

PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE (PSS)
Friday 23 January 2026 @ 9am
Executive Room, Stormont Castle

In attendance:

Jayne Brady (Chair)	Ronnie Armour	Louise Crilly
Mike Farrar	Neil Gibson	Alex Gordon
John Greer	David Malcolm	Declan McGeown
Mark O'Donnell	Ian Snowden	Hugh Widdis

Jayne Byrne (Secretariat)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apology received from Katrina Godfrey. Mark O'Donnell deputised. RA's last PSS. HoCS wished RA well in his retirement and thanked him for his continued leadership, stewardship and service.

2. Minutes 16 January 2026

The minutes of the meeting of 16 January 2026 were agreed.

3. Government updates

- 3.1 HoCS provided an update on the meeting with UKG colleagues which covered government communications and the way forward.

4. Executive Business

HoCS provided a high-level update on ongoing Executive Business

5. Collective leadership

- 5.1 Principles for how PSS works to be revisited and reset to include the collective aspirations of this group. KG supporting HoCS in the reset. PS colleagues to provide any thoughts to HoCS. Aim is the implementation of a reset by 1 April 2026.

- 5.2 The new Permanent Secretary onboarding programme was previously circulated to PSS colleagues for comment.

Actions:

Perm Sec colleagues to provide comments on (1) the principles for PSS; and (2) the Permanent Secretary onboarding programme.

6. TOUR DE TABLE

- 6.1 **DE:** RA advised the consultation on establishing a new organisation to support controlled schools is now complete and the outcome was published on 16 January 2026.
- 6.2 **DfC:** JG provided an update on gender strategies and attendance at Committee to provide quarterly update.
- 6.3 **DoJ:** HW advised of growth in prison population and Criminal Bar association withdrawal of service (LC declared a conflict of interest in this matter).

@ 10am RA left the meeting

- 6.4 **DoH:** MF provided an update on budget issues and the draft strategic operational guidance for HSC.
- 6.5 **DSO:** LC provided an update on a Courts issue and agency contracts social value clause.
- 6.6 **FLC:** AG advised of the importance of early notification of potential Bills.
- 6.7 **DfE:** IS updated on positive economic stats published this week on economic growth and upcoming attendance at Committee.
- 6.8 **DfI:** DMcG advised Tuesday 27 January is dedicated to Road Safety; a soft launch of the trainee planners' scheme which is part of planning reform and future potential strike action.
- 6.9 **DoF:** NG provided an update on budget, NIAO capacity and capability expected publication date, business rates, and advised NISRA have won a national award for public sector finance website. This is the same team who won the award for the health and well-being dashboard.
- 6.10 **TEO:** DM provided an update on CPANI correspondence regarding regulation of appointments; shared island funding and an SCS appointment to the role of Solicitor General for UK Civil Service.
- 6.11 **DAERA:** MMcD provided updates on a Shared Island Fund announcement on bTB and on the latest position on Bluetongue Virus.

@ 10.35 meeting finished