

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2007
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Alan Shannon
Will Haire
Don Hill
Ronnie Jordan
Aideen McGinley
Leo O'Reilly
Stephen Peover
Stephen Quinn
David Sterling
Paul Sweeney

In Attendance: Stephen Grimason
Oswyn Paulin
Stewart Johnston
Nuala Kerr } Agenda item 4
Tim Devine }
Debbie Sweeney - Secretary

1. Apologies: Nigel Hamilton
Andrew McCormick
Malcolm McKibbin
Bruce Robinson
Rosalie Flanagan
John McMillen

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 2 November 2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November were agreed with two minor amendments.

3. Matters Arising

Classroom Assistants

Will informed PSG that NIPSA had voted in favour of strike action. The GMB had unanimously voted to accept the offer.

4. NI Position on Leitch

Nuala Kerr said the Leitch Review was commissioned to identify the UK's Optimal Skills mix for the year 2020, to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice, and to consider the policy implications of achieving the level of change required.

There have been ongoing discussions on how Leitch recommendations could be taken forward and these have focussed on setting up the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and on SSC Reform and Re-licensing.

Nuala explained that NI already had a Skills Strategy, the implementation plan, Success through Skills was published in February 2006 and is due for review in 2008. The review would provide the Department with an opportunity to evidence progress to date and produce new targets set out in the Leitch Review.

Nuala updated PSG on the current position in NI and the proposed way forward with an investment in education and training and developing skills for economic growth.

PSG noted and agreed the proposed way forward.

5. Executive and Assembly Update

Stewart Johnston briefed PSG on the Executive meeting held on Thursday 8 November.

6. Tour de Table

Investment Strategy

Will asked for clarification around data provided and information sought by SIB about potential capital allocations in Years 4 to 10 of the investment planning period.

[Action: Leo O'Reilly]

EU Matters

Leo said the Junior Ministers were keen to step up engagement in EU matters both at home and in Brussels.

The Junior Ministers were going to chair a meeting of senior officials from across departments to agree a plan of action over the next 2/3 months.

Leo asked Permanent Secretaries to ensure the representative attending the meeting would take responsibility for the forthcoming action points.

[Permanent Secretaries to note]

Farmers Protest

Ronnie Jordan informed PSG that there would be a farmers protest on Monday 12 November at Parliament Buildings to protest about poor meat prices.

Whitehall Civil Service Awards

Aideen said the NIO had picked up two awards at the annual Whitehall and Westminster Civil Service Awards in London. They won the leadership award and the overall award for their dedication to the peace process.

Next Week's PSG

There will be no meeting on Friday 16 November due to attendance at the Celtic Forum in Edinburgh.

DEBBIE SWEENEY
November 2007