

PERMANENT SECRETARIES STOCKTAKE (PSS)

Friday 15 September 2023 @ 9am

Executive Room, Stormont Castle

In Attendance:

Colum Boyle, Jayne Brady (Chair), Mike Brennan, Neil Gibson, Katrina Godfrey, Alex Gordon, Gareth Johnston (TEO), Denis McMahon, Chris Matthews (DoH), Richard Pengelly, Hugh Widdis.

Gareth Black, Karen Wilson.

David Hughes (*for item 6 only*)

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received from Mark Browne and Peter May.

2. Minutes 1 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting on 1 September were returned for minor corrections.

3. Actions Arising from Meeting of 1 September 2023

The status of actions arising from the meeting of 1 September 2023, as outlined in the agenda, was agreed.

4. Update on NI Investment Summit & Engagements with SENIEA

A discussion was held reflecting upon the success of the recent NI Investment Summit.

Jayne Brady also updated members on plans for the upcoming U.S. Trade Delegation visit being led by the Special Envoy to Northern Ireland for Economic Affairs, Joe Kennedy III.

Members noted the update.

Jayne Brady left the meeting. Hugh Widdis undertook Chair of the meeting.

5. Funding Requirements for Establishment of the Office of Building Safety

Colum Boyle (CB) spoke to a paper issued to members to consider the current funding requirements for establishment of an Office for Building Safety (OBS) and the additional financial and personnel pressures this function places upon DfC. CB updated on the progress to date in identifying resources to begin the work of implementing the Expert Panel for the Building Safety Programme NI's (2023) recommendations and a clear work plan for the short-medium term. CB outlined the estimated costs for establishing the OBS from (in year) 23/24 to Year 4. CB expressed concern that, though the OBS Business Case

is in the process of being approved, the required Resource funding has not been received by DfC for this work.

Members noted the update, and a discussion was held on the matter. Neil Gibson highlighted that resources were being sought under a reserve claim and that funds could be reallocated to cover the (in year) 23/24 costs.

6. People at the Heart of Policy Paper

Denis McMahon (DMc) and David Hughes (DH) spoke to a draft 'People at the Heart of Policy: Renewing the NICS Policy Profession' paper issued to members in advance of the meeting. DMc thanked DH and Patricia McIntyre for their work on the draft strategy and highlighted the need to ensure that NICS has the skills and professionalism within the policy function to fulfil our responsibilities effectively. He advised the draft strategy has been discussed and agreed by the Policy Profession Steering Group and welcomed colleagues' views. DMc and DH emphasised that the goal was to establish a coherent framework for Policy Profession that would build upon the suite of learning and development already available within NICSHR and People and Organisational Development.

Members noted the update, were supportive of the approach and were content for that the strategy is published subject to any final amendments. Discussion included consideration of joining up national and domestic agendas in shaping policy development, safeguarding specialist skillsets in policy, and a review of professional skills in light of the impact of working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic and the absence of Ministers.

DMc advised that the immediate next steps were to publish the Policy Profession paper on the TEO website and identify opportunities to inform civil servants of its content.

7. Budget

Neil Gibson provided a brief update to members on budget matters. He highlighted that current DoF work on guidelines for Managing Public Money was almost complete and that he would be bringing these guidelines to PSS for discussion in due course.

8. Tour de Table

Updates were received on:

- Walkway Community Centre;
- Plans for the NICS Assured Skills Academy;
- The Northern Ireland Policing Board;
- Increased algal blooms in Lough Neagh;
- The Metropolitan Arts Centre;
- Learnings from the engagement with the Grade 5 Leadership Programme;
- NICS Hybrid Working Policy;
- and Industrial Action within the Health and Social Care sector.

9. AOB

There were no items of AOB raised.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of PSS will take place on Friday 22 September 2023 at 9am in the Executive Room, Stormont Castle.