

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING
SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING
Thursday 26 March 2009
Board Room, Adelaide House

Present: Dr Aideen McGinley (Chair)
Mr Greg McConnell
Mrs Catherine Bell
Mr Trevor Connolly
Mrs June Ingram
Mr Paul McAlister
Mr Hugh McPoland
Mrs Lucy Marten
Mr Fergus Devitt
Mr Richard Kenny
Mrs Patricia McAuley

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mr Victor Dukelow (for item 2.1 and 2.2)
Mr Dave Rogers (for item 2.1 and 2.2)
Mr Tommy McVeigh (for item 2.4)
Ms Angela Whiteside (for item 2.4)
Mr Michael Gould (for item 2.5)
Ms Sian McCleave (for item 2.5)
Mrs Anne-Marie Mooney - Secretariat

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Summary Action Sheet

1.1 The Minutes of the previous SMT meeting held on 26 February 2009 were agreed subject to the following amendments.

1.1.1 Item 2.3.2 should read – “Mrs McAuley raised the need for core skills training which is essential for Preparation for Work Division and suggested some amendments to the existing list of priorities. It was agreed that the list would reflect these amendments. (Action: Mr McPoland)

1.1.2 Item 5.2 penultimate paragraph should read –”Areas for development were also discussed including communicating with staff.”

1.2 Summary Action Sheet – Action in relation to 2.3.2 should reflect the amendments.

1.2.1 All other actions have been dealt with appropriately.

2. Policy

2.1 Implications of new pre-release arrangements for statistical publications

2.1.1 Mr Dukelow presented a paper outlining the background, key issues and recommendations for the Senior Management Team to consider.

2.1.2 Mr Rogers briefed the Senior Management Team on Release Practices, Assessment, Powers to Investigate and comment on key issues in relation to statistics and Pre-Release access to statistics. He also outlined plans for other devolved administrations.

2.1.3 Mr Rogers stated that the Department were awaiting official guidance from NISRA and he will issue a note on the new legislation which comes into effect on 1 April 2009. **(Action: Mr Rogers)**

2.2 Discussion on DEL response to Economic Downturn (Away Day/Balanced Scorecard)

2.2.1 Dr McGinley outlined the structure for the G7 Away Day and the timescales in relation to the Balanced Scorecard with a view to having it agreed by the Senior Management Team in April.

2.2.2 Mr Dukelow informed the Senior Management Team of the facilitator's brief for the discussion on the economy and following discussion it was agreed that the impact of the economic downturn would be discussed using the De Bono methodology in mixed groups in the afternoon. The outputs of this would be used to inform Divisional Scorecards.

2.3 Review of Success Through Excellence

2.3.1 Mrs Bell briefed the Senior Management Team on the current status of the Review and on a number of meetings that Beyond Standards had held, including a number of focus groups. She informed the meeting that an initial report would be produced after Easter which she will circulate. **(Action: Mrs Bell)**

2.4 Report from the Quality and Performance Branch on Quality Improvement April 2008 – March 2009

2.4.1 Mr McVeigh outlined the remit of his branch and the close links with the Education & Training Inspectorate and the Learning & Skills Development Agency Northern Ireland. He stated that there had been a significant period of change and then briefed the meeting on key areas of work which have been taken forward.

2.4.2 Ms Whiteside gave details of inspections carried out and the process for follow-up inspections. She briefed the meeting on how best practice was shared and on-going work with LSDA on recurring areas for improvement.

2.4.3 Mr McVeigh briefed the meeting on Steps to Work inspections which are due to commence in March 2009. Quality and Performance Branch staff will

attend feedback sessions and work to ensure that the necessary quality improvement initiatives are implemented.

2.4.4 The roll out of a pilot teaching qualification for trainers in the work-based learning and community/voluntary sectors was discussed.

2.4.5 Dr McGinley congratulated the Branch on the enormous workload undertaken and the progress made. Mrs Bell commented that the Report is very comprehensive and Mrs McAuley stated that it would be useful to see some more detail in findings on contract monitoring.

2.5 Review of Skills Strategy

2.5.1 Mr Gould gave details of the Review, associated timescales and the proposed way forward. Ms McCleave outlined the main headlines of the Report including the need to focus on long term issues; need to upskill those already in the workplace; need for higher level skills ie. Level 4 and above; lack of specialism in degree courses; lack of management and leadership skills in the workforce; and the need for an “attract” policy to encourage skilled migrants to NI.

2.5.1 Mr Gould outlined how the findings of the Review were to be communicated including a DEL lunchtime Seminar, G7 Away Day, publishing on Department’s website, sharing with the DEL Committee and a planned series of bi-lateral meetings.

2.5.2 Dr McGinley stated that EDF secretariat should be informed that the Review outcomes were available and may be suitable as an agenda item. **(Action: Mrs Kerr)**

2.5.3 A discussion followed on funding considerations for actions suggested in the Review and implementation plans.

3. Finance and Corporate Services

3.1 Finance Report

3.1.1 Risk Register – A discussion took place on the logistics of including amber risks on the risk register. It was agreed that Mr Connolly would continue to highlight red risks and G5s can propose certain amber risks for discussion. Mrs Bell suggested discussing this matter with the Non-Executive Director to ascertain what was required for discussion at the Board Meeting. **(Action: Mrs Bell)**

3.1.2 It was agreed that the Minutes of the DEL Board Meeting should be sent to Senior Management Team Members and that the Board Summary Action sheet should be issued to SMT Members within 24 hours of the meeting. **(Action: DEL Secretariat)**

3.1.3 Mrs Bell stated that the two FE Risks should be discussed at the Board. **(Action: Mr Kenny)**

3.1.4 All risks were discussed and assessed.

3.1.5 Issues Log – Review of Variable Fees to be removed from Issues Log; Potential capital underspend by University of Ulster will escalate to the Risk Register; and Financial position of Belfast Metropolitan College to be removed from Issues Log. **(Action: Mr Devitt)**

3.1.6 All other Issues were discussed and assessed.

3.1.7 February Management Accounts – A lengthy discussion took place on improving the way in which information is provided to the Senior Management Team to ensure that they can monitor spend. Mr Connolly explained difficulties caused by lack of information.

3.1.8 It was agreed that Directors will discuss with their G7s to identify financial capabilities in their divisions and update the May Senior Management Team.

3.1.9 Departmental Balanced Scorecard – Mr Connolly presented an updated draft of the Scorecard which would be discussed at the G7 Away Day. It was agreed that Absence Management would be discussed at either April or May's Senior Management Team Meeting. **(Action: DEL Secretariat)**

3.2 Corporate Services Report

3.2.1 Issues relating to HR Connect implementation – Mr McPoland agreed to check why payroll numbers appear alongside email addresses. **(Action: Mr McPoland)**

3.2.2 Mr McPoland updated the Senior Management Team on issues relating to pay and a discussion followed on the lack of management information and detailed payroll information.

3.2.3 Issues relating to Information Governance – following discussion it was agreed that this should be regularly reported on at future meetings.

3.2.4 Media and Marketing Unit – Mr McPoland informed the meeting that the Advertising Shared Service is being introduced in the next financial year and requested that G5s inform him of any advertising campaigns that they intend to run as soon as possible. **(Action: All G5s)**

3.2.5 Personnel Update Report – the contents of the Report were noted and a discussion took place on the forthcoming G7 competition.

4. Papers and Formal Notings

4.1 Resolution of Employment Disputes in NI – A review of policy and systems

4.1.1 The Senior Management Team noted the contents of the Report and Dr McGinley conveyed thanks to Tom Evans and his team for their work in this area.

4.2 FE Programme Update

4.2.1 The Senior Management Team noted the progress made and conveyed thanks to all those involved. The FE Lecturers Pay Dispute was discussed and again thanks were conveyed to all involved, particularly Mrs Coe.

4.3 Economic & Labour Market Brief

4.3.1 Discussed in detail under item 2.2.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Departments Annual Report – A discussion took place on the format of the Annual Report and the need to align with the Balanced Scorecard. Mrs Marten undertook to compile a draft Annual Report and liaise with G5s as appropriate. **(Action: Mrs Marten)**

5.2 PSA Monitoring Framework – Mr Connolly circulated a paper and a discussion followed on how the Department monitors and reviews PSAs. The contents were noted by the Senior Management Team. It was agreed that the joint structures with DE and DETI be harnessed for cross-cutting PSAs.

5.3 Mr McPoland will update the Senior Management Team at the next meeting on Admin/secretarial support. **(Action: Mr McPoland)**