the 2007-08 budget would be considered and discussed with the Department following the Minister's finance proposals.

16. The Board noted that prompt payment performance had fallen to 90% against a target of 95% due primarily to the impact of the holiday period but that average performance for the year to date is 94%.

Account NI

17. The Board were provided with a progress report by Iain McFarlane on the introduction of Account NI within the Department, including an overview of that new accounting

system, latest news and risks identified with its introduction. The Board noted that the, "go live" date for OFMDFM and DFP, scheduled by Account NI for the 4 June was now at risk of being delayed. Although Finance Division had not received a formal notification of slippage it was noted that the Board's concerns regarding slippage had been previously notified to Account NI. It was agreed that the issue of delay would be raised at a senior management meeting in February 2007 to be attended by a representative from Account NI who would be providing an update on the proposed, "go live" timetable for OFMDFM.

Fraud

18. Iain McFarlane advised that there were no current issues to report and that fraud policy and related issues was scheduled to be discussed at the next Audit Committee meeting on 6 February 2007.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

19. The Board approved a paper from the Departmental Information Manager, Ciaran Murphy which introduced a new format for the presentation of quarterly FOI statistics to Board meetings. The Board also congratulated everyone involved in the excellent performance achieved to date by OFMDFM in delivering its statutory responsibilities under FOI legislation, with 100% of OFMDFM's requests last year meeting the statutory deadline.

Managing Attendance

20. The Board noted a paper tabled by Deirdre Kenny on quarterly absenteeism figures which showed a slight dip in the overall level of absence within OFMDFM and an absenteeism rate lower than most other Departments, at approximately 4.3 % in December 2006.

Operational Plan

21. The Board considered a further amended draft Operational Plan that was refined in line with the discussion at the previous Board meeting and comments received from Directors. As agreed by the Board the revised draft described broad strategic objectives and departmental function. A draft quarterly reporting framework was also developed which set out, against each strategic objective, the outputs and outcomes that will ensure the achievement of each strategic objective.
22. The Board approved the final draft Operational Plan and draft quarterly reporting framework, subject to a final check by Directors who would submit final changes to the business planning sub-group as soon as possible. The sub-group would then consider the way forward for Ministerial discussion of the draft documents and report back to the Board. **Action: Directors/ Business Planning Sub-Group.** It was also agreed that staff involved in delivering on strategic target areas should make policy presentations to the Board at appropriate times, to keep the Board informed. Relevant items would be

submitted to the Board secretary and scheduled in the Board's Forward Plan. Action: Directors.

Devolution of Justice

23. A joint paper tabled by Deidre Kenny and Neill Jackson set out the implications for OFMDFM of the devolution of justice and policing to a restored Executive and suggested a way forward. The paper advised that if Devolution is restored in March 2007, it is proposed that the devolution of justice will follow in May 2008.

24. The Board noted therefore an urgent need to begin the necessary work on putting the OFMDFM structures in place as soon as possible including the appointment and funding of a team to undertake that work. The Board approved the recommendations of the paper, including the formation and funding of additional posts to take the project forward as soon as possible by the relevant officials. **Action: Jointly - Neill Jackson and Deirdre Kenny.**

Tour de Table

25. Frank Cushnahan informed the Board that he was resigning his position as an external member of the Audit Committee of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, because of future commitments and that he would be sending a formal notification to the Department in due course.

26. Deirdre Kenny reported on a forthcoming, National Pandemic Influenza exercise 'Winter Willow' Stage 2 in January / February 2007 involving all NI Departments. .There will be a national media strategy and Executive Information Service and DHSSPS Press Office will providing NI input if required.

27. Cynthia Smith reported on the appointment of the new Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Patricia Lewsley, who took up her post on 8 January 2007; the commencement of a public appointment process for a Victims and Survivors Commissioner and a high level of media and public interest in the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulation (NI) 2006 legislation concerning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services.

Any Other Business

28. No other business was raised by members.

Date of Next Meeting

29. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for 10.45 a.m. on Thursday, 22 February 2007 in the 4th floor conference room, E4.02 Castle Buildings.

Mark Higgins

2 February 2007