

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 25 MAY 2007
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM, JAMES HOUSE,
GASWORKS BUSINESS PARK
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Will Haire
Wilfie Hamilton
John Hunter
Edgar Jardine
Gerry Lavery
Andrew McCormick
Barney McGahan
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Stephen Peover

In Attendance: Rosalie Flanagan
John McMillen
Oswyn Paulin
Emma Wilson - Agenda item 5
John O'Neill } Agenda item 6
Patricia McAuley }
Debbie Sweeney - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** Malcolm McKibbin
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Stephen Grimason

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 25 May 2007**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Executive and Assembly Update**

Rosalie Flanagan updated PSG on the Executive Meeting held on Thursday 24 May.

Nigel confirmed the role, agreed by the Executive, of the Junior Ministers.

5. **PSG E – Citizen-Centred Service Transformation**

Will Haire outlined the work of PSG E and the recommendations in his paper to redefine its role to focus on citizen-centred service transformation.

PSG agreed and supported the recommendations of the group to focus on citizen centred service transformation and agreed to Will's recommendation to reconsider PSG E's membership and representation which included a number of external members.

6. **Welfare Reform**

Barney McGahan introduced John O'Neill and Patricia McAuley who outlined the changes to Welfare Reform.

John said the Welfare Reform Order was part of the process of welfare reform and the modernisation of the benefits system.

The Reform makes provision for employment and support allowance which will replace incapacity benefit and income support on grounds of incapacity. A further significant change makes provision for the introduction of a local housing allowance across the private rented sector and changes to the design and administration of housing benefit.

Patricia explained the workings of the 'Pathways to Work' programme which delivers a comprehensive package of support measures to help sick and disabled clients consider work, at some stage, where that is possible. Patricia said a fresh approach of contacting the client before interviewing and working with them to encourage people to try some work was having a significant positive impact and was well received by staff and external partners. Andrew McCormick said his department was very supportive of the Welfare Reform work.

Nigel thanked John and Patricia for their presentation, he said that area of Reform was an issue which the new Ministers will wish to focus on.

7. **FEI Scholarships 2007**

PSG agreed to issue a note to SCS entry level informing them of the possible course in September and gauge the level of support.

It was agreed that the matter would be discussed at PSG on 1 June.

[Action: Permanent Secretaries]

8. **Tour de Table**

PAC

PSG noted that Gerry McGinn would appear before PAC next week.

Government Legal Services

Ossie Paulin said the launch of the Government Legal Service had been very successful and well attended.

City of Derry Airport

Gerry McGinn reported on the closure of City of Derry Airport.

Health Visit

Andrew McCormick said the Minister had visited Omagh Hospital.

Department of Justice

John Hunter updated PSG on the creation of a Department of Justice.

Retirement Invite

It was agreed that attendance at Stephen Kingon's retirement be discussed at next week's PSG.

[Action: Permanent Secretaries]

Next Week's PSG

PSG on 1 June will be on HR PSG and will be held in the Glasshouse, Stormont Caste.

**DEBBIE SWEENEY
29 MAY 2007**