

**MINUTES OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT MEETING
ON 29 JUNE 2006
IN ROOM E4.02 CASTLE BUILDINGS**

Present:	Mary Bunting (Chair) Frank Cushnahan Jackie Kerr Stewart Johnston Gerry Mulligan John McMillen Colm Shannon	Apologies:	Rosalie Flanagan Billy Gamble George Gray Stephen Grimason Nigel Hamilton Neill Jackson Alan Maitland Laurene McAlpine Denis McCartney Linda Wilson
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In Attendance: Mark Higgins (secretary) David Lammey and Ciaran Murphy.

Introductions

1. Mrs Bunting introduced Frank Cushnahan, Non-Executive Director in the Department, a member of the Departmental Board and Chairperson of the Department's Audit Committee. Mrs Bunting explained that Mr Cushnahan had kindly accepted an invitation to address the senior management meeting on the subject of Corporate Planning.
2. Mrs Bunting also welcomed John McMillen to his first meeting as a member and explained that John has been in post since 12 June 2006. John outlined his responsibilities which included the Department's Accounting Officer, project management of implementation of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and Director of Resources, Regeneration and International Relations Directorate.

Minutes of Last Meeting

3. The minutes of the Senior Management Group (SMG) meeting held on 16 March 2006 were noted and amendments agreed.

Matters Arising

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

Update on Financial Issues

5. Jackie Kerr updated the meeting on Administration Cost bids had been lodged with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) in the June monitoring round. She explained that, in the event that not all bids are met, there would a greatly reduced ability for the Department to manage emerging pressures later in the year. The outcome of the June monitoring round will therefore be critical with regard to managing Administration Cost demands in the Department.
6. Mrs Kerr advised that for the 2006-07 year, improved regular profiled budgeting for all cost centres should assist budget holders to identify overspends and underspends, declare surrenders as soon as possible and provide explanations where profiled trends of expenditure were not being met. In addition for 2006-07 quarterly Resource Management Accounts will be reviewed and provided to the Departmental Board and budget holders should be aware that accruals information will be required for those quarterly.
7. Mrs Kerr expressed her gratitude to staff across the Department who co-operated with the much tighter timetables for the

submission of accruals and year-end financial information and stated that their co-operation was a key contributor to the Department's achievement of its faster closing commitments.

8. Mrs Kerr also advised that a briefing session on public sector pay was arranged for 29.6.06 by DFP for all Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) sponsor divisions and NDPB responsible staff.

Forward Planning of Announcements

9. Colm Shannon requested that Executive Information Service (EIS) is advised by business areas of planned announcements at an early stage to allow sufficient time for EIS to, for example, prepare press releases, provide media advice and commence work on the first draft of speeches. He explained that there have been some instances where EIS have been sent press releases for clearance on the hour that they were due to be released.
10. Mr Shannon emphasised the value to business areas of involving EIS at the earliest opportunity including those cases when it is difficult for business areas to be definite about the timing of forthcoming announcements.

Freedom of Information

11. David Lammey, Central Freedom of Information (CFOI) Team and Ciaran Murphy, Departmental Information Manager provided the meeting with an outline of the roles and responsibilities of their business areas.

- 12.** Mr Lammey explained that the CFOI Team's primary role is to lead, co-ordinate, advise and support Northern Ireland Departments in complying with access to information legislation. He outlined the various methods, systems, training and best practice guidance his team employed in delivering that service and the team's role in monitoring FOI performance across the Northern Ireland Civil Service. He also explained the range of organisations that he and his team liaised with on FOI issues including the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Information Commissioner's Office.
- 13.** Mr Lammey provided the meeting with a copy of the first Annual Report compiled by his team on the use of the FOI Act within Northern Ireland for 2005. The report included statistics and summaries supplied by each of the eleven Northern Ireland Departments, including their reviews for 2005. Mr Lammey advised that, overall the first year was very successful and the report demonstrated a willingness to comply with the spirit of the FOI Act.
- 14.** Ciaran Murphy explained that the Information Management Unit (IMU) is responsible for the wide range of information management-related issues which impact on OFMDFM. A key element of this is Information Access legislation, which primarily relates to Freedom of Information but also includes, for example, Data Protection and Environmental Information. Responsibilities include the development of departmental policies and procedures, the provision of advice and guidance, co-ordination, monitoring and reporting activities, providing awareness and

training, plus the maintenance of a Local Information Managers' network. He explained the IMU also provides a records management service to the Department which encompasses the development and maintenance of Departmental registered filing systems. A key element of this was working with the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) to dispose of records which are no longer required for business or historical purposes.

15. Mr Murphy advised that the IMU was also responsible for the roll-out of a NICS service-wide Electronic Documents and Records Management System (EDRMS) across OFMDFM. An extensive staff awareness programme is currently underway while preparations, including the development of policies and procedures, a training programme and the provision of advice and guidance, are ongoing

Corporate Planning

16. Mr Cushnahan thanked the meeting for the opportunity to talk about corporate planning and in that context the need for executive inclusivity. He provided background to his wide experience and career in the private sector and explained his views on corporate planning were largely based on Herzberg's theory of Management by Objectives and he advised how those principles could be applied in the public sector.
17. He set out several key values and skill sets that are essential in effective corporate planning and that could be applied equally in the private and public sector. Those principles included the need for a clear vision, teamwork, leadership, purpose and direction

and accountability. Critical to all that is integrity and the need to clearly communicate those principles throughout the organisation. He advised that agreement on the organisation's corporate plan can effectively be achieved through away days which set short and long term plans with ongoing assessment of the plan and self evaluations and appraisals.

- 18.** As the current chairman of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Mr Cushnahan provided examples of recent appraisals of his senior staff and the Chief Executive Officer's corporate plan. He also referred to examples of private sector business failures and successes which demonstrated that the successful businesses were those that had clear long term corporate plans. He explained that similar plans could be applied in the public sector to gain successful outcomes. He referred to principles currently being promoted by the Cabinet Office on leadership and business continuity which required time to implement them successfully and consistently within available resources.
- 19.** Mr Cushnahan answered a range of questions from members on the key issues referred to in his presentation and in particular the application of the various values and principles in the public sector. Mrs Bunting thanked Mr Cushnahan for his informative and worthwhile presentation which provided a useful, private sector perspective from his wealth of experience in that field.

Tour de Table

- 20.** John McMillen provided an outline of his role in the project management of the implementation of the RPA, updated the

meeting on recent developments on the design of the stadium for the Maze site, some restructuring in his area of responsibility and current key issues concerning his Accounting Officer role.

21. Gerry Mulligan reported on developments on the launch by the Minister of the new anti-poverty strategy and the start of consultation in early July 2006 concerning sexual orientation anti-discrimination regulations about access to goods, services and facilities. He also advised that restructuring of his division would be made following Laurene McAlpine's return to the Northern Ireland Courts Service in early July 2006.
22. Colm Shannon advised that the Executive Information Service (EIS) would be requesting briefing from business areas, for a major speech by the Secretary of State in mid-July 2006 and that restructuring would take place soon in EIS with Lorna Armstrong heading up an Advertising Team.
23. Stewart Johnston reported on several major areas of work including North/ South economic co-operation, North/ South infrastructure and the economic development of the North West.

Date of next meeting

24. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 21 September 2006, commencing at 10.45 a.m. in the 4th floor Conference Room E4.02, Castle Buildings.

MARK HIGGINS

7 July 2006