

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING  
HELD ON FRIDAY 9 MAY, 2008  
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE  
AT 8.45 AM**

**Present:** Bruce Robinson - Chair  
Will Haire  
Ronnie Jordan  
Gregg McConnell  
Andrew McCormick  
Leo O'Reilly  
Stephen Peover  
Paul Priestly  
Stephen Quinn  
Paul Sweeney

**In Attendance:** Cynthia Smith } Item 6  
Jim Wilkinson }  
Rosalie Flanagan  
John McMillen  
Pauline Boyle - Secretary

**1. Apologies:** Sir Nigel Hamilton  
Aideen McGinley  
Malcolm McKibbin  
Alan Shannon  
Oswyn Paulin

**2. Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 2 May 2008**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May were agreed.

**3. Matters Arising**

Economic Conference

Bruce Robinson thanked Stephen Quinn and asked him to pass on thanks and congratulations to Invest NI and all those involved in the very successful arrangements for the economic conference. He was highly impressed by the whole event and felt it showcased Northern Ireland and our business extremely well. All PSG members endorsed his comments. Stephen Quinn said he would be writing to those involved and would include Permanent Secretaries support.

### Grade 3s

Bruce Robinson asked colleagues, who had not already written to him, to let him have any requests for Grade 3 moves or retirements over the next 12 months within their Departments as soon as possible.

**[Action: Permanent Secretaries]**

### Annual Reports and Accounts

Leo O'Reilly has produced a draft memo on disclosure of Special Advisers salary in Annual Reports and Accounts and would send to Permanent Secretaries for consideration.

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

### Disability Action – Statutory Duty Post

Leo O'Reilly said he has written to Monica Wilson on behalf of all Departments to say they would not be contributing to the annual cost of a Statutory Duty Post in Disability Action.

### Arms Length Bodies

Leo O'Reilly has produced a draft paper on Arms Length Bodies and following discussion it was agreed this would be a substantive agenda item for PSG later this month. PSG to note.

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

## **4. Executive & Assembly Update**

Rosalie Flanagan reported on possible scenarios and dates for the handover to the new First Minister following the resignation of the current First Minister.

She said there would not be a Ministerial Representatives meeting today.

PSG discussed the number and complexity of Assembly Questions. Bruce Robinson said following the completion of the review of Assembly Questions by Gerry O'Neill this should be a substantive agenda item for PSG.

**[Action: Secretary]**

## **5. FOI Update**

David Lammey would prepare a paper for discussion at next week's meeting.

**[Action: Secretary]**

## 6. Reform of the Planning System

Stephen Peover said the Minister is very keen to take forward the reform of the Planning System and it is high on the work programme. A meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 14 May with the Minister to discuss key issues and it is proposed to have a package for announcement by the Minister before the summer recess.

Cynthia Smith gave an overview of the reform programme and timeline and Jim Wilkinson, the project manager, outlined the proposals. The aim of the reform programme is to bring about improvements in the planning system to ensure that it:

- supports the future economic and social development needs of NI;
- is delivered at the right level in relation to different types of development;
- has streamlined processes that are effective, efficient and improve the predictability and quality of service delivery; and
- allows full and open consultation and engages communities.

Professor Greg Lloyd of University of Liverpool was appointed as the Independent Expert in December 2007. His role is to provide the Minister with advice on the broad direction of medium to long-term reform measures and work with planning service officials and meet with key stakeholders. Professor Lloyd briefed the Environment Committee in April 2008 and his final paper issued to the Minister at the end of April.

It is planned to have the formal consultation document issued late summer/early autumn. There was a wide ranging discussion on the key issues.

Stephen Peover paid tribute to the planning team for the huge amount of work undertaken so far on the reform of the planning system.

## 7. Tour de Table

### Water Charging

Paul Priestly said water charging would be discussed at the Ministerial Sub-Committee next week.

### Local Government Boundaries Commissioner

Stephen Peover said 3 applications have been received for the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner post.

**PAULINE BOYLE**  
**12 May 2008**