

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 23 MAY, 2008
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

- Present:** Sir Nigel Hamilton – Chair
Doreen Brown
Edgar Jardine
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Malcolm McKibbin
Leo O'Reilly
Stephen Peover
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
- In Attendance:** Dr Michael McBride - Item 4
Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Grimason
John McMillen
Oswyn Paulin
Pauline Boyle - Secretary
1. **Apologies:** Will Haire
Paul Priestly
Paul Sweeney

2. Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 16 May 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May have been circulated. Any comments/amendments to Pauline.

3. Matters Arising

Annual Reports and Accounts – Special Advisers

Leo O'Reilly confirmed he has circulated a Dear Accounting Officer letter to all Departments on disclosure of Special Advisers salaries in individual Departmental Resource Accounts.

PSG Away Day

Bruce Robinson confirmed his office have identified dates for a PSG Away Day.

4. Public Health Presentation by Chief Medical Officer

Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland joined PSG to give a presentation on Public Health. His objectives today were to remind PSG members of the centrality of population health and wellbeing to everything that the Executive is seeking to achieve; to summarise ongoing work in relation to the cross-government Investing for Health strategy; and to encourage greater focus on health improvement in the development of policies across all departments. He hoped as a result to affirm the Executive's Investing for Health strategy is both a collective responsibility and vehicle to achieve our various departmental objectives.

Dr McBride's presentation was not about illness and the treatment of ill-health but was about health and wellbeing and about the need for effective interventions to improve the overall physical and mental health and wellbeing of our population. It is increasingly clear that low levels of physical and mental health and wellbeing in the population make it harder to achieve economic, educational and indeed just about any other strategic outcomes in which Government has an interest. Poor strategic decisions in relation to urban planning, housing, agriculture, social development to highlight a few examples can have severe long term implications for physical and mental wellbeing in a population.

Dr McBride gave statistics on healthy life expectancy rates in males/females in NI compared to the rest of the UK and in areas of deprivation. He gave other statistics on health inequalities on infant mortality, circulatory and respiratory diseases and cancer and explained the main determinants of health eg income and social status; social support networks; education and literacy; employment and working conditions; social and physical environments; personal health practices and coping skills; gender and culture. He said all these issues fall within the remit of all Government departments and we must work in partnership across Government and ensure that health is a key issue in the development of any long-term policies and strategies.

The Investing for Health strategy, introduced in 2002 was seen as a ground breaking initiative and was cited by the then Chief Medical Officer for England as the best public health strategy in the English-speaking language. A Ministerial Group on Public Health meets to ensure oversight progress by all departments of the strategy. Dr McBride said it is now time to make an assessment of how well the strategy is doing. A review of the strategy is planned for later this year. During the review of the Investing for Health strategy, consideration will be given to the role, remit and membership of a Ministerial Group on Public Health to ensure it remains effective in driving change.

Sir Nigel Hamilton thanked Dr McBride for his presentation. He said this was a very important time to roll out investment in health and said PSG fully supported all this work and invited Dr McBride to come back to PSG at a later date.

5. Assembly and Executive Update

Rosalie Flanagan updated PSG on the Executive meeting held on Thursday 22 May 2008. She said the next meeting of the Executive would take place on Thursday 5 June 2008.

6. FOI Update

Sir Nigel Hamilton drew PSG's attention to a paper to be considered by the Executive at its 5 June 2008 meeting on Procedural Guidance – Freedom of Information. He reminded colleagues that comments on this paper were due back on 23 May.

7. Tour de Table

Flood Policy Management Review

Malcolm McKibbin thanked colleagues for their responses on his draft paper on the review of Flood Policy Management.

Mitchell Conference

Bruce Robinson said he attended a dinner on Thursday 22 May. This dinner was hosted by Senator George Mitchell as part of a two day conference from Thursday 22 –Friday 23 May 2008 as part of Queens University's Centenary celebrations. The event was arranged under the auspices of the international alliance between Queen's University Belfast and the Georgetown University in Washington DC, in collaboration with Co-operation Ireland.

Libraries Bill

Edgar Jardine said the Libraries Bill will reach its final stage on Tuesday 27 May.

PAULINE BOYLE

27 May 2008