

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 9 JUNE 2006 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Derek Baker
Will Haire
Greg McConnell
Andrew McCormick
Stephen Peover
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
David Sterling
Paul Sweeney
Pat Toal

In Attendance: Stewart Johnston - Agenda Item 3
Linda Brown - Agenda Item 4
David Thompson - Agenda Item 5
Tom Reid - Agenda Item 6
Debbie Sweeney - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** John Hunter
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Nick Perry
Alan Shannon
Denis McCartney
Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Grimason

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 2 June**

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

3. **Assembly Update**

Stewart Johnston updated PSG on Assembly business.

The Preparation for Government Committee (PfGC) had met but failed to elect a Chair and to reach agreement on the nature of business to be referred to the Business Committee.

4. **RPA Central Joint Forum Update**

Linda Brown updated PSG on David Hanson's meeting with the PSC.

The PSC stressed the need for ongoing visible leadership from the Minister and Nigel Hamilton. They said there was a need to promulgate more widely the role and remit of the PSC and that Departments factor the PSC into their implementation plans.

The Minister suggested a meeting with the PSC every 3 months.

Linda said the Minister would be meeting the Secretary of State on 19 June on RPA/e-HR and the implications of TUPE.

Nigel Hamilton said he would welcome further discussions on the handling of RPA HR issues at PSG on 16 June.

5. **PAC Report on Emerging Business Trust**

David Thomson said following PSG on 26 May he had produced a paper summarising the key recommendations of general application for discussion at PSG.

The recommendations were set out in five sections:

(a) Appointment and Performance of Board Members

PSG discussed appointments and performance of Board Members and yearly assessment of performance. Nigel Hamilton said he would ask Geoffrey Simpson for advice.

[Action: Nigel Hamilton]

(b) Communication

PSG agreed that Departments needed to ensure the PAC recommendations are fully communicated. David Thomson said he would consider a SCS Masterclass to ensure the message of the necessity of proper conduct of public business is conveyed to senior staff.

[Action: David Thomson]

(c) Third Party Organisations (TPOs)

It was agreed that David should seek advice from Treasury and Cabinet Office as to a clear definition of TPOs.

Derek Baker said he would send David a list of the existing Voluntary Sectors.

[Action: David Thomson and Derek Baker]

(d) Conflicts of Interest

PSG agreed that staff, Board Members of NDPBs and TPOs understand the high ethical standards to which they are required to operate.

6. **PSG Sub-Committee D**

Stephen Quinn introduced the paper from Sub-Committee D which outlined the key findings which emerged from departmental audits of policy-making and legislative capacity.

Stephen said while there had been progress in policy-making, there was a need to develop skills. The recommendations focus on increasing capacity through training, practical experience, support from experienced staff, the production of more practical guidance and training aimed at staff from EOII to G7, more effective communication and co-ordination across Departments and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the policy and legislation improvement work programmes. Tom Reid said the key implementation role would fall to PIU and CPG with input from the SSC.

Tom said a Policylink website would be developed and PIU will develop a toolkit for the development and evaluation of policy. The toolkit would complement the 'Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland'.

Stephen Quinn said the policy conferences, run some time ago, were well attended and the case studies were a key part to the conference and this was an area which could be developed.

[Aideen McGinley to consider]

PSG strongly endorsed the Sub-Committee D document and thanked Tom and his team for their efforts to deliver the report.

7. **Vision for the NICS**

PSG agreed the Vision Statement:

"serving the whole community through excellent public services delivered with integrity by professional and committed staff".

8. **Tour de Table**

FOI Request

Linda Brown informed PSG that a FOI request had been received in relation to Permanent Secretary pay.

HMA Dublin

Nigel Hamilton informed PSG that Stewart Eldon, HMA Dublin, would be moving from his post later in the year.

Brussels Visit

Nigel Hamilton said the Secretary of State had visited Brussels on 6 June and had met the Northern Ireland MEPs.

NIAC Evidence Session

Nigel Hamilton reported on his NIAC Evidence Session.

Car Pool Review

Nigel Hamilton drew PSG attention to the Car Pool Review and asked that any comments be forwarded to Bernie Stuart.

[PSG to note]

Judicial Review

Nigel Hamilton updated PSG on the ongoing Judicial Review.

Cricket Match

Paul Sweeney said the Ireland v England cricket match would take place on Tuesday 13 June at the Maynard Sinclair Pavilion.

Political Group Meeting

Stephen Peover reported on the Political Group meeting which was Chaired by David Cairns.

Health Trust Chairs

Andrew McCormick said interviews for Chairs of the Health Trusts had taken place.

Economic Development Forum

Stephen Quinn said Maria Eagle had chaired the Economic Development Forum.

DEBBIE SWEENEY
12 June 2006