**OFFICIAL MINUTE OF PERMANENT SECRETARY MEETINGS**

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| **MEETING TITLE** | EDSG |
| **DAERA REF** | SINV-0032-2024 |
| **VENUE** | MS Teams |
| **DATE/TIME** | 19-03-2024 09.30hrs |
| **LIST OF ATTENDEES** | Brian Doherty Chair, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group (SPCSG).Norman Fulton Deputy Secretary, Food, Farming & Rural Affairs Group (FFRAG).Robert Huey Chief Veterinary Officer, Veterinary Service & Animal Health Group (VSAHG).Liz Loughran Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group (EMFG).David Reid Deputy Secretary, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).Martin McKendry Director of CAFRE.Marc Little Head of Capacity, Capability, Equality & Diversity BranchColm Morgan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA).Russell McCurry Capacity, Capability, Equality & Diversity Branch |
| **APOLOGIES** | Katrina Godfrey Permanent SecretaryTracey Teague Deputy Secretary, Climate Change, Science & Innovation Group (CCSIG)Brian McGeehan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) |
| **KEY POINTS DISCUSSED****Welcome and apologies*** Brian welcomed all members to the meeting and noted the apologies that were received. Due to other commitments, Colm Morgan and Liz Loughran joined during the meeting.

**Review of previous minutes*** The Chair confirmed with members that the minutes from 13 October 2023 had been agreed by correspondence and no updates were required.

**Action Points from EDSG meeting held on 13 October 2023*** It was agreed that all outstanding actions could be closed as the Terms of Reference will be discussed at today’s meeting.

**Equality and Diversity Report/Update*** Marc Little’s report formed part of the papers for today’s meeting and had been shared in advance with members.
* He specifically drew attention to the Ethnic Equality Monitoring and the need for other Champions and Representatives for the other Social Inclusion Strategies to fill those roles. A memo will issue shortly to request volunteers for the vacant posts.
* Marc also mentioned that the Diversity and Inclusion calendar will issue imminently but in future we can make use of other calendars that are widely produced by other organisations.
* The Chair also noted that although the DAERA budget equality screening had been completed it now needed more detail following the communication from the ECNI. Further information may be shared in due course as Finance Division colleagues continued to engage with ECNI.

**Champions’ Updates - Children’s Champion*** Martin informed the Group that the Children’s Champion Sub-Group was well represented with all members from each DAERA Group represented when they met, on 14 March 2024, to share the new 3-year Action Plan to be ready over the next few weeks.
* There are three main areas for DAERA: Policy, Funding, and Student Support, with the key issues within the Plan relating to these including Climate Change and Environmental Policy, among others. Other areas in the plan relate to student engagement across the Department (which is currently very good), and other funding such as Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster.
* Martin also discussed student support, such as mental health, wellbeing, placement posts for students, etc.
* Martin noted that safeguarding issues were being managed in line with the policy requirements.
* The training for the Children’s Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA’s) has been completed by the CAFRE Grade 7’s and the Children’s Champion Sub-Group. It is recommended that the Grade7’s within the departmental policy areas should also complete this training.
* There have also been a number of Assembly Questions, mainly about financial support for students, and these have come from the Children’s Commissioner. This will be dealt with by inclusion within the Action Plan with a column within the table for financial support requirements.
* The Action Plan may be ready to go out with the EDSG minutes as there are only a few minor additions to be added to it.

**Review of EDSG Terms of Reference*** The Chair highlighted the need to review and, where necessary, update the Terms of Reference for the EDSG group with anything that may be helpful (**Action Point 1**).

**AOB*** No additional items were raised.
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| **ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:*** **Action 1 to be completed by 25-03-2024 – Equality Unit.**

The EDSG Terms of Reference are to be reviewed and sent to the attendees for their input by the end of the week. |
| **Minutes written by:**Russell McCurry Capacity, Capability, Equality & Diversity Branch | **Date:** 19-03-2024 |