

PERMANENT SECRETARIES STOCKTAKE

Friday 9 December 2022 @ 9am

Executive Room, Stormont Castle

In Attendance:

Hugh Widdis (Chair), Katrina Godfrey, Mike Brennan, Gareth Johnston (for Denis McMahon), Neil Gibson (virtual), Mark Browne, Julie Harrison, Colum Boyle, Deborah Brown (for Richard Pengelly), Peter May, Alex Gordon.

Jayne Byrne, Gareth Black, Emer Morelli, Joanne McBurney

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jayne Brady, Denis McMahon, Richard Pengelly and Chris Stewart.

2. Minutes of 25 November & 2 December 2022

Amendments were suggested and it was agreed to resubmit minutes for consideration at the next meeting.

[Action: Jayne Byrne]

3. Budget 2022-23 Update & Budget 2023-24 Planning

Neil Gibson (NG) and Joanne McBurney (JMcB) provided an update on the 2022-23 budget. Attention is now turning to focus on next year's budget exercise. JMcB highlighted the need for DoF Public Spending Directorate (PSD) to gather relevant data to allow them to present recommendations/options to Minister(s) on Budget 2023-24. Given the funding shortfall next year, rather than the usual approach for Resource DEL of plus/minus change to a baseline position the proposal is to gather data on departmental spending which will allow a more zero-based approach. PSD propose commissioning an exercise before Christmas with departmental responses due before the end of January.

[Action: Joanne McBurney]

Emer Morelli, Joanne McBurney and Alex Gordon left the meeting.

4. NIO/NICS Engagement Update

Hugh Widdis updated members on the status of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Bill and pending guidance on decision-making.

NG provided an update on the pay policy.

5. Stakeholder and Media Update

Members agreed the importance of mechanisms to establish consistency of messaging across departments on key issues.

Jayne Byrne was asked to liaise with Natasha Sayee in order to identify methods for further streamlining Comms Plans and return with options for members to consider.

[Action: Jayne Byrne]

6. Tour de Table

Gareth Johnston reported that the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry Team has been successful at the UK Civil Service Awards.

Neil Gibson noted the upcoming release of Census findings related to data on Health and Housing.

Hugh Widdis updated on the demands for legal representation in public inquiries and it was agreed that when Departments are contemplating future Inquiries, the need for legal staff will be included in departmental planning at the earliest stage.

Colm Boyle provided an update on recent media coverage.

7. AOB

There was no other business.

The next Permanent Secretaries' Stock Take will take place on **Friday 16 December 2022** at 9am in the Executive Room, Stormont Castle.