

h/c establishing OFM/DFM as a Dept.

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

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FROM: Gerry Loughran

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TO: To All Staff in OFM/DFM

ESTABLISHING OFM/DFM AS A DEPARTMENT

1. This is my first opportunity to communicate with all of you since I joined the Department last month. Since my arrival, I have been struck by the breadth of work, the great demands placed on staff across the Department, and the very fast moving nature of much of the policy work we face.
2. As I shall formally take over as Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, and of this Department, in early August from Sir John Semple, I am taking this early opportunity to explain in detail how I see the project which has been called "Establishing OFM/DFM as a Department" evolving in the coming months.
3. Although I was not involved in the detailed work which was initiated during the period of suspension, I attended a part of the away day held in Templepatrick on 17 and 18 May involving senior management of the Department and representatives of the special advisers of both the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
4. I support the objective of the project creating a sense of identity and common purpose in this new Department and of seeking better ways of supporting Ministers to achieve their objectives.
5. Many of you have already been involved in this exercise in one or more ways, either by responding to the survey questionnaire, or through focus group meetings or in various sub-groups. That participative approach is one which I am determined will inform all of the elements of this project, and the wider management of the Department.
6. Essentially I see the project being taken forward in 3 ways. **Firstly**, we need to develop a clear sense of what the Department is here to achieve, and a strategic and corporate planning process to support this. I am attaching to this note a first draft of a Mission Statement and values for the Department which emerged from the away day in

May. The consultation process which leads to the finalisation of this document will be a thorough one in which large numbers of you have the opportunity to contribute.

7. As to the planning process, the principles of widespread participation and of ensuring that the process is not a purely top-down in nature apply here equally. We need to establish objectives and targets for the current financial year as a matter of some urgency, ensuring that each work unit has its own plans which fit in with the overall Departmental objectives. Thereafter, we will be looking to establish longer-term objectives and a proper business plan. This exercise will be initiated once the necessary resources have been identified to support it.

8. **Secondly**, we need to create good communications within the Department. The new in-house magazine "Focus First" which will issue shortly will help in this regard. I intend to supplement this with a "Staff Brief" which will provide bullpoints on key issues for which the Department has responsibility, and on wider issues which impact on the Department in a significant way.

9. I am keen to promote less formal opportunities for us to get together and get to know each other better. With this in mind plans are in hand to organise a social event for the Department before the end of the month.

10. A Senior Management Group has also been established under my chairmanship comprising the Directors within OFM/DFM and the two Principal Private Secretaries. This group will meet regularly to address the major management issues facing the Department. In addition to the formal mechanisms, I intend to establish informal sub-groups involving staff at all levels throughout the organisation to carry forward specific targeted exercises which impact on the Department.

11. **Thirdly**, we need to continue to examine ways of improving support to Ministers and to ensure all elements of the Department work together to maximise the impact we make. Devolution has transformed both the political environment and the way in which the Government operates. That has meant considerable change affecting us all, and places an onus on us to look constructively at the way we work, to identify problems and individually and collectively to look for solutions to those problems.

12. I look forward to working with you to make progress on all fronts identified in this note.

[Signed]

G Loughran

GERRY LOUGHRAN

ANNEX A

DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT, VALUES AND MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is to support its Ministers and the institutions of Government and to take forward three key policy areas: equality and human rights, the development of a coherent Programme of Government setting out the Executive's overall aims and ensuring its implementation, and the co-ordination of the business of Government.

The key roles of the Department are:

- *to support the institutions established under the GFA*
- *to demonstrate that devolved Government makes a positive difference to the people of Northern Ireland*
- *to promote the equality and human rights agenda*

OFM/DFM has a strong central role

- *providing strategic leadership, drive and innovation*
- *promoting and building corporacy and cohesion across Government*
- *facilitating the overall business of the Executive Committee, including by maximising consensus*

Values

The following value statements represent the set of beliefs that define our organisational behaviour:

- *respect for diversity, internally among staff and externally*
- *develop partnerships*
- *open to new ideas and adaptive to change*
- *open and honest communication*
- *conduct our business with integrity*
- *respect for customers' values, principles and opinions*
- *continuously strive for improvement in the quality of our service*
- *value the contributions of staff*

Management Principles

The following statements of principle reflect our management practices:

- *encourage a flexible team-based approach and avoid rigidity and hierarchical approaches*
- *empower staff to do their best through support for their continuous improvement and development*
- *seek to implement new ideas by encourage innovative ideas from staff*
- *encourage and foster close working relationships and partnerships with other departments and external organisations*
- *seek to build consensus and develop a corporate approach in our dealings with departments*
- *seek to harness creative energies through progressive leadership*
- *value the contributions of staff*
- *strive for efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources*

1 July 2000

ESTABLISHING OFM/DFM AS A DEPARTMENT: TAKING THE PROJECT FORWARD

Context

- Need to build on Departmental input to date.
- Some Ministerial interest in outcomes.
- Renewed devolution.
- New HOCS.

Proposals

- Communicate awayday outcomes to staff. Note from HOCS.
- Include draft Mission Statement/values with note.
- Initiate participative planning process.
- Hold Department-wide social occasion in July ?BBQ.
- Maximise communications with staff. Magazine supplemented by staff brief.
- Engage group(s) of staff on project work eg OFM/DFM name
Female-friendly.
- Finalise outstanding work: Helen Roulston to meet FM
Visit to Cabinet Office.
- Consider how best to communicate outcomes to Ministers.