

PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE
Friday 1 April 2022

9.00am –Boardroom, Clare House

Attending

Jayne Brady (Chair), Katrina Godfrey, Alex Gordon, Anthony Harbinson, Mark Browne, Hugh Widdis, Mike Brennan, Moira Doherty, Richard Pengelly, Julie Harrison Neil Gibson, Roisin Coleman and Mairead Rooney (Minutes).

For agenda item 1 – Claire Archbold & Geraldine Fee

For agenda item 2 - Doreen McClintock

For agenda item 3 – Jane Holmes

1. Apologies

Peter May, Colum Boyle and Denis McMahon (*late arrival*).

2. An Update on “Equally Safe, The NI Strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls”- *Presentation*

Claire Archbold and Geraldine Fee gave an update on ‘Equally Safe, The NI Strategy on Ending Violence against Women and Girls’. They provided an overview of scoping work carried out, the proposed governance structures and working approach. SIB will be conducting a landscape review and a memo from HOCS will issue seeking nomination of a key contact point from each Department. As the work progresses, further nominations from departments will be required for Co-design Group, Programme Board and identification of projects for the One Team.

Action: Claire Archbold /HOCS Team

Jayne Brady advised she has engaged with CBI and IoD in relation to scheduling a presentation on the strategy. She also reported on her recent visit to the Connect Project in the North West.

Colleagues expressed their appreciation to Claire and Geraldine for their presentation.

Denis McMahon joined the meeting.

3. CCG & Ukraine

Doreen McClintock provided an update on the P&O situation, noting the recent statement by the Transport Secretary on minimum wages for sea-faring employees. Doreen also provided an update on Ukraine in relation to supply chains and advised that while there are no significant issues to report at this stage, a final 'product list' is awaited and issues may arise in time in relation to product choice and price.

Denis McMahon provided an update on preparedness for Ukrainian Refugees including the various UK schemes, property check, support payments and the impact on public services.

Jayne Brady thanked Doreen and Denis for their updates and note that Karen Pearson is developing a paper in relation to cost of living analysis which will be brought forward for consideration shortly

4. ECT Update

Jane Holmes gave an overview of the Covid-19 Taskforce Update paper. The current guidance on Working from Home (WFH) which came into effect on 21 January remains in place. In relation to the NICS policy on New Ways of Working, a message to all staff from HOCS will issue later today to update on the current position.

It was agreed that an ECT update paper would be provided for the HOCS /Ministerial meeting session on Monday 04 April.

Jane Holmes advised that Cabinet Office are seeking to establish a UK-wide Covid-19 Commemoration Commission. Cabinet Office have requested that each Devolved Administration nominate persons who could take part in the Commission. A memo from HOCS asking Departments to consider and identify nominees suitable for consideration will be issued.

Action: Jane Holmes & HOCS office.

5. Minutes of 11 March 2022 meeting

Minutes of 11 March were agreed.

6. Tour de Table

Jayne gave an update on the recent the British Irish UK-Ireland Permanent Secretaries/Secretaries General Summit 2022.

David Hughes will be joining HOCS office on interim basis in role of PPS wef Monday 4 April.

OLC

Alex Gordon referred to the high volume of legislation passed in the Assembly during the mandate and recorded his appreciation to colleagues for their assistance. It was agreed to issue a communication/intranet story to highlight the achievement. Alex also noted that the commissioning of new Bills for the next two years will be underway shortly. **Action: Alex Gordon & TEO Comms**

DfI

Katrina Godfrey updated the group on planning decisions.

DfC

Moira Doherty referred to the recent launch of the Child Funeral Fund.

DE

Mark Browne gave an update on special educational needs, the impacts of the current UNITE strike action, teachers' pay offer, plans for a Jubilee book and early school starting age DE officials continue to work through the implications of the Integrated Education Bill passed by the Assembly.

TEO

Denis McMahon referred to recent publication of the High Street Task Force report. He recorded his appreciation to colleagues and their teams for their contributions.

DAERA

Anthony Harbinson updated colleagues on the carrier bag levy.

DOJ

Julie Harrison spoke on recent security incidents.

DSO

Hugh Widdis asked colleagues to consider their likely requirements for legal support from DSO in relation to the forthcoming UK Covid Inquiry.

7. AOB

There was a discussion on beginning to build a framework for a presentation/briefing with incoming Ministers around topics such as adherence to the Ministerial Code, use of Private Members' Bills and propriety around the use of Ministerial directions.

Action: Chris Stewart, Neill Jackson.