

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING
SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING
Thursday 29 January 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 John McKeown
Mrs Lucy Marten
Mr Fergus Devitt
Mrs Bernie O'Hare
Mrs Nuala Kerr

Apologies: Mrs Patricia McAuley

In Attendance: Mr Des Lyness, Training Programmes Branch (for item 2.3)
Mrs Anne-Marie O'Kane, DEL Secretariat

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Summary Action Sheet

1.1 The Minutes of the previous SMT meeting held on 17 December 2008 were agreed.

1.2 Summary Action Sheet – Structured to Deliver – Dr McGinley presented a paper outlining the rationale for change and outlining the new structure of the Senior Management Team. Timing for its introduction was also discussed. Mr Devitt expressed concern at how the proposed changes were

communicated to the SMT. It was agreed that Dr McGinley, Mr McConnell and Mrs Bell would meet on Monday 9 February 2009 to discuss feedback from G5s. **(Action: Dr McGinley, Mr McConnell and Mrs Bell)**

1.2.1 Mr McKeown agreed to take forward any accommodation issues arising from the restructuring. **(Action: Mr McKeown)**

1.2.2 All other actions have been actioned appropriately.

2. Policy

2.1 HE Strategy

2.1.1 Mr Devitt outlined the remit, scope and timescales for the Higher Education Strategy, which would be taking into account the Widening Participation Strategy and the Fees Review. The Chair of the Steering Group was currently being considered. Dr McGinley congratulated Mr Devitt and his team on the success of the event - 'Higher Education – Making a Difference to Economies and Communities'.

2.2 RAE Outcomes

2.2.1 Mr Devitt stated that Northern Ireland had done well particularly in terms of the international and world class quality of the research. He outlined the improved position of both NI Universities on league tables and outlined the need to develop the formula for the future allocation of funding.

2.3 New Approach to Contracting

2.3.1 Mr Des Lyness joined the meeting and Mrs Kerr outlined the background and main issues leading to the development of the discussion paper. At this stage views were being sought and Mrs Kerr will discuss fully with PfW division. Mr Lyness then provided detail of the existing arrangements and the proposals for new contracts in 2010. Benefits, risks and resource implications were discussed and it was agreed that careful consideration should be given to

communicating any changes. Dr McGinley commended Mr Lyness on his work on this area and on the objective view taken. Mrs Bell stressed the importance of input to inform the policy development process from all colleagues and would particularly welcome Mr Devitts knowledge of procurement issues. **(Action: Mr Lyness)**

- 2.3.2 The Departments response to the Committee's Review of Training for Success is to be circulated to the Senior Management Team.
(Action: Mrs Kerr)

2.4 Review of Quality Improvement Programme

- 2.4.1 Mrs Bell reminded the meeting about the Review of the Department's Quality Improvement Strategy – 'Success Through Excellence'. Staff from 'Beyond Standards' will begin their work week commencing 2 February 2009.

3. Finance and Corporate Services

3.1 Finance Report

- 3.1.1 Risk Register – Mr Connolly informed the meeting that an additional risk had been added in relation to the Exchange Rate.
- 3.1.2 The Contents of the Issues Log, the December Management Accounts and February Monitoring were noted.
- 3.1.3 Departmental Balanced Scorecard – Mr Connolly provided an update on the achievement of targets and a discussion followed on how these are measured. It was agreed to amend Target No 2 to green and re-issue the Scorecard. **(Action: Mr Connolly)**
- 3.1.4 Mr Connolly agreed to amend the colouring used in the Scorecard as it can be difficult to distinguish red from amber. **(Action: Mr Connolly)**

- 3.1.5 The owner of Target No 9 should be the Corporate Services Director.
(Action: Mr Connolly)
- 3.1.6 Dr McGinley and Mr Connolly will meet mid February to discuss next years Balanced Scorecard. **(Action: Dr McGinley and Mr Connolly)**
- 3.1.7 Account NI – Mrs Kerr thanked Mr Connolly and his staff, as many of the issues have now been resolved. She also stated that staff in her own Division and others had also worked very hard to overcome these issues. Dr McGinley asked that Mr Connolly and Mrs Kerr thank their teams for their dedication to resolving the issues so successfully. **(Action: Mr Connolly and Mrs Kerr)**
- 3.1.8 It was agreed that the Account NI Issues Log should continue to be presented to the Senior Management Team for the next few months along with maintaining the red risk on the Departments Risk Register.
(Action: Mr Connolly)
- 3.1.9 Mr McKeown agreed to liaise with Ms Ann Loney in respect of issues regarding overtime payments within her branch. **(Action: Mr McKeown)**
- 3.1.10 Update on Finance Issues – A discussion took place on the Memorandum of Reply in relation to PAC and generic Departmental wide risks on the accountability grid. Dr McGinley to discuss with Mr David Thompson.
(Action: Dr McGinley)
- 3.1.11 Dr McGinley informed the Senior Management Team that Mr Gerry Lavery (DARD) had agreed to join the Audit Committee.

3.2 Corporate Services Report

3.2.1 Absence Management – Mr McKeown informed the meeting that issues with HR Connect should be resolved soon to enable the capturing of the last two months absence figures. He also informed the meeting of the new procedures regarding dealing with sickness warnings and appeals.

3.2.2 Vacancy Position – The board noted the contents which were to be amended to include a DP accountancy vacancy in FE Corporate Governance.

(Action: Mr McKeown)

3.2.3 A discussion took place on the pressures being experienced in Pfw Division and Redundancy Payments Branch and it was agreed to keep this situation under review. A discussion followed on accommodation issues and Mr McKeown will keep Mrs Kerr informed re. issues affecting the Careers Service. **(Action: Mr McKeown)**

3.2.4 Dr McGinley asked that Mrs Kerr pass on congratulations to all involved on the successful launch of the Careers Strategy and all the work it entailed.

(Action: Mrs Kerr)

3.2.5 The Senior Management Team noted the contents of the Calendar of Events and the Media Analysis Paper and noted that the C'mon Over event in Dublin would be held on the 11 March 09.

3.2.6 Customer Service Standards – The contents were noted and a discussion followed on targets - it was agreed these were standards and not targets and it was recognised they were based on the wider NICS standards.

3.2.7 Information Access Regime – It was agreed that a breakdown by Division of FOI requests should be sent to all G5s for information. **(Action: Mr McKeown)**

3.2.8 The Senior Management Team noted the contents of Central Management Branch Update Report on Departmental Performance and the Departments good performance on responding to Assembly Questions and meeting Customer Standards would be reflected in Dr McGinley's article for Update Magazine. **(Action: Dr McGinley)**

3.2.9 Information Assurance – It was agreed that this should be included in the Risk Register and the Information Assurance Working Group be established to take forward recommendations. A note will also issue to G5s on what is required in respect of arms length bodies **(Action: Mr McKeown)**

3.2.10 The Senior Management Team noted the contents and progress of the Reform Projects Update and the Departments Learning and Development Plan.

4. Papers and Formal Notings

4.1 Economic and Labour Market Brief – Dr McGinley informed the Senior Management Team that this paper would be presented to both the SMT Meetings and Board Meetings and to the Minister and Committee to keep all informed in light of the current economic climate. Content was noted.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 DEL's Approach to Downturn

5.1.1 Mrs Bell circulated a paper which highlighted actions being taken across the Department. This would be used as the basis of the response to the EDF. Mrs Bell and Mrs Marten will discuss how this is communicated. **(Action: Mrs Bell and Mrs Marten)**

5.1.2 Dr McGinley informed the meeting that there were plans to introduce weekly Executive Meetings and a system should be established to capture

- information on the downturn and response and update the Minister accordingly. **(Action: Lynne Taylor)**
- 5.2 Mrs Ingram gave an update on Transitions and Bamford and a discussion followed on the wide range of inputs required as a result of extensive sub-group activity, and efforts to streamline and rationalise the related processes.
- 5.3 Dr McGinley stated that the SMT needed to take a strategic long term look at the programmes/services which the Department delivers and how these link to policies/strategies and future actions which could draw on the Review of the Skills Strategy for example, and extend the forward look to 2020.
(Action: Dr McGinley)
- 5.4 Review of ESF – Mr Connolly circulated a paper ‘Review of 2007-13 Competitiveness and Employment Programmes’ and gave a summary of content. Mr Connolly agreed to provide Mrs Kerr with more information on State Aid Liberation Opportunities. **(Action: Mr Connolly)**
- 5.5 Dr McGinley expressed her thanks in particular to Mr McKeown for his work over the past 10 months which was endorsed by the Senior Management Team.

