

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 11 MAY 2007
IN LECTURE THEATRE, CASTLE BUILDINGS
AT 8.45 AM**

- Present:** John Hunter - Chair
Will Haire
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Malcolm McKibbin
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Paul Simpson
Paul Sweeney
- In Attendance:** Rosalie Flanagan
Oswyn Paulin
Des Armstrong - Agenda item 5
David Orr - " " "
Pauline Boyle - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** Nigel Hamilton
Stephen Peover

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 4 May 2007**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 May have been circulated. Any amendments to be forwarded to Debbie Sweeney

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Devolution Update**

Business in the Assembly

Rosalie Flanagan reported that the Business Committee met on Wednesday 7 May. She asked PSG to ensure their Ministers contacted their members on the Business Committee to ensure individual Departmental interests were looked after.

[Action: Permanent Secretaries]

Executive Committee

Rosalie explained the Agenda for Executive Committee meetings would be known and issued a few weeks prior to each meeting. This would allow time for drafting and clearance by Ministers/Special Advisers. She said lists had issued to Departments.

Written and Oral Questions

Rosalie said guidance along with templates had been issued on process and timeline for Assembly Questions.

Executive Meeting

Rosalie Flanagan was in attendance at the first Executive Meeting of the new Devolved Government on 10 May. She gave a read out of proceedings and particularly the Ministerial Code and Procedural Guidance, the Chancellor's Package, Programme for Government and Public Spending Priorities, deferral of the introduction of water and sewerage charges, the legislative programme, special advisers and the North South Ministerial Council/British Irish Council/Civic Forum.

Rosalie said a meeting has been organised next Thursday with Ministerial Representatives, Advisers and officials to discuss draft Executive papers. It is planned that draft papers should be circulated to other Ministers for comment, finalised at Ministerial Representatives meeting and taken to Committee or referred back to Ministers. She explained the process would evolve over time.

5. **Procurement Issues**

David Orr and Des Armstrong attended PSG meeting to discuss key issues in advance of the Procurement Board meeting on Thursday 31 May.

VfM Procurement Gains

David said a draft paper on value for money gains had issued to Departments and although the position had improved over the last 6 months the target of £250m saving could only be achieved through sustained effort by Departments and their CoPEs have been asked to put in place an appropriate audit or review mechanism to ensure the measurement methodology had been applied and that figures recorded were accurate. David was working closely with Barry Edgar, NIAO in relation to audits.

Aideen McGinley thanked CPD for their help in the past and David said that he or Brendan O'Neill would be happy to meet with Departmental Boards if requested.

Alan Shannon queried how some of the percentage targets had been set and David asked him to highlight this point at the next Procurement Board meeting.

[Action: Alan Shannon]

Achieving Excellence in Construction

Des Armstrong said there was good co-operation from Departments and the reports received from the Achieving Excellence Champions demonstrate improvement and indicate that the public sector is on target to implement the Achieving Excellence initiative by March 2008. The Achieving Excellence Champions agreed that CPD would commission the Constructing Excellence Centre at the University of Ulster to validate the self-assessment return made by the group in relation to the National Audit Office Maturity Matrix.

It was recognised that the stakeholder issues were more complex within the Schools and Youth and Social Housing programme. However both programmes have committed to the Achieving Excellence initiative in their procurement strategies.

John Hunter thanked David and Des and said it was useful and a good initiative to discuss these issues before the Procurement Board Meeting.

6. Remuneration of Special Advisers Update

This was discussed under Agenda Item 4.

7. e-HR Update

As discussed at last week's PSG meeting, John Hunter gave an update following Derek Baker's meeting with Fujitsu last week.

8. Tour de Table

RPA

Aideen McGinley and Paul Simpson commented on the RPA paper issued by Stephen Peover on 10 May which asked for comments by 4 pm on 11 May.

Government Skills – Employee Survey

Aideen McGinley said Derek Baker had written to Personnel Directors across all Departments about a forthcoming Government Skills Employee Survey. This is a short questionnaire and Aideen will write to PSG and ask colleagues to encourage participation in their respective Departments.

Civil Service Reform

Bruce Robinson said Peter Robinson agreed that a paper should be tabled at an early Executive meeting.

DETI

Stephen Quinn gave an indication of imminent diary events for his Minister, Nigel Dodds.

9. **Next Week's PSG**

PSG on 18 May will be held in Netherleigh.

PAULINE BOYLE

15 May 2007