

**MEETING OF THE RPA STEERING GROUP HELD ON  
FRIDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2006 IN ROOM GD14 STORMONT CASTLE AT  
10.30am**

**Members:** Nigel Hamilton  
Aideen McGinley  
Andrew McCormick  
Stephen Peover  
Alan Shannon  
Sid McDowell Chair Public Service Commission (PSC)  
Bruce Robinson  
David Gavaghan  
John Hunter  
Will Haire  
Gerry McGinn

**Present:** George Gray  
Michael Henderson (for Colm Shannon)  
Brian Doherty  
Rosalie Flanagan  
Mary Bunting  
John McMillen  
Jim McKeown  
Colette Leeson

**Apologies:** Colm Shannon  
Paul Sweeney

**1. Progress on Key Actions**

- 1.1 Nigel Hamilton welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited members to provide a brief update on progress over the summer.
- 1.2 Andrew McCormick reported that the Chief Executive (Designate) of the HSSA, and the 5 new HSS Trusts are now in post and have commenced planning work on their new organisations. Detailed proposals for the establishment of the Local Commissioning Groups are being established.
- 1.3 DE will be advertising for Chief Executive (Designate) for the Education and Skills Authority during week commencing 4 September. Will Haire reported that DE has a particular interest in the cross-cutting theme of community planning and is keen to work with DOE in developing policy proposals.

- 1.4 The nine sub groups of the DOE Local Government Taskforce all reported on schedule to the DOE Working Group on 4 July and to the Political Panel, chaired by David Cairns, on 14 July.
- 1.5 On equality and good relations, Mary Bunting provided an update on the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the RPA Equality Forum (which brings together key members from Departments, the Equality Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People) which was held on 31 August 2006.
- 1.6 The Steering Group noted the Forum's recommendations which related to – an early Government discussion on HR issues with ECNI on the meaning of 'RPA affected group'; utilisation by the cross-sectoral HR group and Departments consider of HR/equality expertise within the wider public sector; maximising coordination and cross-sectoral decision making, especially in relation to decisions on location; prioritising plans for communication and consultation with key stakeholders; and consideration to be given to regulating the approach on flags and emblems.
- 1.7 John Hunter provided an update on the work being carried out by the Estates sub group. The group is currently developing appropriate policies and guiding principles to use as a framework against which decisions on location can be taken. A principles paper will be presented to PSC in September.
- 1.8 Taking account of the S75(ii) statutory duty and in line with Government commitments to embedding 'A Shared Future' in RPA implementation, the Forum recommended that consideration is given to regulating the approach to the displays of flags and emblems across the new public sector. Mary advised members that Billy Gamble (Equality Directorate, OFMDFM) will chair a group made up of the Equality Commission, Community Relations Council, and representatives of key departments with a view to preparing a paper for consideration by the RPA Steering Group.
- 1.9 The Equality Forum also recommended that a plan for communication and consultation with key equality, good relations and human rights stakeholders should be prioritised. This should be taken forward in association with the various Commissions beginning with an event in October followed by monthly newsletters.
- 1.10 Finally Mary reminded members of the need to provide the Equality Directorate with details of key decisions to be taken, timing and mechanisms for equality impact assessment and consultation. The Equality Directorate will be issuing a formal

reminder to those departments from which returns are still outstanding.

## **2. HR Issues**

### **2.1 Public Service Commission**

- 2.1.1 The Public Service Commission has continued to meet over July and August. Sid McDowell provided an update on progress during the period. The Commission's second recommendation on "Managing Vacancies Effectively" has been accepted and published. A [recommendation in relation to the Recruitment of Directors of Finance and Directors of Human Resources in the HSS Trusts](#) was submitted to Government on 31st August 2006.
- 2.1.2 PSC is recommending that Government should fill Director of Finance posts and Director of Human Resources posts by inviting applications, in the first instance, from people within the RPA affected group. This is subject to an analysis of the relevant data to establish that such an approach represents a proportionate means of meeting the Secretary of State's aim to make every possible effort to avoid redundancies in a way which is compliant with statutory obligations, including Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- 2.1.3 Draft versions of the guiding principles and associated recommendations in relation to 'Staff Transfers' and 'Filling Posts in New Organisations' have been submitted to Government and circulated to the Equality Commission and RPA affected organisations for comment by 14 September 2006. This should enable the Commission to complete its deliberations and submit final versions of the guiding principles and associated recommendations, formally to Government, immediately after its meeting in September.
- 2.1.4 John McMillen advised that work was under way to scope the RPA affected group. Andrew McCormick stressed that it would be important to have data on the composition of the groups across each of the relevant sectors and he understood that Stephen Donnelly (NISRA) was leading on this important project. Mary Bunting assured members that this work was well advanced. Sid McDowell reemphasised PSC's interest in the equality related aspects of implementation, particularly in relation to HR and location issues.

## **2.2 NICICTU**

2.2.1 John Hunter provided an update on the NICICTU consultative forum meeting of 25 August 2006. The main issue for discussion was establishing an agreed definition of the limits to the RPA affected group for the purposes of managing vacancies and recruitment. The group also discussed the need for the communication guiding principle to be quickly published and regular bulletins setting out progress on RPA. The next tri-partite meeting (with the PSC) is being organised to discuss both the protocols for handling relationships between the central Joint Forum and the arrangements for separate engagements with other unions such as the BMA and RCN.

## **2.3 Staffing Issues in legislation instructions**

2.3.1 George Gray provided an update on RPA legislation. The laying date for the six remaining pieces of primary legislation is July 2007. It is anticipated that each piece of primary legislation will require provisions relating to the transfer of staff. A paper specifying these principles and outlining draft legislative provisions has been forwarded to the Public Service Commission and NICICTU for consideration, and discussions have been held with NICICTU. A draft of the Libraries Order is complete apart from staff-related provisions. Instructions relating to health restructuring are progressing well.

### **2.3.2 Definition of RPA Affected Area**

2.4.1 John McMillen provided an update on the work in progress to define the RPA affected area. The Commission has asked Government for its perspective on this for its meeting on 20 September and work is underway to identify the Group by initially including or excluding organisations or parts of them for the purposes of the definition.

## **3. Communications Strategy**

3.1 EIS has been working with the Communications Subgroup, the HR Cross-Sector Group and the RPA Central Unit to ensure that regular progress on RPA implementation is reported to all affected organisations and staff. A newsletter to supplement websites and other communication mechanisms has been prepared and the first copy has issued. John McMillen paid tribute to Colm Shannon and Michael Henderson from EIS for their efforts. Further copies of the newsletter will issue regularly. EIS will provide progress reports on the effectiveness of communication on RPA.

- 3.2 John also reported that he had circulated the PSC's recommendation on "Managing Vacancies Effectively" to Permanent Secretaries and also to public bodies asking them to implement as appropriate. EIS met with the Minister and he is very keen to play an active part in communicating progress on RPA. The Communications Subgroup is currently developing key milestones and sourcing appropriate speaking engagements for the Minister.

**Action: Colm Shannon**

#### **4. Programme Management - Progress**

- 4.1 John McMillen provided an update on the programme management arrangements in place to oversee the implementation of RPA decisions and ensure that the Steering Group can monitor progress. He paid tribute to Jim McKeown for providing significant leadership and direction to the Central Unit during a time of major change and thanked Michael Donnelly, SIB, for his support in developing the programme management reporting arrangements.
- 4.2 The RPA Steering Group received the first monthly progress report in the new format on 11 August 2006. The report includes information on the purpose and responsibility of specific programmes/projects; detailed schedules and progress against them; future work to be completed; risks associated with the programme/project; and an overall RAG status applied to the programme/project. These reports are the basis from which the RPA Steering Group can judge the overall status of the implementation of the RPA and easily identify those areas where intervention or key decisions are required by them. It is imperative, therefore, that information is accurate, contains the detail required and properly reflects the status of the programme/project.
- 4.3 That report was accompanied by a paper from Michael Donnelly, SIB, which highlighted issues relating to the quality and consistency of the reports received. The paper recognised that programme management arrangements are still being mobilised in a number of areas. During the intervening period, the RPA Central Unit has worked with programme management teams to address the highlighted issues.
- 4.4 The second progress report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Progress reports were received from all programme teams, with a noticeable improvement overall in the quality of returns received. There are still a number of areas which need to be refined including benefits realisation. The RPA

Central Unit will be undertaking a round of meetings with programme teams before next month's reports are commissioned. These meetings will be used to provide advice and guidance on programme management arrangements; to familiarise staff with any enhancements to the reporting tool; and to work through the issues detailed in the Challenge Report.

- 4.5 Bruce Robinson suggested that guidance be developed to assist ongoing monitoring of RAG status and risks by the RPA Steering Group to enable them to add value to the process. John McMillen agreed to develop proposals and advised that Permanent Secretaries would report directly to the Steering Group on projects that had been assessed as Red.

**Action: Central Unit**

- 4.6 George Gray observed that there were some inconsistencies in the way Departments were establishing milestones for RPA legislation and undertook to produce some guidance which clearly defined the key stages involved.
- 4.7 John McMillen reported that arrangements for the Gateway health check are being finalised with Kathie Walker, Centre of Excellence (COE). The Gateway process provides the challenge required to ensure that the necessary programme management arrangements are in place. An OGC team leader has been identified and is in the process of putting an assessment team together. Once their team is assembled, OGC will arrange a planning day with the RPA Central Unit to finalise the scope of the health check. A full Gateway Zero review will be conducted in the New Year.

## **5. RPA Risk Register**

- 5.1 John McMillen presented the RPA Risk Register which has been produced by the RPA Central Unit in conjunction with Michael Donnelly, SIB. It has been developed by considering the risks highlighted within the various RPA programmes/projects to date. These have been aggregated up to a number of high level strategic risks with associated details on risk implications, root causes, management actions taken to address root causes and further planned actions. In addition, the RPA Central Unit has made an initial assessment of Risk Impact and Probability; Risk Status; and the Central Unit will meet with the Risk Owners to discuss the details of risks assigned to them. Alan Shannon suggested a further risk in respect of local government capacity

to absorb the scale of change which the Central Unit will consider.

**Action: RPA Central Unit**

**6. Any Other Business**

- 6.1 Sid McDowell advised that Stephen Graham was returning to the NI Assembly and that Brian Martin would be replacing him as Chief Executive of PSC on 11 September. Sid McDowell praised Stephen's contribution during his time with the Commission and Nigel Hamilton asked that the Steering Group's appreciation and best wishes be passed on to Stephen.
- 6.2 George Gray reported that there had been some instances of departments seeking to add additional clauses to RPA related legislation. Because of the tight legislative timetable he requested that departments refrain from enlarging the scope of the legislation unless absolutely necessary.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

- 7.1 13 October at 10.30 am at Stormont Castle. A draft agenda and request for information will issue on 29 September (including dashboard summary report updates).