

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING  
HELD ON FRIDAY 25 APRIL, 2008  
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE  
AT 8.45 AM**

**Present:** Sir Nigel Hamilton - Chair  
Will Haire  
Greg McConnell  
Andrew McCormick  
Malcolm McKibbin  
Leo O'Reilly  
Stephen Peover  
Paul Priestly  
Stephen Quinn  
Bruce Robinson  
Paul Sweeney

**In Attendance:** Michael Ferguson - Item 6  
Stephen Grimason  
Neill Jackson  
David Lammey - Item 8  
Pauline Boyle - Secretary

**1. Apologies:** Aideen McGinley  
Alan Shannon  
Rosalie Flanagan  
John McMillen

**2. Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 18 April 2008**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 18 April have been circulated. Any comments/amendments to Pauline.

**3. Matters Arising**

Commissioner for Public Appointments

Sir Nigel Hamilton said he would write soon to Felicity Huston, the Commissioner for Public Appointments about the allegations she made to the PAC Committee on Thursday 17 April in relation to conflicts of interest and compliance with the OCPANI Code of Practice and ask her to provide details of the evidence on which she based her comments. PSG agreed with this approach.

**4. Executive & Assembly Update**

Neill Jackson updated PSG on the Executive meeting held on Thursday 24 April. He said the Executive would meet on 15 and 22 May. He said the Assembly are prepared to introduce a facility to make Written Statements. Amendments would

be needed to the Regulations and guidelines would be drawn up over the next few months.

## **5. Economic Conference Update**

Stephen Quinn reported most encouraging acceptance rates for the Economic Conference. Colleagues discussed how the Varney 2 report, which was due to be published next Wednesday, could be handled at the conference. Leo O'Reilly said Minister Robinson met the Chief Secretary and the Secretary of State last Monday and they were given a presentation by Varney of what would be in his report. Leo said he would circulate the presentation to colleagues.

**[Action: Leo O'Reilly]**

## **6. Independent Board Members**

Michael Ferguson joined PSG for this item. Future appointments of Independent Board Members was raised at recent PSG meetings and OFMDFM were asked to collate information on existing Independent Board Members. Michael Ferguson produced a paper for the meeting which included an up to date register of existing Board members. Following discussion PSG agreed:

- their commitment to the concept
- a common induction package should be drawn up
- learning takes time
- staggered appointments – maximum 6 years
- cross-use eg Audit and Risk Committees
- to continue policy – Departments can proceed to appoint as and when necessary

On remuneration packages, Sir Nigel Hamilton asked Michael Ferguson to contact the NIO to compare rates of pay. Michael will consider an induction package and report back to Sir Nigel Hamilton on these two issues.

**[Action: Michael Ferguson]**

## **7. Head of Profession for Policy Delivery**

At a PSG meeting last December it was agreed that Paul Priestly should continue as Head of Profession for Policy Delivery. Paul wanted to report on progress to date. The Policy Champions Network has been set up with representation from most Departments and CPG and supported by the Policy Innovation Unit in OFMDFM with a focus on delivering the work plan endorsed by PSG. An accredited learning and development programme focussed at staff at Grade 7 level has been drawn up based around the 4 stage policy cycle. Work is in hand by a CAL-led project team to pilot the training programme. Steve Hare has engaged with NSG, Scotland and Wales and hopes to pilot the Package in September.

PSG strongly endorsed Paul's proposals and were alert to the context and future needs of the SCS. PSG would welcome further thoughts and proposals and Paul will report back at a future PSG meeting.

## 8. FOI Update

PSG reviewed current FOI requests. David Lammey would offer central advice on one particular request.

## 9. Tour de Table

### Spring Sunningdale

Following Sir Nigel Hamilton's attendance at the Spring Sunningdale event on 17 and 18 April he has written to Bruce Robinson and Derek Baker on the National School for Government and Sunningdale Initiative and Sir Nigel asked Bruce to share this information with Paul Priestly.

**[Action: Bruce Robinson]**

### Assembly Questions

Sir Nigel Hamilton informed PSG that he asked Gerry O'Neill to undertake a quick review of performance of Northern Ireland Departments in answering Assembly Questions to identify best practice. As part of this review Gerry will visit Departments commencing on Tuesday 29 April.

### Leadership Development Programme

Bruce Robinson reported the Leadership Development Programme would be launched today to Grade 6/7s by CAL.

## 10. Next PSG Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 2 May and is an HR PSG.

**PAULINE BOYLE**  
**28 April 2008**