

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP EXTENDED MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2009, IN THE GLASSHOUSE,
STORMONT CASTLE AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Bruce Robinson - Chair
Will Haire
Aideen McGinley
Michael McBride
Malcolm McKibbin
Stephen Peover
Paul Priestly
Alan Shannon
David Sterling
Paul Sweeney
David Thomson

In attendance: Sir Peter Ricketts }
Anthony Cary } Item 6
Aidan Liddle }
Nick Perry }
Peter May } Item 5
Bill McCluggage }
Aileen McClintock } Item 8
Iain Fleming }
Oswyn Paulin }
John McMillen }
Maurice Dowling }
Stephen Grimason }
Pauline Boyle - Secretary }

1. **Apologies:** Leo O'Reilly
Stephen Quinn

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2009**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March have been circulated. Any comments/amendments to Pauline Boyle.

3. **Matters Arising**

Emerald Fund

John McMillen is still investigating how money from the Emerald Fund has been distributed. He will follow-up with Alan Shannon and Aideen McGinley and report back to PSG on 3 April. **[Action: John McMillen]**

Sir Gus O'Donnell

Bruce Robinson confirmed that his office circulated to Permanent Secretaries the letter of thanks from Sir Gus O'Donnell following his visit to Northern Ireland on 12-13 March 2009.

Deloitte

Leo O'Reilly not attending PSG today and will report back to PSG on 3 April 2009 on the outstanding action point on the Deloitte Report which quoted salaries of Northern Ireland Permanent Secretaries.

[Action: Leo O'Reilly]

4. Assembly & Executive Update

Rosalie Flanagan updated on the Executive meeting held on Thursday 26 March 2009. She reported that a schedule of planned meetings of the Executive Committee between April and July has issued to Departments. Rosalie would write to Departments requesting an indication of business to be taken over that period to assist a process of formal planning and seeking Ministerial agreement to Executive agendas.

The FM and dFM would make a statement to the Assembly on Monday 30 March 2009 on their recent visit to the US.

The Assembly would rise on Friday 3 April for the Easter recess and return on Monday 20 April.

The first meeting of the Cross Sector Advisory Forum would be held on Monday 6 April 2009.

5. NIO Matters

Nick Perry updated on NIO matters. It was decided that the NIO would meet with relevant NI Departments ie OFMDFM, DSD, DEL and DE and report back to the PSG meeting on 24 April.

[Action: Secretary]

6. Sir Peter Ricketts – Reform & International Relations

As part of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Heads of Mission Leadership Week from 23-27 March Sir Peter Ricketts visited Northern Ireland and as part of his programme joined PSG. He introduced Anthony Cary the Canadian High Commissioner who is responsible for Inward Investment into Northern Ireland in his leadership work for the FCO. Sir Peter said in the past Head of Missions met once a year in London only to discuss policy and corporate issues. Part of a recent review had recommended Heads of Mission should visit rest of the UK as part of this programme. The FCO is

facing enormous changes and has responsibility for international links. Its four main policy issues are - conflict; low carbon/high growth working for the economy; counter terrorism and enforcing international institutions. Its three main service delivery issues are – consular assistance; visa work and UK Trade and Investment.

There is a global network for the whole of the UK. While InvestNI have a number of offices around the UK, the FCO links are much more extensive. Sir Peter said the FCO would be interested to engage with officials in Northern Ireland Departments. Bruce Robinson thanked Sir Peter and Anthony for their presentation.

John McMillen said a draft International Relations Strategy is with Ministers at present and when approved by Ministers would go formally to Departments.

7. Election Guidance

Machinery Government Division in OFMDFM had prepared a draft paper on Election Guidance which was circulated for today's meeting. It was agreed that Permanent Secretaries would let Rosalie Flanagan have any comments on this and this would be on the agenda for the PSG meeting on 3 April.

[Action: Permanent Secretaries & Secretary]

8. Digital Preservation and Long Term Access to Digital Information

Aileen McClintock wished to give an overview and highlight the risk to the Civil Service of not maintaining records as stipulated under the terms of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923. PRONI's statutory functions are to receive and preserve Northern Ireland Official records and make them available either in paper or electronic format.

The RecordsNI project was completed in 2007 and on back of this PRONI has an interest in the new system and the records retained. Aileen said DID in DFP is taking this forward.

Ian Fleming said over the last 18 months Government records have moved to being mainly created and stored in electronic record-creating systems and the NICS now faces the requirement to maintain long term access and to support PRONI's legislative requirement to preserve such records. Consideration needs to be given now on how to manage digital preservation. Long term access to information is the responsibility of individual Departments and some Departments are responsible for certain records in a format which can transfer into PRONI's digital repository.

Bill McCluggage said DFP would be involved to assess digital preservation; web archiving and long term records activity in Departments and to consider the most appropriate mechanism for taking forward. DFP have a draft

business case approved by the DCAL economist on delivery of long term record access.

Following discussion it was agreed that the PSG Sub-Group on Communications and DFP would consider the way ahead and produce an action plan. Bruce Robinson said it would be useful to have a timeframe for that piece of work and suggested this be put on the Agenda for PSG late May/early June.

[Action: Bill McCluggage]

9. **Tour de Table**

RPA

Michael McBride said Phase II RPA arrangements will be launched by Minister McGimpsey on Wednesday 1 April.

Housing Budget

Alan Shannon updated on the housing budget.

Budget

Paul Priestly said it would be useful to have a substantive discussion on budget issues. PSG agreed and David Thomson was asked to relay this to Leo O'Reilly who would indicate the best date to come back to PSG.

[Action: Leo O'Reilly]

Ards/Down Area Plan

Paul Priestly said the Ards/Down Area Plan would be launched on Monday 30 March.

Business in the Community

Aideen McGinley reported that Business in the Community will host an event in Hillsborough Castle in September on NI Cares.

Education Boards

Will Haire said the budget for the Education Boards have been agreed for this financial year.

Contamination issue

Malcolm McKibbin said the cull of animals had begun.

PAC

Malcolm attended a PAC on Thursday 26 March on Bovine Tuberculosis.

Honours

Bruce Robinson reminded colleagues he had written to them on 23 March asking for nominations for the New Year 2010 Honours Round. He asked Permanent Secretaries to give this priority in their Departments.

PAULINE BOYLE

2 April 2009