

PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING

Minutes of meeting on Friday 15 January 2016, 8.45 am

1. **Present:** Malcolm McKibbin (Chair)
Andrew McCormick
Derek Baker
Andrew Hamilton
Paul Sweeney
Denis McMahon
Brenda King
Hugh Widdis
Peter May
David Sterling
Richard Pengelly
Noel Lavery

Apologies: Nick Perry
Leo O'Reilly
Stephen Grimason

In attendance: Mark Browne
Chris McNabb
Neill Jackson
Paul Duffy
Lianne Patterson
Hannah Cavalleros (Secretariat)

2. **Minutes of 8 January 2016 Meeting**

The minutes of 8 January 2016 were cleared subject to one minor amendment.

3. **Matters Arising- verbal**

VES

David Sterling is to have further discussions with NIAO regarding the timing of a possible audit of the VES.

Action: David Sterling

DARD Flooding Grant Scheme

Malcolm asked Noel to provide a briefing note on this scheme for FM.

Action: Noel Lavery

Chamber of Commerce in camera event

Malcolm confirmed that the date for this event will be the 6th April, venue still to be confirmed.

Peter Housden update

Malcolm advised that he met with Peter to explore individual and team leadership development issues. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to this at the NICS of the Future event next week.

Action: DFP

DFP Assembly Committee appearance

Malcolm advised that he will be appearing in front of the DFP Assembly Committee along with Colin Sullivan and Colin Lewis on 20th January regarding the VES.

4. **Executive & Assembly Update**

Neill Jackson provided an update on Executive and Assembly business. The special Executive meeting on flooding held on Monday 11th was the first with the new FM as co-Chair.

Neill also advised PSG that upcoming significant dates for the Assembly include:

- last plenary session Tuesday 15th March;
- last day for laying statutory rules or any other documentation Friday 25th March;
- Assembly will be dissolved at midnight on the 29th March; and
- Purdah begins on the 30th March.

Neill indicated that a document informing the Assembly of the new responsibilities of the Departments will be required. Neill and Derek Baker will liaise on this action.

Action: Neill Jackson & Derek Baker

5. **Diversity Champion Update**

Peter May indicated that an LGBT survey of staff was on track to issue in March. He also indicated that the Gender Equality Research carried out by Professor Ballantine was not yet published and would be launched shortly.

Tracey Meharg attended the meeting to provide an update on the Gender research element of the work into diversity. She provided a verbal update regarding work carried out by the NICS Senior Women's Network. Members discussed a range of issues including target setting, resourcing and opportunities for flexible working such as those in place at senior levels in Whitehall. PSG approved the action plan produced by the Senior Women's Network; noted the paper assessing the recommendation from Professor Ballantine's report and its forthcoming publication; agreed to continue to engage with diversity champions to ensure diversity issues are promoted within their Department; and agreed to promote an item on diversity at Departmental Board level by March 2016 and also once each year thereafter.

Action: PSG

6. **Tour de Table**

DFP

David Sterling referred to the Infrastructure Action Plan indicating that a planning day would be held on 25th January with Tony Whitehead to set the terms of reference for a review. CPD will circulate the ToR for comment.

David indicated he recently met with representatives from the SOMME Association and DCMS. They are seeking a financial contribution towards a commemoration event to be held at Thiepval Barracks later this year. David will be approaching relevant Perm Secs to discuss this further.

Action: David Sterling

DEL

Derek Baker reminded everyone to continue to encourage their SROs to notify ESS of their departmental structures as they are confirmed, and not wait until the new Departments are in place. He also referred to a high level paper on the benefits realisation of the restructuring remaining at programme level, and to accommodation issues. He raised a query regarding the Transfer of Functions Order. Neill will speak to Tony Canavan regarding this and circulate an update note.

Action: Neill Jackson

OLC

Brenda King highlighted the current intense level of work within OLC. Only this week OLC were involved in the Assembly Bill process for four Bills on Monday and five Bills on Tuesday. She indicated that there are risks involved with this level of workload and the associated short time available between Bill stages.

DSO

Hugh Widdis indicated he would be writing to Departments shortly regarding their future DSO needs.

DARD

Noel indicated that DARD, DFP and DOE officials are meeting this afternoon to discuss the Executive's response to the recent flooding.

HOCS

Malcolm advised PSG that FM and dFM have agreed to a meeting to discuss aspects of the PFG framework.

He also advised that a meeting had taken place with the Secretary of State, First and deputy First Ministers, Executive parties and Irish Minister Flanagan at Stormont House to review progress on the Fresh Start agreement and focus on challenges ahead. Malcolm asked David Sterling to provide a briefing paper for FM and dFM listing the Treasury agreed projects from the Fresh Start agreement, and the steps being taken to ensure the money will be spent in line with the conditions set.

Action: David Sterling

PERMANENT SECRETARIES ONLY

7. Grade 5 Management Structure in nine new departments

PSG discussed the Grade 5 assignments and vacancies in the nine new departments. David Sterling is to prepare a further note on the outstanding issues associated with vacancies.

Action: David Sterling