

PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE

Minutes of meeting on Friday 11 January 2019, 8.45am, Stormont Castle, Belfast

1. **Present:** David Sterling (Chair)
Richard Pengelly
Noel Lavery
Chris Stewart
Peter May
Tracy Meharg
Hugh Widdis
Jill Minne
Brenda King
Mark Browne
Sue Gray
Derek Baker
Chris McNabb
Katrina Godfrey
Denis McMahon
Andrew McCormick
Neill Jackson

Apologies: none

In attendance: Julie Thompson (item 5)
Gail McKibbin (item 4)
Stephen Rusk
Hannah Cavalleros (Secretary)

2. **Minutes of 13 December 2018 Meeting**

The minutes were agreed subject to one amendment

3. **Matters Arising**

A number of matters arising from the previous meeting remained ongoing.

4. **Brexit Update and Contingency planning**

Andrew McCormick provided a verbal update on the BREXIT position and highlighted the issues of greatest concern. He advised the meeting of the new EU Exit and Preparedness Group which has been established in Whitehall which includes membership from the devolved administrations, including HOCS. Andrew also advised Permanent Secretaries of the next steps that need to be taken by officials in relation to action plans.

Chris Stewart provided an update on the response to the expression of interest note that issued on 19th December seeking volunteers to join the C3 structure in preparation for a “no deal” exit.

Hugh Widdis reminded everyone that officials should continue to consider their legal needs going forward and to ensure direct liaison with DSO on these needs.

5. **January Monitoring and Budget**

Julie Thompson provided an update on discussions with HM Treasury and the January monitoring position, and a range of issues were discussed.

HOCS asked Noel Lavery and Julie Thompson (as co-sponsoring departments) to consider commissioning a piece of independent research from the Economic Policy Unit into regional rates of pay across the public sector.

[Action: Noel Lavery/Julie Thompson]

Julie also provided an update on the 2019-2020 budget, highlighting the fact that pressures from pensions and Brexit were still to be addressed.

6. **Tour de Table**

DE

Derek Baker advised that the UKG Secretary of State for Education Damien Hind would be visiting Northern Ireland on the 15th February 2019. He also advised that a new Chief Executive of the Education Authority had been appointed and would take up post on the 1st April 2019.

DoH

Richard Pengelly advised that he was appearing at the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on Wednesday 16th January 2019.

DoF

Sue Gray updated colleagues on the People Survey and Perm Secs noted a paper should be discussed at a future meeting.

TEO

Mark Brown provided an update on Public Appointments secondary legislation, explaining that a Statutory Instrument (SI) was laid before Parliament on the 9th January. The SI is intended to deal with those critical appointments that will arise until August 2019. The NIO anticipates that the parliamentary process to make the SI will take 6-8 weeks to complete.

HOCS

David Sterling advised that the next Grade 2 programme will take place on the 14th and 15th February at the Burrendale Hotel in Newcastle, Co Down.

7. High Potential Development Scheme (Perm Secs only)

Perm Secs discussed NICS participation in the UK Civil Service scheme and agreed to nominate a candidate.