

**PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE
FRIDAY 12 March 2021**

8:45 VIA ZOOM

Attending

Jenny Pyper, (Chair), Andrew McCormick, Hugh Widdis, Denis McMahon, Peter May, Sue Gray, Alex Gordon, Richard Pengelly, Mike Brennan, Tracy Meharg, Katrina Godfrey, Mark Browne, Roisin Coleman (Secretary), Hannah Cavalleros.

Colum Boyle, Michael McKibbin, Derek Kennedy attended for item 2 only.

Apologies

There were no apologies.

Minutes of previous meetings & matters arising

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2021 were agreed and an update on matters arising provided.

2. NICS People Survey Presentation

Colum Boyle (DfC), Michael McKibbin (NISRA) and Derek Kennedy (SIB) delivered a presentation on the results of the 2020 NICS People Survey.

A high level summary of the results were presented including:

- 10,907 NICS colleagues completed the survey;
- this was a 50% response rate compared to 57% response rate in 2019;
- the engagement score was up 6 percentage points on 2019 results to 57%;
- results demonstrate colleagues have faced challenges to both their mental and physical health over the past year;
- the pandemic has resulted in challenging impacts on working relationships between colleagues and managers;
- 60% of staff who completed the survey would prefer working from home every day or most days;
- 8% of staff who completed the survey indicated that they would prefer working in the office every day or most days.

Permanent Secretaries thanked Colum, Michael and Derek for the work put in by their teams in relation to the People Survey. Discussion took place around

the results presented, the need to manage staff expectations around flexible working balanced against operational business needs, and the need to move quickly on next steps. Sue advised that the NISRA team would be engaging with every Departmental Board in relation to individual Departmental scores.

It was agreed that Sue Gray, Colum Boyle and Derek Kennedy would consider the next steps in relation to the People Survey results and bring recommendations to the NICS Board.

[ACTION: Sue Gray, Colum Boyle, Derek Kennedy]

3. Functioning of Government Bill

Katrina Godfrey provided a verbal update on ongoing work to develop consistent advice and guidance in relation to the provisions of the bill which is expected to receive Royal Assent in the coming days.

Katrina drew attention to the paper circulated by her office on 11 March and asked that comments be provided to her by close of play on Monday 15 March.

[ACTION: All]

The need to inform Ministers and Special Advisers of the progress of this work was discussed and HOCS agreed to provide a briefing with Katrina to SpAds by 19 March. It was also agreed that HOCS would then issue a corporate note to Ministers and that Permanent Secretaries would then progress requirements at a local level with their individual Ministers.

[ACTION: HOCS]

Sue Gray highlighted the need to work closely with Private Secretaries and Private Offices to ensure clear understanding of the out workings of the Bill and the legal obligations for both Ministers and Special Advisers when the Bill is enacted.

4. AOB

EU Exit

Andrew McCormick provided an update on EU Exit related issues.

DfE

Mike Brennan advised on a DfE workforce issue.

HOCS

Jenny provide an update on a number of NIO related issues.

5. The next meeting will take place virtually on Friday 19 March 2021