

HCS/195/14

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 21 MARCH 2014
IN THE GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45AM**

Present: Malcolm McKibbin - Chair
Will Haire
Derek Baker
Peter May
Leo O'Reilly
Nick Perry
Paul Sweeney
David Sterling
Noel Lavery
Brenda King
Andrew McCormick

In attendance: Mark Browne
Neill Jackson
Barney McGahan
Des Armstrong
Kellie Sprott - Secretariat

1. Apologies: Stephen Peover
Richard Pengelly
Oswyn Paulin
Chris McNabb

2. Minutes of the PSG meeting held on 14 March 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

NICS Live

Malcolm McKibbin reminded those who had not already submitted their nomination for the NICS Live steering group to do so.

Action: All those outstanding

TRIM

Paul Wickens provided an update on work ongoing to improve TRIM.

4. Executive and Assembly Update

Neill Jackson provided an update on the previous day's Executive meeting. He reported that the Executive had asked for a paper discussing the staffing issues involved following the DVA announcement to be submitted for consideration. Leo O'Reilly and Malcolm McKibbin agreed to discuss the drafting of the paper following the meeting.

Action: Malcolm McKibbin and Leo O'Reilly

Neill Jackson advised that a note would issue shortly to the Legislation Liaison Officers regarding a drift in timelines for the introduction of bills.

5. Plans for next PSG Away Day

Malcolm McKibbin asked for comments from colleagues on his proposed agenda for the next away day. A short unstructured session was proposed; it was agreed that Kellie would contact all permanent secretaries a week before to ask for any discussion topics they would like added to this 'semi-structured session'.

Action: Kellie Spratt

There was general agreement to the other items on the proposed agenda. Malcolm said if anyone had any other thoughts or comments that they should contact him directly.

Action: All permanent secretaries

6. Public Sector Reform and Innovation

Colin Sullivan took the lead for this agenda item. Key areas of discussion were:

- the DFP Minister's approach to public sector reform;
- engagement strategy;
- OECD review;
- common reform themes;
- operational delivery;
- financial drivers;
- governance of public sector reform;
- timeframe for building reform; and
- next steps.

A general discussion followed which referred to the importance of identifying the scope of a project, the philosophy underpinning it and the approval levels.

Colin Sullivan agreed to share the findings from the landscape review currently underway in departments aimed at providing a baseline position for the OECD review.

Action: Colin Sullivan

7. Operational Delivery in the NICS

Tommy O'Reilly took the lead for this agenda item. Key areas of discussion were:

- background;
- position in Civil Service in Great Britain;
- learning and development;
- inspection and compliance;
- delivery, design and support; and
- Northern Ireland position.

PSG confirmed its support for the Operational Delivery profession in the NICS. Tommy O'Reilly will write to each department to ascertain whether it wants to be involved and if so seek their Senior Civil Service nomination.

Action: Tommy O'Reilly

8. Review of Major Infrastructure Projects

Des Armstrong took the lead for this agenda item. He updated PSG on the work of the Procurement Board sub-group on Infrastructure. PSG endorsed the work of the sub-group and supported the draft Action Plans compiled in response to the Infrastructure Report. Malcolm McKibbin said he would speak to the First Minister and deputy First Minister at his regular meetings with them about this and advise of the progress of the sub-group.

Action: Malcolm McKibbin

He asked other permanent secretaries to do the same with their Ministers.

Action: All permanent secretaries

9. Plans for next Programme for Government

Will Haire took the lead for this agenda item. He updated PSG on work ongoing to develop a Social Policy Framework more aligned with the Economic Strategy in preparation for the next Programme for Government. He sought views from PSG on the work so far and asked how departments want to be involved in the process over the coming months. Key areas of discussion were:

- 8 policy think pieces;
- emerging core issues;
- cultural change;
- early intervention;
- integrated government;
- flexibility and innovation;
- sustainability;
- research proposals;
- next steps.

A general discussion followed. Key points raised were around the need to make better use of research to inform our decisions, the need to be aware of, and focus more on, the interventions that we know work and scale these up, the need to learn and share our lessons learned better and the important link with the Economic Strategy. PSG endorsed the work carried out so far, acknowledged the good progress and asked that their thanks was passed on to those who had been involved. Will Haire said that he would come back to PSG with ideas on how to engage further on this and asked for any views to be passed directly to him.

Action: All PSG

Malcolm McKibbin said that he would update the First Minister and deputy First Minister on progress at his next meeting with them.

Action: Malcolm McKibbin

10. Tour de table

DEL

Derek Baker advised that an audit office report would be published the following week about Belfast Metropolitan College's Titanic Quarter campus.

DCAL

Peter May said that DCAL would be making an announcement in the coming weeks about how the department is building in social clauses to its procurement projects.

DOE

Leo O'Reilly provided a further update on the recent DVA/DVLA announcement. He also discussed progress on the Local Government bill.

OLC

Brenda King provided an update on the Local Government bill and other OLC matters.

DHSSPS

Andrew McCormick advised of a further Ministerial Statement about Emergency Department care in NI. He also advised of a recent Ministerial meeting in Edinburgh with Scottish and Welsh colleagues.

HOCS

Malcolm McKibbin discussed the Ministers visit to USA the previous week.

KELLIE SPROTT
26-3-14