

The Office of the Clerk to the Northern Ireland Assembly Corporate Report 1999-2002

FUNCTION

This Office was established, following the appointment of the Clerk and Chief Executive in April 2001, to provide a central policy and management function and to offer a range of corporate services, as listed below. In addition the Office provides key support services for the Clerk and Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive, the Deputy Clerk, the Head of Legal Services and the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

The office comprises the following discrete functional areas:

Private Office

- Supports and advises the Clerk to the Assembly, the Deputy Clerk and the Deputy Chief Executive on the Secretariat's corporate responsibilities;
- Contributes to the development and review of strategic and business plans;
- Develops, implements and reviews policy; and
- Deals with customer relations and internal communications.

Internal Audit

- Provides an independent and objective appraisal service to examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy of internal control as a contribution to the economic, efficient and effective use of resources; and
- Advises on risk management and corporate governance as part of the modernising government agenda.

Procurement Office

- Provides professional purchasing expertise, including advice and direction on good procurement practice, to ensure propriety, efficiency, best value and compliance with legal obligations;

- Develops and implements procurement policies and procedures across the Secretariat;
- Interprets, negotiates and purchases major service contracts; and
- Monitors and reviews supply and service contracts to ensure quality and value for money.

Legal Services

- Provides a comprehensive range of legal advice (covering constitutional law, human rights law, employment law, contract law and EU law, etc) to the Speaker and his Deputies, Assembly Committees and the Assembly Commission.

Examiner of Statutory Rules

- Assists the Assembly, the Statutory Committees and the Committee of the Centre in the technical scrutiny of statutory rules and draft statutory rules which are subject to procedures before the Assembly.

ACTIVITY DURING THE PERIOD

TO 31 MARCH 2002

- Co-ordinated the development of contingency plans and the Secretariat business plan;
- Contributed to corporate policy development and monitored progress on behalf of the Clerk and Chief Executive;
- Provided support to 23 Board of Management meetings;
- Co-ordinated a Members' survey and a staff survey;
- Provided expertise in drafting procurement guidelines;
- Audited seven key areas in the Assembly Secretariat;
- Co-ordinated the establishment of a tailored system of Team Briefing;

- Advised on risk management issues;
- Produced a pocket guide to Secretariat services;
- Provided advice on the competency of 20 Bills;
- Provided the technical scrutiny services necessary for the Assembly and its Committees to meet the accepted time scales for 283 items of subordinate legislation; and
- Agreed an Assembly Whitley Constitution and established formal management/trade union meetings.

THE KEY CHALLENGES 2002/2003

- Plan for the transition from this Assembly to the next Assembly in May 2003;
- Develop the business planning processes and monitor progress throughout the Secretariat;
- Develop an internal communications strategy;
- Implement guidance for corporate governance and risk management;
- Review Assembly procurement needs and develop a procurement strategy;
- Establish the Assembly and Business Trust (ABT);
- Prepare, publish and implement an equality scheme;
- Provide technical scrutiny of subordinate legislation to the Assembly and the appropriate Committees;
- Consider and report on subordinate legislation within prescribed timescales;
- Establish an Assembly Legal Service and Legal Library; and
- Advise on the competency of Bills within prescribed timescales.