

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 11 APRIL, 2008
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

- Present:** Sir Nigel Hamilton - Chair
Will Haire
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Malcolm McKibbin
Leo O'Reilly
Stephen Peover
Paul Priestly
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Paul Sweeney
- In Attendance:** Rosalie Flanagan
John McMillen
Oswyn Paulin
Iain Greenway - Item 4
Geoffrey Simpson } Item 5
Tony Canavan }
Mick Cory } Item 6
Lorraine Conlon }
Paul Simpson - Item 7
Pauline Boyle - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** Stephen Grimason

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 4 April 2008**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 4 April have been circulated. Any comments/amendments to Pauline.

3. **Matters Arising**

Account NI

An update on the performance of the Account NI system over the first 4 months of operation was tabled at last week's PSG meeting. Additional information was requested on the nature of the 4880 incidents opened as a result of calls to the Account NI Helpdesk during this time.

Diarmuid McLean provided the information in a memo dated 7 April. This will be discussed again at next week's PSG meeting.

[Action: Bruce Robinson]

Top 200

At last week's meeting Stephen Quinn asked colleagues to consider attendance of Permanent Secretaries at the next Top 200 event on 8 & 9 May in Sunningdale. Following discussion Sir Nigel Hamilton asked colleagues to send names of those interested in attending to Pauline by lunchtime on Monday 14 April.

[Action: PSG]

Ministerial Visits to USA

Sir Nigel Hamilton stressed to colleagues the importance to inform the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington at an early stage of any planned Ministerial visits.

Civic Forum

Sir Nigel Hamilton reported that Tony Canavan will undertake the role of Team Leader for the Civic Forum Review on a part-time basis for approximately 6 months.

4. Civil Service Live

Iain Greenway, Chief Executive of OSNI attended the Civil Service Live event from 1-3 April at the QEII Centre in Westminster and joined PSG to give a presentation on this at Sir Nigel Hamilton's request. This was the first ever Civil Service Live event organised by Whitehall and Westminster World, the National School of Government and the Civil Service. More than 6,000 civil servants attended representing every level of civil service grade. During the three days speakers included the Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Business Secretary John Denham, former Home Secretary Charles Clarke and former England rugby team captain Matt Dawson as well as many others. Cabinet Secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell made an appearance on each of the days to talk about innovation along with Dragon Den's Peter Jones in front of a live audience and discussed the future with hundreds of civil servants.

Iain contacted other NICS participants Colin Jack, Damian Prince and Andrew Elliott prior to today's presentation. They agreed the event was a good opportunity to interact between people in sessions and between policy and delivery people. There were strong messages about the need for all staff to have a clear understanding of overall mission and vision and how their work connects to it. The message for the NICS is that resources like the Practical Guide to Policy Making should continue to guide our policy development process. A Civil Service award was presented to the NIO Peace Team who paid full tribute to NICS colleagues for their success as winners of this award.

The NICS participants felt the administration for such a huge event was chaotic and the venue was difficult to navigate around. Some sessions were not advertised in the programme and therefore poorly attended. The general feeling was that it was worth doing again, but probably in a smaller, more focused way.

Iain felt one big event in this unfocused way would not lend itself to NICS colleagues. The NICS have good collegiality at SCS level with staff coming together for a range of events eg Masterclasses but perhaps didn't have the same for middle management levels especially Grade 7/DP. He suggested events aimed at Grade 7/DP level could be considered to enable them to share knowledge across the NICS in a more focused way and particularly in service delivery.

Sir Nigel Hamilton thanked Iain for his presentation and agreed with his suggestion to improve issues of corporacy and to build ethos at Grade 7/DP level. Aideen McGinley along with CAL, Iain Greenway and CPG would give some thought to this and come back to PSG.

[Aideen McGinley]

5. Devolution of Policing & Justice

Bruce Robinson wanted colleagues to be aware of the work being undertaken to plan for the transfer of functions to the devolved sector for the devolution of policing and justice powers. Tony Canavan said the St Andrews Agreement envisages circumstances in which justice and policing functions will be devolved. Although initial expectations were that this could happen by May 2008, it is now considered more likely to be at a later date, subject to party political agreement. The work is cross-cutting in nature and Bruce Robinson's team are grateful to colleagues for their support to date for the Devolved Administration Board and look forward to further cooperation. The Board will provide regular update reports to PSG on progress and will endeavour to keep colleagues advised of significant developments as they arise.

6. 2012 Olympics

Mick Cory and Lorraine Conlon joined PSG to give a presentation on the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Mick Cory said the games present Northern Ireland with a significant opportunity to benefit from a major global event. Northern Ireland will compete for opportunities with other Nations and Regions of the UK, the rest of Ireland and countries in the North West of Europe, all of whom are well aware of the potential, and are already planning for it. NI has set out its plans and ambitions for participating and benefiting from the games.

Mick explained the processes in place. The London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) is responsible to the International Olympic Committee for delivering the Games in 2012 including organising and staging the Games and its ceremonies. DCMS provides overall direction on behalf of the UK government and DCAL attends the DCMS Inter-departmental Steering Group. DCAL are responsible for co-ordinating Northern Ireland's input and represents Northern Ireland on the National and Regions Group which has representatives from Scotland, Wales and each of the 9 English regions. The First Minister and

deputy First Minister have endorsed the 'Principles of Co-operation' agreement with LOCOG. DCAL have set up a 2012 Unit headed by Mick Cory and Lorraine Conlon is the NI co-ordinator. Mick updated on funding and branding issues. Sir Nigel Hamilton asked if plans were in place to visit Beijing to promote Northern Ireland and Mick confirmed a small group, to include the Minister had planned to visit Beijing. Sir Nigel said it would be very useful to put a paper to the Executive and Mick confirmed a paper was ready to be considered.

Sir Nigel thanked Mick and Lorraine and he confirmed PSG are committed and supportive of arrangements and suggested this be tabled at another PSG meeting in approximately 6 months time.

[Action: Paul Sweeney]

7. RPA & Local Government Update

Paul Simpson circulated a presentation on RPA and Local Government. He said the Minister made a statement to the Assembly on 31 March 2008. The review of public administration was set up by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002 to deliver wide-ranging and comprehensive modernisation and reform to the public sector. Paul explained the way forward would be an effective statute-based community planning process with clear requirements placed on public bodies to participate and support the community planning process. He explained the detail of the set up of the council boundaries. Belfast will retain an upper limit of approximately 60 councillors and the remaining councils will have an upper limit of approximately 40 councillors. He said that a severance scheme would be introduced for long serving councillors who would not be standing for re-election. A new Boundaries Commissioner would be appointed by early July to coincide with the passage of Local Government (Boundaries) Bill and the appointment would be for a year. A Strategic Leadership Board has been in existence for a while and is chaired by Minister Foster. Transition Committees will be established to manage the transition between the existing councils and the new bodies. Leo O'Reilly asked about membership of sub-committees and Paul Simpson said he would issue a note to give detail of work of these panels which would include Departmental membership.

John McMillen advised that OFMDFM was reviewing the central arrangements for the management of the RPA.

[Action: Paul Simpson]

8. Executive and Assembly Update

Rosalie Flanagan updated on the Executive meeting held on Thursday 10 April.

9. Economic Conference Update

Stephen Quinn said Minister Dodds updated the NI Executive on arrangements for the Economic Conference at yesterday's Executive meeting. Sir Nigel thanked Stephen for the huge amount of work that had been done and asked him to consider the logistics of visitors between events and passed on the offer of help from Stephen Grimason's Executive Information Service.

10. FOI Update

This would be discussed at next week's meeting.

[Action: Secretary]

11. Tour de Table

Aideen McGinley reported she would attend a PAC hearing on Thursday 17 April in relation to the Hospitality Association of Northern Ireland.

12. Next PSG Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 18 April and will be a Reform PSG.

PAULINE BOYLE
15 April 2008