**OFFICIAL MINUTE OF PERMANENT SECRETARY MEETING**

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| **MEETING TITLE** | EDSG |
| **DAERA REF** | SINV-0426-2023 |
| **VENUE** | MS Teams |
| **DATE/TIME** | 13-10-2023 13.30hrs |
| **LIST OF ATTENDEES** | Katrina Godfrey Chair, Permanent Secretary, DAERA.Fiona McCandless Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group (SPCSG), NICS Gender Champion.Norman Fulton Deputy Secretary, Food, Farming & Rural Affairs Group (FFRAG).David Reid Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group (EMFG).Paul Donnelly Deputy Secretary, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).Jonathan McFerran Climate Change, Science & Innovation Group (CCSIG), Green Growth Deputy Director.Alan Galbraith Head of College Support Service, Food, Farming & Rural Affairs Group (FFRAG).Seamus McErlean Food, Farming & Rural Affairs Group (FFRAG), DAERA Chief Economist.David Simpson Director of Corporate Services Group (CSG).Colin Campbell Head of Equality & Diversity Branch (EDB).Brian McGeehan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA). |
| **APOLOGIES** | Robert Huey Chief Veterinary Officer, Veterinary Service & Animal Health Group (VSAHG).Tracey Teague Deputy Secretary, Climate Change, Science & Innovation Group (CCSIG).Brian Doherty Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group (SPCSG).Martin McKendry Director of CAFRE.Colm Morgan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA). |
| **KEY POINTS DISCUSSED****Welcome and apologies*** Katrina welcomed all members to the meeting and noted the apologies that were received.

**Review of previous minutes*** The Chair confirmed with members that the minutes from 08 March 2023 had been agreed by correspondence and that no updates were required.

**Action Points from EDSG meeting held on 08 March 2023*** All actions points had been completed and noted in the Agenda Item No. 3 paper. Colin Campbell, briefly talked through some of the actions and gave clarity where necessary.

**Equality and Diversity Report/Update*** Colin Campbell’s report formed part of the papers for today’s meeting and had been shared with the group.
* He specifically drew attention to the letter about the Annual Progress Report from the ECNI and the positive review that it provided for the Department. ECNI had also stated that the NIEA and EMFG input was helpful, given that they also provided photographs relating to some of the projects that they had worked on. Colin also mentioned the positive and constructive advice that the ECNI provided in relation to the DAERA Budget equality screening.
* The Equality and Diversity Report also highlighted the IJSD (International Job Shadow Day), and Katrina asked for another sweep of the Department looking for any extra opportunities, to job shadow, that may exist (**Action Point 1**).
* It was noted that the Diversity event, held at Greenmount, did not have a high uptake of staff visits as would have been hoped for.
* Norman Fulton joined the meeting at this stage and shortly after this Paul Donnelly also joined the meeting.

**Champions’ Updates*** **Diversity & Inclusion Champion**
* David Simpson provided an update, noting that he had only recently taken up his role as DAERA D&I Champion.
* He informed the group that sign language would be classified as a language and not as a disability. The next meeting for the sign language group would be held in December.
* Fiona McCandless (NICS Gender Champion) highlighted the work being done across the Civil Service and gave an update on the Women’s Network mentoring programme. There were approximately 40 mentees and 14 mentors, but others could put their name forward at this stage, for either role, if they wanted to.
* Katrina informed the members that, in her new role as NICS Joint D&I Champion, she had met with the NICS Gender; LGBTQI+; Race & Ethnicity; and Disability Champions to learn about their roles, the networks they led and the support they might need from her.
* **Children’s Champion**
* Alan Galbraith deputised for Martin McKendry (the DAERA Children’s Champion) and provided an update on a number of projects.

It was noted that student enrolments continued to be strong at CAFRE especially in agriculture. Female numbers continued to rise. Increased marketing for young males was being pursued for CAFRE’s Food education provision due to the male inequality in these courses.The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Chris Quinn, took up appointment as NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) in September 2023. The Permanent Secretary had written to Chris, congratulating him in his role and inviting him to meet with her and Martin McKendry at CAFRE.* In October the DAERA Children’s Champion Sub-Group contributed content to the annual departmental written update provided to NICCY by Martin McKendry. This report would be considered at the Interdepartmental Children’s Champion meeting at Equality House on 24 October.
* On 24 October, Valerie Finlay would represent the Department at A Children’s Rights Briefing Event: Acting on the concluding observations and recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.
* The Permanent Secretary had made a short video in support of Parenting Week which runs from 16-20 October 2023. The short video message celebrated the role of parenting and promotes the positive roles parents make. The video would be shared across DAERA digital channels.
* Alan also highlighted Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) as an approach which embeds children’s rights considerations at the outset of developing legislation, strategies and policies and by applying the CRIA Framework avoid / mitigate any negative impacts at the earliest possible stage. NICCY are keen to see dissemination of this training within Northern Ireland Departments and Agencies. Two training modules were available on LInKS: Introduction to Children’s Rights (e-Learning) & Conducting Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIM) (e-learning). Recently CAFRE staff at Grade 7 equivalent and above completed these and confirmed that the content was helpful for staff developing legislation, strategies and policies.
* This would be discussed further at the next DAERA Children’s Champion Sub-Group which will meet on 11 November.

**AOB*** Katrina updated the group on the recommendations from the recent Departmental Board Effectiveness Review on committees of the board. A new Capacity and Capability Committee would include a focus on equality and diversity. EDSG would however continue to meet twice a year in working group format and would include TUS representation. New terms of reference would be prepared to set out how the group would support the new Committee in discharging its functions (**Action Point 2**).
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| **ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:*** **Action 1 to be completed by 20-10-2023 – Equality Unit, Cindy Fowler.**

The Secretary asked for another sweep of the Department looking for any extra opportunities, to job shadow, that may exist for the IJSD (International Job Shadow Day).* **Action 2 to be completed by 30-11-2023 – Equality Unit.**

New terms of reference for EDSG/EDWG to be prepared, reflecting how the group can support the work of the new Capacity and Capability Committee of the Departmental Board. |
| **Minutes written by:**Russell McCurry Equality & Diversity Branch (EDB). | **Date:** 16-10-2023 |