

MEETING OF THE RPA STEERING GROUP HELD ON

FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2006 IN ROOM GD14 STORMONT CASTLE AT 10.30am

Members: Nigel Hamilton
Sid McDowell (Chair, PSC)
David Gavaghan
Will Haire
Stephen Peover
Aideen McGinley
John Hunter
Bruce Robinson
Gerry McGinn

Present: George Gray
Paul Simpson (for Andrew McCormick)
Neill Jackson (for Rosalie Flanagan)
Denis McCartney
Colm Shannon (for Stephen Grimason)
Gerry Keenan (for Alan Shannon)
Jim McKeown
Debbie Donnelly
Colette Leeson

Apologies: Andrew McCormick
Alan Shannon
Mary Bunting
Rosalie Flanagan

1. Minutes of 28 April 2006

1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 28 April were agreed.

2. Matters Arising –

2.1 Progress on key actions for 2 June meeting

2.1.1 Nigel Hamilton advised that John McMillen has been appointed as Head of the central RPA Implementation Unit and will take up his post on 12 June.

2.1.2 He congratulated DOE on completing the Local Government Boundaries Order and the appointment of Dick Mackenzie as Boundary Commissioner.

2.1.3 Paul Simpson reported that completion of the competitions for Chief Executive (Designate) of the Health and Social Services Authority and Chairs of the 5 new HSS Trusts is imminent.

- 2.1.4 DHSSPS will be advertising for Chief Executives (Designate) of the 5 new trusts in week commencing 5 June. Paul Simpson advised that the Department received a helpful response from the Public Service Commission (PSC). The competition will be restricted to those employed in public sector organisations affected by the RPA. PSC are hopeful that this could act as a template for future competitions.
- 2.1.5 Will Haire advised that DE had a constructive meeting with PSC on 24 May about the appointment of a Chief Executive (Designate) for the Education and Skills Authority and provided assurance that they will keep PSC advised of HR issues as implementation progresses.

2.2 Legislation Programme – progress

- 2.2.1 George Gray provided an update on the legislative programme. There was positive feedback from Departments on the legislation seminar run by OFMDFM on 3 May and progress on the programme seems steady so far.
- 2.2.2 A first draft of the Libraries Order is being considered by DCAL. Office of the Legislative Counsel (OLC) has pointed to the need for greater precision in regard to instructions in certain areas, especially in regard to staff issues.
- 2.2.3 OLC expect a first draft of DHSSPS instructions later this month and Education Instructions are expected in September / October 2006.
- 2.2.4 Local Government (Transfer of Functions) instructions are expected to be with OLC in September / October 2006. DoE has held two meetings with Departments responsible for transferring functions to local government. There have been some early issues in terms of definition of functions and timetable but it is hoped that these will be resolved by the next meeting of the Steering Group so that the business of drafting instructions for OLC can begin.

2.3 Cross-cutting Issues – progress

- 2.3.1 Debbie Donnelly advised that an Equality, Good Relations and Social Need Group comprising key members from Departments, the Equality Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Commission will meet on 6 June 2006.

- 2.3.2 The Equality Directorate will be in contact with departments over the coming month and will engage with the Human Resource and Estate cross-cutting groups to identify key decisions to be taken, timing and mechanisms for equality impact assessment and consultation.
- 2.3.3 In respect of capacity building, Debbie Donnelly informed the group that a paper which examines the issues that will need to be addressed in an integrated manner during implementation will issue shortly and reported that the research to date highlights the need for a corporate approach across government. The RPA Steering Group agreed with her recommendation that an event be organised to identify priority capacity building needs.
- 2.3.4 On HR issues John Hunter advised that a cross sector HR Forum has been established with representatives from DHSSPS, DE and DOE and Equality Unit. The aim is to develop a consistent HR framework for implementation which will feed into the work of PSC.
- 2.3.5 Bruce Robinson is chairing a group which is assembling information on the existing location of public service offices to inform future decisions on the location of offices associated with new organisations.

3. HR Issues

3.1 Public Service Commission

- 3.1.1. Sid McDowell provided an update on PSC's recent meeting with the Secretary of State and current work programme. PSC issued its first Guiding Principle on the need for an effective communications strategy on 15 May, which was tabled for consideration by Steering Group. PSC will shortly be issuing Guiding Principles on managing vacancies.
- 3.1.2 Arrangements for consulting on the content of the recommendations are being considered. John Hunter advised that DFP are reviewing the nature of consultative machinery required on HR issues and agreed that a follow-up meeting with PSC might be useful.

3.2 NICICTU

- 3.2.1 John Hunter advised that a formal consultative forum will be established with NICICTU to negotiate on principles governing RPA implementation. A draft memorandum setting out the

terms of reference for this forum was discussed and agreed with NICICTU on 26 May.

- 3.2.2 DHSSPS mentioned the importance of having clarity between the role of the Forum and established arrangements which Departments and employers already had with Trade Unions. It was also important that all of the staff groupings affected by the RPA should be represented in the Forum, since NICICTU does not include BMA or RCN.

3.3 Staffing Issues in Legislation Instructions

- 3.3.1 Nigel Hamilton reminded the Group of the importance of agreeing a consistent approach to staffing provisions in Health, Education and Libraries legislation and to share proposals at an early stage with PSC.
- 3.3.2 DHSSPS has prepared a draft Human Resources Framework which contains a number of general principles relating to staff transfers and other matters. This Framework has been referred to the PSC and may become a useful model for all sectors to translate into legislation instructions. A meeting with George Gray has been arranged to discuss possible HR models for the purposes of legislation.
- 3.3.3 It was agreed that it will be important for the cross sector HR Forum to seek an early meeting with OLC.

4. Communications Strategy

- 4.1 Colm Shannon presented a draft outline communications strategy for discussion. He explained that it is intended to provide corporate direction and facilitate the development of individual communications plans at departmental and programme level. EIS and the Local Government Staff Commission are hosting a communication conference on 14 June, and an EIS internal communication team will be established by the end of June.
- 4.2 PSC welcomed the development of the strategy. There was some discussion about how to communicate the strategy to each of the sectors. It was agreed that a note setting out the approach should issue from Nigel Hamilton to all sectors following the meeting with the NICICTU Forum scheduled for 27 June, this could then be circulated more widely in staff newsletters.

Action: Colm Shannon

- 4.3 Nigel Hamilton congratulated DoE on the Local Government Taskforce website, DE's newsletter and also DHSSPS for putting key messages about their roadshows and other material on the Department's website. The group noted that the existing RPA website will be revamped from 5 June with details of implementation progress taking prominence and agreed that relevant papers should be posted on the site.

5. Key Actions for 7 July Meeting

- 5.1 The steering Group agreed that at its 7 July meeting it will wish to review progress on a number of key issues as set out in Annex A.

6. Steering Group – Programme Management

- 6.1 Debbie Donnelly provided an update on programme management arrangements being put in place to oversee the implementation of RPA decisions and ensure that the Steering Group can monitor progress. She thanked Michael Donnelly SIB, and Peter Glynn for their help in developing reporting arrangements to capture progress electronically in the same format as that being introduced to monitor progress on the whole reform agenda. She also updated the group on plans to bring together Senior Responsible Officers and programme managers to agree a cross sectoral approach to monitoring progress and risk management.

7. Dates of Next Meetings

Friday, 7 July 2006

Friday, 4 August 2006

and thereafter on the first Friday of every month.