

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING  
HELD ON FRIDAY 18 APRIL, 2008  
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE  
AT 8.45 AM**

**Present:** Bruce Robinson - Chair  
Will Haire  
Andrew McCormick  
Aideen McGinley  
Malcolm McKibbin  
Leo O'Reilly  
Stephen Peover  
Paul Priestly  
Stephen Quinn  
Alan Shannon  
Paul Sweeney

**In Attendance:** Bob Brown  
Stephen Grimason  
Neill Jackson  
Oswyn Paulin  
Chris Thompson

1. **Apologies:** Sir Nigel Hamilton  
Rosalie Flanagan

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 11 April 2008**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 April were cleared with a few amendments.

3. **Matters Arising**

Top 200

It was agreed that Malcolm McKibbin, Oswyn Paulin, Richard Pengelly, Rosalie Flanagan and Mary Bunting would attend the Top 200 event on 8 & 9 May in Sunningdale.

4. Biodiversity Update

Bob Brown, Chair of Biodiversity Group joined PSG to update Permanent Secretaries on Government progress in delivery of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and to seek measures to consolidate and develop the work achieved. Bob last came to PSG on 17 June 2005. At that time he explained the main requirements for the effective delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy and the need for Departments to commit to it. Clear structures and lines of authority were needed in Departments to include training for key staff. By delivering the Biodiversity Strategy, Departments were addressing a range of other major

commitments including the Water Framework Directive, Birds and Habitats Directives, the NI Wildlife Order, Shaping Our Future, EU policies, and Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy. This could be achieved at little cost to Departments and without major changes to Departmental functions. The NI Biodiversity Group offered support and advice to Departments in implementing the 76 recommendations relating to them in the Strategy.

A Biodiversity Officer, Jackie Morgan, was appointed in May 2006 to advise, guide and support Departments in their preparation of Biodiversity Implementation Plans (BIPs). BIPs have been prepared in all Departments and are ready for action. A workshop was held in February 2008 for biodiversity officers to provide opportunity for further communication and sharing of ideas and best practice. The NIBG are developing a website to provide further advice. The NIBG three-yearly report was due in September 2008, but has been postponed with agreement from the Minister to May 2009. This is to coincide with the timing of the UK reporting cycles on biodiversity.

Bob wanted senior management support to maintain drive the delivery of the BIPs progressed through Departmental Sustainable Development Champions. The Planning and Environmental Policy Group in DOE collates the BIPs and produces annual reports on progress with implementation to the Head of the NI Civil Service who submits to the Minister of Environment for consideration and discussion.

Stephen Peover said the NIBG Strategy has clear linkages to the Sustainable Development Strategy which OFMDFM are responsible for and felt these two could be linked together. In terms of most appropriate time to link into the OFMDFM Sustainable Development Strategy, Bruce Robinson asked John McMillen to check the best time to do this. John said the Sustainable Development Strategy in OFMDFM was beginning the second implementation stage to link into the priorities within the Programme for Government. Bruce thanked Bob for his presentation and for his help on the work to date.

**[Action: John McMillen]**

## **5. Civil Service Reform Report March 2008**

The Civil Service Reform Report had been circulated to PSG colleagues and covers the progress made in NI Public Sector and Civil Service Reform Programmes up to the end of March 2008. Bruce Robinson thanked Chris Thompson for the significant work he accomplished on all the reform projects over the last 4½ years. Bruce asked if colleagues found the Reform Report still had relevance in its current format or did they see merit in doing it differently. There was unanimous support for the report in its current format as it was a valuable tool for taking stock and combining reporting particularly on reform and the delivery of the RPA.

## **6. Workplace 2010**

Chris Thompson updated PSG on Workplace 2010 and reinforced the importance of accurate headcount projections over the CSR period for the negotiations of the WP2010 contract. Following discussion Chris said he and his team, along with

CPG would work with Departments on this. He said he would circulate the Clare House evaluation report to PSG.

**[Action: Chris Thompson]**

## **7. Printed Related Services**

Chris Thompson updated PSG on the work undertaken in EIS Division in OFMDFM on print and related services to improve the quality and costs of the service. Traditionally print has been the key method in meeting the communication of information demand, both internally and externally of the NICS. In recent years there has been a move towards other communication channels. These have tended to be technological and we have for example seen growth in web sites and Chris would propose a move away from the print method and encourage an electronic publishing policy. A corporate printing service was established in 1983 known as the Central Print Unit. This Unit was the largest in-house printing service within the NICS but with the decrease in the volume of work would need to be included in a strategic review of print related services. Chris said it would be a good time to look across the Civil Service to improve the print related service and consider a way forward. The Director of Corporate Services, DFP will sponsor and fund the review. The EIS in OFMDFM will project manage the review and the Central Procurement Directorate and the Delivery and Innovation Division within the Department of Finance and Personnel will provide advice, trend data and consultancy service.

Will Haire said the Department of Education will have difficulties with the electronic delivery of some of their printed guidance but he would speak to Chris Thompson separately in relation to this.

PSG were content to proceed with the strategic review to include a stakeholder cost element.

Bruce Robinson took the opportunity to remind colleagues that Chris Thompson's retirement reception would take place on Wednesday 30 April at 3.30 in the Glasshouse, Stormont Estate. Colleagues thanked Chris and offered him best wishes on his imminent retirement.

## **8. Executive & Assembly Update**

Neill Jackson said the next Executive meeting would take place on Thursday 24 April 2008 and gave a read out of possible agenda items. Dates for future Executive meetings had not yet been agreed due to the Investment Conference in May and the change of First Minister.

## **9. Economic Conference Update**

Stephen Quinn updated PSG on arrangements for the Economic Conference with good acceptance rates.

## **10. FOI Update**

PSG noted David Lammey's updates of 11 and 18 April.

## 11. Hospitality Association for Northern Ireland

Aideen McGinley updated PSG on her appearance at the PAC hearing on Thursday 17 April in relation to the Hospitality Association of Northern Ireland. Matters raised by the Commissioner for Public Appointments would be followed up with Sir Nigel Hamilton.

**[Action: Sir Nigel Hamilton]**

### Invitations

It was agreed that Stephen Quinn and John McMillen would attend the CBI Lunch on Tuesday 20 May.

### Water Charges

Paul Priestly updated PSG on Water Charges.

## 12. **Next PSG Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Friday 25 April 2008 and the agenda will include the Review of Environmental Governance.

**PAULINE BOYLE**

21 April 2008