

## **MEETING OF THE RPA STEERING GROUP**

**FRIDAY 13 OCTOBER IN ROOM GD14 STORMONT CASTLE AT 10.30am**

**Members:** Nigel Hamilton  
Will Haire  
Sid McDowell (Chair, PSC)  
Andrew McCormick  
Stephen Peover  
Bruce Robinson  
Alan Shannon  
Gerry McGinn

**Present:** Michael Daly (for John Hunter)  
Alan Esdale (for George Gray)  
Carol McCabe (for Mary Bunting)  
Michael Donnelly (for David Gavaghan)  
John McMillen  
Brian Doherty  
Neill Jackson (for Rosalie Flanagan)  
Colm Shannon  
Jim McKeown  
Damian Prince  
Maurice Dowling

**Apologies:**

John Hunter  
Mary Bunting  
George Gray  
Rosalie Flanagan

**1. Welcome**

1.1 Nigel Hamilton welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Damian Prince and Maurice Dowling who recently joined the RPA Central Unit. He recorded his thanks to Colette Leeson who had acted as secretary to the Group and recently moved to the Shared Training Services Centre.

**2. Minutes of 1 September 2006**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September were agreed noting the revision of paragraph 1.6 requested by Mary Bunting.

2.2 As to the Action points, David Hanson spoke at the Govnet Conference on 3 October and the speech was covered in an article on the same day in the Belfast Telegraph. The RPA Central Unit will address both the programme management and risks issues at the November meeting.

### **3. Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Nigel Hamilton invited an update from each of the key sectors.
- 3.2 Will Haire reported that DE had a good stakeholder meeting with the Trustees and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Transferors Representative Council (TRC), the GBA and the Chairs and Chief Executives of the ELBs and progress is being made. The Minister was also to meet NICIE and CnaG in the next week.
- 3.3 It is hoped to have appointed the Chief Executive (Designate) of the Education and Skills Authority by November.
- 3.4 The recommendations of a formal Gate 0 review by The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) for the Education RPA programme are being considered.
- 3.5 Education has a considerable amount of complex legislation to prepare – the timetable and resources are a continuing concern.
- 3.6 Andrew McCormick highlighted that a lot of progress has been made by DHSSPS and emphasised the good work with the Chief Executive (Designate) of the HSSA and the Chief Executives and Chairs of the 5 new HSS Trusts. All Director level posts in the Trusts have now been advertised as well as the Chief Finance and Corporate Services post in the HSSA.
- 3.7 A press release will be issued on Tuesday (17 October) regarding the interim arrangement for commissioning of services.
- 3.8 RPA events have been delivered to DHPSS & Trust staff. The definition of 'Affected Groups' has raised further queries. It is hoped to issue a draft HR Framework for consultation to put many of the issues in context.
- 3.9 DHSSPS continues to work on the area of shared services which has been identified as critical in delivering savings but it is causing concern with TUS.
- 3.10 Relationships with TUS reached a critical point when they walked out of the HR Advisory Forum Meeting. It is hoped that constructive relationships can quickly be restored.
- 3.11 Stephen Peover advised that 2 reviews had been commissioned from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) on:
  - RPA Local Government Taskforce Structure
  - The 'Fitness for Purpose' of NILGA

- 3.12 The proposals for the Local Government Taskforce Structure to implement RPA have been reported to the DOE Working Panel and go to the Political Panel on 16 October.
- 3.13 The review of NILGA and its RPA 'Fit for Purpose' has been reported direct to NILGA.
- 3.14 The Local Government Boundary Commissioner, Dick MacKenzie will publish initial proposals for the 7 Council Boundaries on 7 November.
- 3.15 Referring to Gateway Reviews, John McMillen advised that OGC will be completing the RPA Implementation Health Check today and reporting to Nigel Hamilton this afternoon. Early indications are that whilst the Review Team are impressed with the level of commitment to the Programme, areas for consideration are likely to touch on the scale of, and timescale for, the Reform; detail on costs and benefits; and refining the vision and its communication to staff and the wider public. John extended his appreciation to everyone who contributed to the Health Check.
- 3.16 Sid McDowell commented that the Govnet Conference and the Belfast Telegraph could usefully have recognised the wider perspective of RPA impacting on 180,000 staff and the role of the PSC. It was also noted that the mechanism of making permanent appointments to the Senior Civil Service for the purposes of filling top management posts in the new Authorities would be avoided where possible. A secondment method was preferable.
- 3.18 Bruce Robinson proposed that a shared services discussion might usefully take place on a broad scale across the public sector.

## **4. HR Issues**

### **4.1 Public Service Commission**

- 4.1.1 Sid McDowell provided an update on the progress of the Public Service Commission. The Commission has met with Government and David Hanson to further discuss the points of difference between the Commission's and Government's positions on the draft 4<sup>th</sup> (Filling posts in New Organisations) Guiding Principle. The Commission gave further consideration to the draft 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principles at its 11 October meeting.
- 4.1.2 The Commission believe the draft 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle goes to the heart of staffing issues and the protection of pensions is highly important. The Commission are seeking further discussions with Government to narrow the gap in opinions. Concern was raised about some conflicting language being used in a proposed DHSSPS circular on staff transfers. Nigel Hamilton emphasised that all communication should be clear and consistent.

- 4.1.3 The Commission are working on a further redraft of the 4<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle following the PSC meeting 11 October and its meeting with David Hanson at which Minister confirmed that Government was willing to take a power of direction over local authorities.
- 4.1.4 The Commission are working on a draft 5<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle – Voluntary Early Retirement and Redundancy
- 4.1.5 The Group's attention was drawn to a letter received by the Commission. It was agreed that this demonstrated a need for improved communication to encourage employers to take on a proactive leadership role in relation to their statutory obligations within consistently applied RPA principles.

**Action Point 1: John McMillen will seek to address this point in future communications.**

- 4.1.6 John McMillen advised he had circulated an initial definition of the 'RPA Affected Group' and also guidance to 150 bodies in relation to the PSC's recommendation on "Managing Vacancies Effectively". There has been a relatively small number of responses to date and these are being addressed.
- 4.1.7 John requested that colleagues forward any papers for the next PSC meeting (1 November) to the Central RPA Unit by 20 October.

## **4.2 Central Forums**

- 4.2.1 Michael Daly advised that discussions are on-going with NICICTU mainly around the definition of the "RPA Affected Group" and HR principles in legislation. The next meeting will be 27 October. He advised the first meeting with non-affiliated unions of the BMA, RCN and RCM is to take place on 26 October.
- 4.2.2 Sid McDowell asked if there was a forum only for the three mentioned non-affiliated unions. Michael Daly advised that they were the only non-affiliated unions to have requested such a forum.
- 4.2.3 Will Haire agreed to check if there is a demand for such a forum from the non-affiliated unions in the Education sector.

**Action Point 2: Will Haire agreed to check if there is a demand for a forum from the non-affiliated unions in the Education sector.**

- 4.2.4 Carol McCabe reported the outcome of a recent meeting of the Equality Forum. It highlighted the importance of decisions on future Estate locations and maximising co-ordination between the sectors. Further discussions are planned with the Estates Working Group. A draft paper on Flags and Emblems, prepared by CRC and ECNI was

considered by the Forum. The Group noted that this would be further developed and circulated for views to relevant bodies and departments.

### **4.3 Staffing Issues in Legislation Instructions**

4.3.1 Jim McKeown advised that the HR provisions for legislation purposes, relating to staff transferring to new organisations will emerge from the PSC's draft 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle. As mentioned earlier there is still a substantial gap between the Commission's position and Government's position.

4.3.2 Jim advised that Government were to have further discussions with NICICTU before liaising with George Gray on how best to incorporate relevant provisions into legislation.

4.3.3 On legislation progress, Alan Esdale advised:

- Libraries Order – drafting is complete except for HR provisions
- Public Authority Reform – drafting is almost complete except for HR provisions and further instructions on the Fisheries Conservation Board are awaited
- Health – main Instructions are drafted but work remains on consequential provisions
- Education – Instructions are due in November

4.3.4 Alan advised that some instructions have been received on the local government structures Order and Stephen Peover confirmed that the bulk of the remaining instructions on that Order and on the Transfer of Functions Order should be forwarded to OLC by the end of October.

4.3.5 Alan also advised that George Gray had asked him to repeat the point made at the last meeting that information on the progress of legislation is presented in a confusing and unhelpful manner. There has been no real improvement.

4.3.6 Jim McKeown advised that a number of major functions were indicating that Instructions would reach OLC by the last due date, 31 October, and it remained to be seen if these were delivered. Some cross-cutting issues, such as governance, will need to be factored in but the overall signals are reasonably positive. Jim emphasised the importance of timeliness and quality of Instructions being presented and made clear that George Gray and his team cannot fill policy gaps.

## **5. Communications**

5.1 Colm Shannon advised that since the first RPA Bulletin was published on the website there have been 25,000 hits. It is planned to issue a second bulletin in October and a further bulletin after the Boundary Commissioner's announcement on 7 November. Colm stated that

Minister Hanson is keen on a bulletin to external stakeholders after 7 November.

- 5.2 Discussions are taking place with the RPA Central Unit to survey external stakeholders to determine RPA awareness and understanding.
- 5.3 Alan Shannon provided an update on the DSD RPA awareness road shows which are being delivered on a Q&A format for which there has been a positive feedback. Colm advised this format is an important 2-way message delivery process that also worked well on the Health side.
- 5.4 John McMillen agreed to meet with Colm to address the concerns raised earlier about communicating with external stakeholders.

**Action Point 3: John McMillen to agree with Colm Shannon on improving communication with external stakeholders.**

## **6. Programme Management – Progress**

- 6.1 John McMillen provided an update on the overall current programme management position as reflected in the programme management paper. He advised that the OGC Health Check is a timely reminder and reality check on the robustness of programme management arrangements and reports. Whilst the RPA Central Unit can act as a challenge function, individual programme/projects should be flagging up areas of concern but it is clear from early OGC feedback that this is not the case. Further work is needed to improve the monitoring arrangements and the RAG status reports.
- 6.2 Nigel Hamilton emphasised that all future Steering Group Meetings must address any 'red' highlighted in the RAG status reports and allocate responsibility for corrective action. Alan Shannon reported that the "Red" activity status in the DSD RAG Report was due to a delay in completing instructions to the draftsman because of the need to agree between Departments the nature of the Government-Local Authority relationship. DSD had arranged meetings with the Planning Service and the Road Service in an attempt to bring this to a conclusion. John McMillen indicated that there was a translation error in one of the DoE reports and the Central RPA unit would correct this.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

- 7.1 3 November at the revised time of 11.00am at Stormont Castle. A draft agenda and request for information will be issued on 20 October.

### **Action Points Summary**

<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Oct. 1	To address this point in future communications – see Action Point 3.	John McMillen
Oct. 2	To check if there is a demand for a forum from the non-affiliated unions in the Education sector.	Will Haire
Oct. 3	To agree on improving communication with external stakeholders.	John McMillen & Colm Shannon