

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
ON 29 MARCH 2007**

PRESENT: Nigel Hamilton (Chair), Mary Bunting, George Gray
Stephen Grimason, Rosalie Flanagan, Deirdre Kenny
Paul Priestly and Cynthia Smith.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mark Higgins (Secretary), Iain McFarlane and Lesley
Stannage (Lesley Stannage Design).

APOLOGIES: Frank Cushnahan, Jackie Kerr and John McMillen.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2007 were agreed as amended.

MATTERS ARISING

Operational Plan 2007-08

2. Deirdre Kenny advised the Board that the Operational Plan had been approved by Minister Hanson and the Board agreed it should be disseminated to staff as a working document and submitted in due course to the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their consideration. **Action: Deirdre Kenny.**

STANDING ITEMS

Assembly/ Restoration Issues

3. Rosalie Flanagan provided a summary of political developments and continuing preparatory work, including arrangements for Private Offices and other administrative support matters in the event of restoration on the 8 May 2007. The Board discussed

related support functions for a restored devolved administration, including the Programme for Government which would part of Paul Priestly's responsibilities as Director of Strategy.

Forward Plan

4. The Forward Plan was noted and the Board agreed that the plan would be reviewed in the event of restoration of a devolved administration on 8 May 2007.

Resource Planning

5. The Board noted a joint paper from Deirdre Kenny and Iain McFarlane which advised that the Department was currently on target to achieve the required headcount reduction. The Board also noted the current administration reserve and anticipated shortfall in the administration budget position for 2007-08 which would require to be addressed as a result of the unique resource pressures on the Department arising in the event of restoration.
6. It was agreed that Iain McFarlane would provide a draft minute for Nigel Hamilton to the Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) to address those additional resource needs. **Action: Iain McFarlane.**

Financial Report

7. Iain McFarlane summarised the papers tabled by Finance Division on financial outturn information to February 2007 and the outcome of February monitoring adjustments by DFP. The finance paper also provided a comparison of outturn against Budget Holders profiled budgets for administration and resource

costs. The Board discussed the most significant areas of administration variance, resource variance and capital expenditure variances against profiled budgets.

8. The Finance report advised that the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI2) return had been completed by OFMDFM. The Board approved the draft for submission to the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and DFP Supply.

9. The Board noted that work is underway with Budget Holders to agree and set Budgets for 2007-08 and that DFP had issued guidance to Departmental Finance Directors to commence work on the Priorities and Budget 2007 process, in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2007. The guidance outlined the timetable for the process and inputs required from Departments, for example on the development of Public Service Agreements (PSAs), Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSO's) Delivery Agreements (DA's) and requests for additional spending plans for CSR 2007. A commissioning minute would issue from Finance Division to Directors in early April seeking their input to the exercise.

10. Paul Priestly advised that the DFP guidance recommended a total of about 30 PSAs which should be cross-cutting and differentiate between external, i.e. public facing and internal functions.

11. Iain McFarlane explained the background and action required on other financial matters including Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) pay remits and ongoing work to finalise a small number of outstanding recommendations from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Management Letter 2005-06. The Board noted with appreciation that the Department had achieved its performance target of 95% for prompt payments in February 2007.
12. Iain McFarlane expanded on the Faster Closing timetable for the production of Resource Accounts 2005-06.
13. The Board noted a progress report submitted by Finula Magowan on the introduction of Account NI within the Department, which advised that the, "go live" date for OFMDFM and DFP, would be delayed until 5th November 2007. The Board supported the emphasise on the involvement of staff in developing and implementing Account NI in OFMDFM and agreed that Directors should identify staff to act as key systems users and subject matter experts or, "Super Users" and ensure their attendance at, "Conference Room Pilots" in April 2007. Directors would provide names of relevant super users from their business areas to Finula Magowan by 6 April. **Action: Directors.**

Fraud

14. Iain McFarlane advised that there were no matters to report in respect of fraud.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

15. Deirdre Kenny reported that the Department continued to perform well in meeting the FOI Act's statutory deadlines for responding to FOI requests. There were no exceptional cases to report.

Managing Attendance

16. Deirdre Kenny advised that the latest available absenteeism figures to January 2007 showed an absence rate of 4% which was a slight improvement on the December 2006 rate of 4.3%.

HR Connect

17. Deirdre Kenny tabled a progress report on work carried out on HRConnect within OFMDFM. The Board noted the progress to date and indicated its support for the identification of staff to act as super users for their business areas and agreed that local training co-ordinators should assist with the training logistics for HRConnect.

Management of Departmental Board & Corporate Risk Register

18. The Board discussed a paper submitted by Deirdre Kenny on the management of the Board with the aim of reviewing the Board's role and responsibilities in the context of the Corporate Risk Register. The Board noted that the paper was based on the agreement at the February 2007 meeting to place a greater focus on the Corporate Risk Register and the need for a much

stronger link between the register and the Department's Operational Plan. Mrs Kenny's paper had incorporated members' supportive responses to Rosalie Flanagan's further proposals on this subject. It was noted that the February Board had also agreed that the Corporate Risk Register would be placed high on the agenda of Board meetings.

19. The Board discussed the Management of the Board paper in detail in the context of the Corporate Risk Register and interim Operational Plan for 2007-08. The Board agreed with Paul Priestly's proposal that he lead a sub-group of the Board in taking forward a review of the management, role and responsibility of the Board, with a view in particular to achieving a more strategic approach to business planning and risk management. The sub-group would be facilitated by Mark Higgins who would arrange the first meeting of the sub-group. Paul Priestly would write to Board members to finalise the sub-group's membership and set out the initial key themes and the approach to the review. **Action: Paul Priestly.**

Devolution of Justice

20. Deirdre Kenny tabled a paper on the progress of a project on the implications of the devolution of justice for OFMDFM. The Board noted the paper and the extension of time span of the project to 12 months.

RecordsNI

21. Deirdre Kenny tabled a paper on OFMDFM's RecordsNI project which will implement an Electronic Documents and Records Management System (EDRMS) across the Department. The Board noted the current position, endorsed the proposed approach including the co-operation of business areas to ensure effective implementation and welcomed the provision of brief monthly progress reports to the Board. It was agreed that Ciaran Murphy and Lynne Davison would be invited to the April Board to provide a brief outline of the key issues for implementation in OFMDFM.

Publications Template

22. Stephen Grimason tabled a paper which proposed that OFMDFM adopts a design template for all publications. He introduced Lesley Stannage from graphic design company, Lesley Stannage Design who have developed design concepts for the template.
23. Mr Stannage outlined the concept and the advantages of adopting a design template with working examples of designs that could be adopted for a variety of communication mediums. He explained that the template provided cost savings, strengthening of the corporate identity, the provision of visual cohesion between OFMDFM publications, the introduction of a house style and flexibility in design to meet the needs of different target audiences.
24. George Gray raised a number of questions regarding the application of the template to, for example, legislative documents which have a predetermined layout. The Board

concluded with the broad concept of the template and the potential for its application across Departments and the wider public sector. It was agreed that Stephen Grimason would take this work forward, in consultation with business areas on their specific requirements and the Board would re-visit the item at a later stage.

Tour de Table

25. Deirdre Kenny reported on the recent "Winter Willow" pandemic flu exercise conducted by Central Emergency Planning Unit. The Board noted the initial issues and additional work to be taken forward as a result of the exercise. Mrs Kenny also provided copies of a, "Delivery Landscape Map" for information and explained that it was a user-friendly word document that provided key information in a succinct format on the relationship between the Department and its associated bodies. The Board welcomed the map as a useful information tool and proposed some minor amendments.

26. Deirdre Kenny advised that in light of Restoration of the Executive in May it was no longer feasible for the Department to apply for Investors in People (IIP) accreditation before the end of March 2007. The Board agreed that the application should be deferred until later in 2007/08. The Board also agreed Paul Priestly's suggestion that an IIP assessor be engaged to conduct a preliminary assessment of the Department's readiness to apply under the new IIP standards and draw up an action plan for the Board's consideration before a formal application is made for accreditation.

Any Other Business

27. No other business was raised by members.

Date of Next Meeting

28. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for 10.45 a.m. on Thursday, 26 April 2007 in the 4th floor conference room, E4.02 Castle Buildings.

Mark Higgins

3 April 2007