

**DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING**  
**SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING**  
**Thursday 28 May 2009**  
**Board Room, Adelaide House**

**Present:** Dr Aideen McGinley (Chair)  
Mr Greg McConnell  
Mrs Catherine Bell  
Mr Trevor Connolly  
Mrs June Ingram  
Mr John Baird  
Ms Beverley Harrison  
Mrs Lucy Marten  
Mr Fergus Devitt  
Mr Richard Kenny  
Mrs Patricia McAuley

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:** Mr Colm Shannon, NI Direct (for item 1)  
Mr Jim Hamilton, NI Direct (for item 1)  
Mr Mervyn Langtry (for item 3.1)  
Ms Jan Harvey (for item 3.1)  
Ms Olive Matthews (for item 3.1)  
Ms Sian McCleave (for item 3.2)  
Mrs Anne-Marie O’Kane - Secretariat

**1. NI Direct Presentation**

- 1.1 Mr Colm Shannon delivered a presentation on the NI Direct website, concentrating on the Department’s themes: Employment and Education &

Learning. A discussion took place on the continued role for the Department's website and on utilising the NI Direct website to highlight key topical issues. Mrs Bell stated that 'skills' should be included within the Department's main themes. Dr McGinley thanked Mr Shannon for the presentation.

1.2 Ms Harrison was welcomed to the meeting.

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Summary Action Sheet**

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

2.1.1 Para 3.2.1 should read "... Mrs McAuley supported this and highlighted that Preparation for Work Division are working with other Public Sector organisations to promote work placements for Steps to Work participants. This needed to be taken forward by Corporate Services with PDG and CPG." Action Point to reflect these changes.

2.1.2 Para 3.2.4 should read "Mrs McAuley highlighted the need for careful consideration on 'Mentoring and Support', including resource implications ...."

2.1.3 Para 4.2.3 should read " .... Shows that DEL has met and exceeded its target absence level.....".

2.2.1 **Summary Action Sheet** – ICT Update – the meeting was informed that work on CMS was being taken forward by the Project Board and that the results of the Departmental Business Scorecard 08/09 would be communicated to staff via Update magazine.

2.2.2 All other actions are being dealt with appropriately.

2.2.3 At this stage Dr McGinley dealt with an action point arising from the Board Meeting from Any Other Business – she stressed the importance of keeping the Issues Log and Risk Register up to date. The Board Minutes and Summary Action Sheet will be included in SMT Meeting packs in future.

**(Action: DEL Secretariat)**

### **3. Policy**

#### **3.1 Cross-Departmental Strategy Update**

3.1 Ms Ingram introduced by providing a brief overview of current issues and Dr McGinley stressed to the meeting the value of the interdepartmental approach in dealing with them and thanked the Strategy & Equality team for their work to date.

3.1.1 The Senior Management Team were provided with an update on the following issues:

- Neighbourhood Renewal;
- Poverty and Social Inclusion;
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups;
- Children and Young People;
- Disability;
- Rural Issues;
- Social Economy;
- Homelessness;
- NEET;
- Regional Development Strategy;
- Equality; and
- Europe – Barosso Taskforce

#### **3.2 Economic Downturn**

3.2.1 Ms Kerr briefed the meeting on Strand 1 of Skillsafe and on the good press coverage the announcement had attracted. She tabled a paper on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Strand and a discussion took place on the financial implications.

3.2.2 Dr McGinley commended all involved in the Skills Conference.

### **3.3 Review of Reward and Recognition**

3.3.1 Mr McKeown outlined the key points arising from the Review of Reward and Recognition measures in the Department.

3.3.2 Dr McGinley suggested making an award under each 'value' which would then be celebrated at the annual 'celebrating success' event – Mr McKeown will look at this proposal in more detail. **Action: Mr McKeown**

3.3.3 Following a discussion on targets Mr McConnell suggested that agreement was needed on continuing the bonus scheme and on a two strand approach – further work was required from Departmental HR in this respect. **Action: Mr McKeown**

### **3.4 Review of Business Continuity/Contingency Planning**

3.4.1 Mr McKeown informed the meeting that Personnel Services plan to review and update the Departments Business Continuity/Contingency Plan, with a view to having an emergency plan by September 2009, which would be tested in the following months. He will present a paper to the Senior Management Team in advance of this, asking for Directors to identify business priorities. **Action: Mr McKeown**

## **4. Finance and Corporate Services**

4.1.1 **Risk Register/Issues Log** – a discussion took place on a number of items and their appropriateness to be logged as an issue or a risk. A number of amendments were agreed.

4.1.2 Provisional Outturn 2008/09 – Mr Connolly reported on the Department's outturn figures but explained that DFP were still considering the overall Block position.

4.1.3 Papers were also tabled in respect of FAST inspections and Internal Audit Indicative Programme 09/10 and on the PSA Monitoring Framework Quarter 4, 2008/09 in respect of PSA 2 and PSA 3.

## 4.2 **Corporate Services Report**

4.2.1 Mr McKeown informed the meeting that draft Absence Management figures had been provided by HR Connect and would be validated by NISRA in June. Monthly figures are not available. The target for 09/10 is 10.4 days.

4.2.2 The meeting was informed that a supplementary DP list would issue on 8<sup>th</sup> June and a discussion took place on general staffing issues, including the issue of non-attendance at training courses. The vacancy position was noted.

4.2.3 The DEL Calendar of Events June 2009 – August 2009 was noted.

4.2.4 DEL Media Analysis paper – Ms Marten asked for feedback on how the information was presented and it was agreed that analysis by business area should be maintained and analysis by Division was not necessary. **Action:**  
**Ms Marten**

## 5. **Papers and Formal Notings**

5.1 The meeting noted the following papers – World Skills Calgary 2009, Update on FSAG for Hospitality and Tourism, Service Level Agreement between ETI and DEL 2009/2010 and the Economic and Labour Market Brief.

5.2 A brief discussion took place on the Post Graduate Review in relation to financial implications.

6. **Any Other Business**

6.1 Dr McGinley had previously circulated correspondence from Derek Baker in relation to the NICS Staff Survey and everyone was urged to respond to this.

6.2 National Minimum Wage – Ms Ingram informed the meeting that BERR had circulated the draft remit for the Low Pay Commission for 09/10 seeking urgent comments. The key issue for us was the proposal to look at a minimum wage for apprentices, but Nuala Kerr and she would discuss further to establish the nature of DEL's interest. She wanted to make SMT aware at this stage in case others had an interest or could comment. The participation age in England was a factor which needed to be taken into account.

6.3 Economic Downturn – Mrs McAuley stated that the focus of the Employment Service in the downturn was to make sure that individuals are ready for the upturn rather than merely contributing to the benefits process. Employment, training and skills would remain the priority. The Employment Service would need to re-prioritise to cope with the increased number of clients and staffing and accommodation issues would need to be addressed. The Senior Management Team agreed that priority is given to filling Jobs and Benefits front-line EO2 and AO vacancies.

6.4 Mr McKeown was thanked for his assistance during the transition period following Mr McPolands departure.