

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 26 MAY 2006 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Derek Baker
Will Haire
John Hunter
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Stephen Peover
Nick Perry
Stephen Quinn
Bruce Robinson
Paul Sweeney
Pat Toal

In Attendance: Rosalie Flanagan }
Stephen Grimason } Agenda Items 1-9
Denis McCartney }
David Thomson }
Pauline Boyle – Secretary

1. **Apologies:** Alan Shannon

2. **Minutes of PSG Away Day**

The minutes have been circulated; any amendments please e-mail to Debbie Sweeney.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Assembly Update**

Rosalie Flanagan provided a brief summary of events at the Northern Ireland Assembly over the last few weeks.

5. **Good Government**

Rosalie Flanagan reported on the outcome of discussions at the Good Government meeting held on Wednesday 24 May 2006 in relation to Review of Public Administration, Water Reform, Rating Reform, Welfare Reform and North South Economic Co-operation.

6. Stephen Grimason gave a read out of what is happening on media issues.

7. **Public Service Commission**

John Hunter reported that the Public Service Commission met on Wednesday past to discuss the appointment of Trust Chief Executives. PSC will write to the Department of Finance and Personnel in relation to these appointments. Nigel Hamilton asked that the Secretary of State and David Hanson should be kept informed of developments.

8. **Corporate Government Issues**

David Thomson introduced these issues for PSG discussion.

Code of Good Practice

The DAO Treasury Code issued for 2006/07. An issue for NI Departments was the number of Independent Directors in each. After debate, it was agreed that Bruce Robinson would produce a table in consultation with Departments to include agencies to assess needs and to ensure consistency and compliance with the Code.

[Action: Bruce Robinson]

Governance Training

Nigel Hamilton asked colleagues to encourage attendance at the forthcoming seminar for Audit Committee Members on 14 June, and any future event for NDPB Board Members.

[Action: PSG Members]

Accountability Grids

DFP have recently completed an extensive exercise on its accountability grids covering commitments given to the PAC. David Thomson said Accounting Officers should be fully up to date with developments and Nigel Hamilton asked each Permanent Secretary to follow up.

Whistleblowing

David Thomson asked PSG to consider the process to develop best practice guidance on whistleblowing to staff to supplement current policy in the Staff Handbook. It was agreed that DFP should take the lead on building up guidance on best practice and it was suggested this may best be disseminated at a future Masterclass event.

[Action: David Thomson]

PAC Report on Emerging Business Trust

David Thomson said the EBT report highlighted a number of recommendations and he would like PSG's views as to how best to cascade lessons from the report around the system. After discussion, Nigel Hamilton asked David Thomson to produce a 2-page summary of key issues Departments need to do with key conclusions and facts and come back to PSG soon for further discussion.

[Action: David Thomson]

Disclosure of Salary and Pension Information in Resource Accounts

David Thomson has written to Departments on this issue asking for early notification of any cases of non-disclosure.

9. **Gifts and Hospitality**

Nigel Hamilton proposes to replicate the NIO and Court Service guidance on gifts and hospitality in the NICS to ensure consistency. The draft guidance had been circulated by Linda Brown. Some PSG members had some suggested amendments and will send them to Linda Brown in CPG.

[Action: PSG]

10. **Building the Top 200 Community**

Nigel Hamilton said he would write to colleagues in relation to an event to be held on 5 and 6 October as a follow-up of the first meeting of the Top 200 Group on 13 March.

He is planning to attend and would encourage as many PSG colleagues as possible to attend also.

[Action: Nigel Hamilton]

11. **Public Sector Pay**

John Hunter set out the context for the public sector pay restraints in 2007/08.

12. **Tour de Table**

Dinner with Judith Eve

John Hunter said he would write to colleagues with dates for a possible dinner with Judith Eve to mark her retirement as Chair of the Civil Service Commissioners.

[Action: John Hunter]

New Vision Statement for the NICS

John Hunter said he would include this item on the agenda for next week's PSG meeting.

[Action: John Hunter]

Maze Master Plan

Paul Sweeney reported the Maze Master Plan will be launched next Tuesday, 30 May 2006.

HSS Appointments

Andrew McCormick reported that Interviews would be held next Thursday and Friday.

Londonderry Chamber of Commerce

Stephen Quinn asked colleagues to consider attendance at the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce's 4th Conference on Entrepreneurial ship to take place on 23 November.

Stephen Quinn reported that David Gordon has requested a briefing/interview with him on the Emerging Business Trust and the Memorandum of Reply.

North West Stakeholders

Gerry McGinn said he had met on Wednesday with the North West Stakeholders Alliance.

CODA/All Ireland Travel

He reported on the CODA announcement and the All Ireland Travel Initiative.

Special Olympics

Derek Baker reported that Alan Shannon had received an invitation to the Special Olympics Opening Ceremony on Wednesday 21 June. Nigel Hamilton said he also received an invitation. PSG agreed attendance.

Pat Toal reported on his visit to Dublin with Stewart Eldon. He met with the four Secretaries General. Feedback on the Hillsborough event was very positive and feedback on the Gus O'Donnell visit was also very good.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 2 June at 8.45 – HR Meeting.

Pauline Boyle
26 May 2006