

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2006 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Will Haire
John Hunter
Edgar Jardine
Noel Lavery
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Carol Moore
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Pat Toal

In Attendance: Denis McCartney
Stephen Grimason
Chris Thompson } - Agenda Item 4
Olive Maybin }
Nigel Woods }
Alan Bronte } - Agenda Item 5
David Rainey }
Debbie Sweeney - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Peover
Nick Perry
Stephen Quinn

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 17 February**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Workplace 2010**

Chris said the programme had made substantial progress over the last six months, during which Permanent Secretaries and their Management Board members have been fully engaged on a Departmental basis.

PSG discussed Workplace 2010 and noted the programme's principles, the Strategic Development Plan and the TUPE implications.

Chris confirmed he would return to PSG in April with a further update.

5. **Rating Reform Presentation**

Nigel Woods, Alan Bronte and David Rainey made their presentation on Rating Reform to PSG.

Nigel said the Rating Policy Review was launched by the NI Executive in 2000 to establish a fairer way to share the burden of local taxation and help meet the costs of regional and local public services. Domestic property would be re-valued on a capital value basis. The current rateable values (NAVs) are based on late-1960s rental values and there are many anomalies and inequities in the distribution of the rating burden.

The new capital values will be more transparent, understandable and re-distribute the rate burden upwards; 60% of households will benefit or be unaffected by the move. There are currently 700,000 properties on the list and the capital value definition equates to the price which the property might reasonably have been expected to realise if it had been sold in the open market at 1 January 2005. Alan Bronte explained that in March/June 2006, VLA would be publishing an advance leaflet to households explaining the system and would be holding workshops with advice services to help with a greater understanding of the system.

Stephen Grimason confirmed that Colin Ross and Paddy Cullen were working on Timelines to access what information would be hitting NI households and when.

6. **Public Sector Pay**

Bruce Robinson updated PSG on Leo O'Reilly's meeting with Tom Wechsler from the Cabinet Office, to discuss the implication of the new Public Service Pay Committee gateway arrangements for the management of public sector pay in Northern Ireland. The meeting also considered the handling and publication of the national Pay Review Body reports in Whitehall. The reports have important and immediate implications for the Health Education sectors in Northern Ireland.

7. **Tour de Table**

PSC

John Hunter updated PSG on the meeting with NICICTU to discuss the PSC.

The announcement of the PSC would be made by the Secretary of State as a Parliamentary Statement.

Invite to Leadership

PSG agreed that Alan Shannon would attend the Leadership Seminar. Nigel Hamilton said if other Permanent Secretaries were able to attend, they should make the necessary arrangements.

Institution of Structural Engineers

PSG agreed that John Hunter would attend the Institution of Structural Engineers' Annual Dinner on 8 March 2006.

IBEC/CBI Joint Business Dinner

Attendance at the dinner on 8 March was discussed at PSG on 27 January. It was agreed that Nigel Hamilton, with a representative from DETI (Wilfie Hamilton) and DE (Eddie Rooney) would attend.

Chartered Accountants' Dinner

Bruce Robinson said he was attending the Institute of Chartered Accountants' dinner on 9 March.

Olympics 2012

Edgar Jardine informed PSG that Lord Coe would visit Northern Ireland on 2 March.

HE Strike

Aideen McGinley reported that there would be a one-day strike by HE Colleges.

Avian Flu

Pat Toal updated PSG on the Avian Flu situation. The registration of poultry in Northern Ireland had been completed. Bert Houston had undertaken media interviews to keep the public up to date with the situation.

Portadown Package

Alan Shannon said that DSD has offered over £600,000 to local regeneration company, Portadown 2000, to implement the town's Development Framework.

Education Announcements

Will Haire said there would be announcements on schools' capital and integrated options.

Next Week's PSG

Next week's meeting will be the monthly HR meeting.