

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 28 APRIL 2006 IN ROOM GD.14, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Will Haire
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
Stephen Peover
Nick Perry
Stephen Quinn
Alan Shannon
Paul Simpson
Paul Sweeney
Pat Toal

In Attendance: Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Grimason
Billy Gamble } - Agenda item 4
Nuala Kerr }
Tim Divine }
Debbie Sweeney - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** John Hunter
Denis McCartney
Andrew McCormick
Bruce Robinson

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 7 April**

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Assembly Staff

Rosalie Flanagan said a number of Assembly Staff had been recalled to their posts.

Rosalie explained how the recalled Assembly plans to operate. There would be meetings in Plenary on Monday and Tuesday of each week. The Business Committee would decide for themselves how often and when they need to meet.

Rosalie said Machinery of Government would commission short First Day Briefs from Departments.

[Action: Rosalie Flanagan]

4. **Migrant Workers**

Aideen McGinley introduced Nuala Kerr and Tim Devine from DEL.

Nuala said the core areas of challenge in relation to migrant workers were

- race and community relations;
- fair access to public services; and
- the impact on the labour market.

The issues impact on all Departments and it was agreed that central co-ordination was essential. DEL had agreed to Chair a Sub-Group of the Race Forum to deal with migrant worker issues. The Government Department members of the Sub-Group will meet on 11 May and the full Sub-Group would meet as soon as possible thereafter.

Nuala said there was a wide range of issues which have emerged in relation to migrant workers. They include employment problems, housing language issues, health, education, integration, racism and immigration status.

Nigel Hamilton said Government would need to continue to develop its systems and processes to effectively deal with migrant workers. He asked that DEL commission research from NISRA on migrant workers and identify the range of policy issues which exist and then ensure policies and strategies are in place to address issues.

[Action: DEL]

He asked that DEL report back to PSG in September.

5. **NICS Training and Development Strategy**

Aideen McGinley updated PSG on the amendments that have been made to the Training and Development Strategy 2006/09. PSG agreed that the Sub-Group continue to work with the Shared Service Centre, CPG and others to develop the Strategy.

A number of points were raised:

- the need to ensure that policy and legislation were not forgotten;
- a welcome for the three core objectives;
- the need to be aware of and avoid any inequalities across Departments; with current pressures, the squeeze on training would be difficult to balance.

Aideen agreed to consider the need for further clarity on the 'how' and 'when' in particular in relation to resources at the next Sub-Group meeting.

PSG were keen that PDG were in the loop and content with the proposals.

Aideen agreed to report back to PSG on a regular basis.

[Action: Aideen McGinley]

6. **Engagement with the Review of Environmental Governance**

Stephen Peover said the Review of Environmental Governance was formally launched on 28 February and had now begun to seek views in writing and in oral sessions. Some Permanent Secretaries had already received invitations. PSG discussed how Departments and their Agencies should respond to requests for written statements and to invitations to the oral hearings. It was agreed Departments would limit any Departmental input to broadly factual material but Agencies should have a more expansive approach.

Stephen said he would nominate a point of contact in DOE where advice could be sought.

[Action: Stephen Peover]

7. **Tour de Table**

Boundary Commissioner

Stephen Peover confirmed that Dick Mackenzie had been appointed as the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner.

First Gala Awards Dinner

It was agreed that DSD would take a table at the BITC Gala Awards Dinner on 7 June.

Chief commissioner to PAC and WAC

Aideen McGinley confirmed that Mrs Maíre Campbell was successful at her interview for the Chief Commissioner to PAC and WAC.

Beef Ban

Pat Toal confirmed that the regulations permitting the export of live cattle, meat and meat products would come into effect on 3 May.

BIIGC

Rosalie Flanagan said a BIIGC would be held in Dublin on Tuesday 2 May.

PSG 5 May

PSG will be an HR meeting including Procurement Savings and NIAO Action Plan; Workplace 2010; Professional Skills for Government presentation.

PSG Away Day

PSG 'Away Day' will be held on Friday 12 May, from 8.45 am to 3.30 pm in the Lakeland Suite, Bankmore House, Belfast. Substitutes for the four unavailable Permanent Secretaries are welcome.