

PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE (PSS)
Friday 27 February 2026, 09:00am
Executive room, Stormont Castle

In attendance:

Jayne Brady/HOCS (Chair)	Alex Gordon
Declan McGeown	Emer Morelli
Moira Doherty	Ian Snowden
Joanne McBurney	David Malcolm
Katrina Godfrey	Joanne Timoney
Mike Farrar	Hugh Widdis
Helen McCarthy	

Debbie Murphy (Secretariat)
Janet Smyth (Secretariat)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Neil Gibson and Louise Crilly provided apologies, Joanne McBurney and Joanne Timoney deputised respectively.

HOCS noted as part of the reset of the PSS Helen McCarthy will be attending PSS on a monthly basis going forward.

2. Minutes & Actions arising from PSS 20 February 2026

The minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2026 were agreed.

Actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and discussed.

3. Executive Update

HoCS provided a high-level update on ongoing Executive Business.

4. PSS Framework - Draft

HoCS referred members to the paper which issued on 19/02/2026 from KG setting out a proposed operational framework for the PSS.

KG provided an overview of the proposals and discussion followed around timescales. Members endorsed the proposed ways of working highlighting that it reinforces the collective leadership of SCS in line with the People Strategy.

Action: Members to develop engagement with G3 cohort in advance of PSS meetings in line with proposals.

5. SCS Leadership event 29 April

MF noted the feedback from the last event had been very positive with suggestions it should be more interactive and set out proposals for this event. Members provided feedback on the proposals.

6. Tour de Table

6.1 TEO

MD updated on the recent ICO decision in relation to an FOI request from T Gaston.

6.2 DoH

MF referred to the Neighbourhood Model approach connected to health. MF also referred to the SWAH protest which took place on Wednesday 23 February 2026.

6.3 OLC

AG provided updates on current legislation moving through the Assembly and noted the importance in quality control of papers.

6.4 DoJ

HW referred to the trauma informed practice module launched on LinkS. HW updated about emerging positive outcome from unannounced inspection on Magilligan and invited PSS members to visit one of the prisons.

6.5 CSTA

H McC referred to positive engagement with unions on the AI Strategy who welcome the human centred approach and to ongoing wider engagement.

6.6 DfI

D McG provided an update on the A5.

6.7 DSO

JT updated on legal matters.

6.8 DE

DM referred to recent statistics on school enrolments, communications to schools in relation to SEN provision and consultation on school assessments as well as ongoing review of the schools' estate.

6.9 DfE

IS referred to positive recent statistics in relation to the economy.

6.10 DoF

J McB noted the external DP recruitment competition to launch on 2 March and ongoing work with the Treasury.

6.11 DAERA

KG referred to the DAERA involvement in the A5 appeal and ongoing engagement with DESNZ.

Action: All PSS members to ensure Departmental reps are regularly attending the Climate Change Strategic Oversight Group.

6.12 DfC

EM provided an update on the draft anti-poverty strategy.

6.13 HoCS

Referred to ongoing recruitment for Police Ombudsman candidates and to work on the development of fiscal framework.

7. AOB

7.1 Update on Honours

HoCS advised members that the New Year 2027 Commissioning letter issued to all departments seeking nominations of individuals who have made a significant impact/difference.

7.2 Transformation Update

HoCS provided an update on the range of transformation projects approved to date. HoCS advised that a communications piece is required to promote this work.

8. Date of next PSS meeting:

Friday 13 March 9.00 – 11.00

To note: Marie Doyle and Malcolm McKibbin will attend to present the findings of the Deloitte State of the State Report

To note: PSS meeting 6 March has been cancelled to allow PSS members to attend the International Women's Day event.

Meeting closed 10.45