

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

**FRIDAY 3 NOVEMBER IN ROOM GD14 STORMONT CASTLE AT 11.00am**

**Members:** John Hunter  
Will Haire  
Sid McDowell (Chair, PSC)  
Bruce Robinson  
Aideen McGinley  
Alan Shannon  
Gerry McGinn

**Present:** George Gray  
Edgar Jardine  
Paul Simpson (for Andrew McCormick)  
John Ritchie (for Stephen Peover)  
Billy Gamble (for Mary Bunting)  
Michael Donnelly (for David Gavaghan)  
John McMillen  
Colm Shannon  
Damian Prince  
Maurice Dowling  
Eamonn McConville

**Apologies:** Nigel Hamilton  
Andrew McCormick  
Stephen Peover  
David Gavaghan  
Mary Bunting

### **1. Welcome**

1.1 John Hunter welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Eamonn McConville from the RPA Central Unit, who will now act as secretary to the Group.

### **2. Minutes of 13 October 2006**

2.1 Minutes of the 13 October 2006 meeting were accepted.

### **3. Matters Arising**

- 3.1 John Hunter invited an update from each of the key sectors.
- 3.2 Paul Simpson reported that the HR and Finance Director competitions for the new Trusts were in progress.
- 3.3 DHSSPS had also advertised for Non Executive Director posts and this competition should complete in January 2007.
- 3.4 In relation to the Local Commissioning Groups, DHSSPS are using existing legislation to appoint a committee from the 4 Boards to operate in shadow form.
- 3.5 The HR framework has been issued for consultation.
- 3.6 Andrew McCormick held a productive meeting last week with the Trade Union. The intention is to replace the HR Advisory Group with an implementation group.
- 3.7 Andrew McCormick had also chaired a meeting with BMA, RCN and RCM on 26 October where they stressed the importance of seeing all relevant papers and having the opportunity to express their views.
- 3.8 Will Haire reported that there had been good engagement with the ELBs at a recent conference.
- 3.9 DE planned to hold a joint forum next week with the Trade Unions. The department was also exploring means of communicating with their non affiliated Unions.
- 3.10 DE was still working on some policy issues with the Minister. Therefore the 10 November deadline for instructions would not be met. It is expected that instructions will be delivered to OLC by the end of November.
- 3.11 John Ritchie reported that the Boundary Commissioner's initial recommendations would be published on Tuesday (7 November) and that this would be followed by a 2 month period of consultation. He highlighted the fact that the District Electoral Officer cannot be appointed until after the boundaries have been agreed.
- 3.12 John McMillen reported that he has had discussions with Colm Shannon about the need to communicate more widely with stakeholders.

- 3.13 Sid McDowell commented that whilst consultation with non affiliated unions was not required, it was good practice in getting a constructive rapport established. Sid also advised that the Commission are to meet the RCN.

## **4. HR Issues**

### **4.1 Public Service Commission**

- 4.1.1 Sid McDowell reported that since the last meeting, very significant progress had been made and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle (Staff transfers) had now been revised and put to Government.
- 4.1.2 The Commission are also close to submitting the 4<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle (Filling new posts in new organisations) to Government.
- 4.1.3 It is hoped that the 5th Guiding Principle (Voluntary Severance Arrangements) will be put to Government next week.
- 4.1.4 PSC were working on another Guiding Principle, which would be concerned with the body of statutory obligations related to a change process. This may result in a Code of Practice being used by the 150 employers to avoid recourse to tribunals or judicial proceedings.
- 4.1.5 John McMillen requested that colleagues forward any papers for the next PSC meeting (29 November) to the RPA Central Unit by 20 November.

### **4.2 Central Forums**

- 4.2.1 John Hunter reported that the Central Joint Forum had continuing discussions on the Guiding Principles from PSC. These had been constructive and reflected the discussions held with PSC. Staffing provisions were key.
- 4.2.2 Trade Unions' desire for a harmonisation of Terms and Conditions post transfer will only be effected by their negotiations with the new organisations.
- 4.2.3 John Hunter reported that a considerable amount of work had been done with colleagues across departments on the Estates policy. There were some issues to tidy relating to the consultations and then the document would issue shortly.
- 4.2.4 Paul Simpson added that DHSSPS had recognised the Estates issue and had therefore identified temporary headquarters for the Trusts.
- 4.2.5 Will Haire added that DE were also going for temporary accommodation for the CEO Designate and their team. This would

allow more work to be done on the key issue of taking a long term view of service delivery, relating to accommodation.

- 4.2.6 Sid McDowell said that PSC would be interested in seeing the locations paper and that they might come back to this issue at a later date. He said a workshop with Government representatives would be useful.
- 4.2.7 John McMillen suggested the use of a coordinated approach to locations between sectors.
- 4.2.8 Will Haire confirmed that was the case and used Child Centres as an example, adding that there was no reason why some services with Local Government couldn't also be joined up.
- 4.2.9 Billy Gamble stated that this issue had been raised at the RPA Equality Forum and whilst it was acknowledged as difficult, it was a key thing to do.
- 4.2.10 Damian Prince explained that membership of the HR Cross Sector Group was being reviewed to consider ways of including local government and the Education Staff Commission on the forum.

### **4.3 Staffing Issues on Legislation**

- 4.3.1 John McMillen commented that upon agreement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle the key issue was to ensure that the staffing provisions translated into legislation.

## **5. Cross Cutting Issues**

### **5.1 Legislation**

- 5.1.1 George Gray reported that work on the Libraries Order would be complete with acceptance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle. Work on the Public Sector Reform Order had progressed exceptionally well in the last month and that this was virtually finished except for the staffing issues.
- 5.1.2 In relation to Education, there have been discussions with the DE team and it was hoped to have instructions from them by the end of November.
- 5.1.3 In relation to Health, work was progressing very well, with the basic structures already settled.

- 5.1.4 In relation to Local Government, the Transfer of Functions instructions have been received on time. Within the Structures Order, about half the areas have been covered with the question of governance in councils and relations between Central Government and Local Government still being worked up.
- 5.1.5 John Ritchie commented that the remaining 50% of the Structures Order would be delivered by the end of November. He explained that the Minister was holding 1 to 1 meetings with the political parties in relation to governance arrangements.
- 5.1.6 Alan Shannon asked when the Transfer of Functions would be laid.
- 5.1.7 George Gray replied that this would be before the summer recess.

## **5.2 Common Boundaries & Capacity Building**

- 5.2.1 John McMillen presented 2 papers on Common Boundaries and Capacity Building. Each paper reflected work commissioned from Goldblat McGuigan to report on examples of international experiences and from Delivery and Innovation Division to reflect key stakeholder views. Key issues were the need for political consensus; development of a citizen's vision; shared services and key stakeholders' commitment.

## **5.3 DOE Implementation Structures**

- 5.3.1 John Ritchie reported that the Task Force had presented the proposed new implementation structures to the political parties on 16 October. However, further work and discussions will take place before the next meeting on 20 November.

## **5.4 Shared Services**

- 5.4.1 Bruce Robinson presented a paper on Shared Services. He reported that the Common Infrastructure Programme had been revised and renamed as the Civil Service Reform. In relation to shared services, there were 2 key points - the use of common platforms to give greater opportunity for savings; and the ability of different elements of core business to use the common platform.
- 5.4.2 Michael Donnelly enquired that as the vast majority of RPA benefits were based on shared services, should it become a cross cutting theme?
- 5.4.3 Will Haire suggested that DE would support shared services but there was a timing issue.
- 5.4.4 Paul Simpson suggested that a long term common infrastructure framework should be aimed for through a series of steps.

- 5.4.5 John Hunter added that a pragmatic approach was required.
- 5.4.6 John McMillen reminded the Group that the potential RPA savings stated in the DeLoitte's RPA Cost & Efficiency paper were premised on the delivery of shared services. There is a need to make business cases at programme and project level to evaluate the options for shared services. He welcomed the setting up of a cross sectoral/departmental group.
- 5.4.7 Bruce Robinson said he would consider options for shared services ahead of the next Steering Group meeting.

**Action Point 1:** Bruce Robinson to consider shared services options ahead of the next Steering Group meeting.

## **6. Communications**

- 6.1 Colm Shannon reported that the 2<sup>nd</sup> RPA bulletin had now issued. The next one would focus on the Boundary Commissioner's work and an update on the PSC's Guiding Principles. In addition, the RPA Central Unit were organising a conference for RPA-affected organisations which fell outside the three main sectors.
- 6.2 He reported that the Minister was keen to provide bulletins to external stakeholders and the first of these would issue by end of November. Along with John McMillen he would review the external stakeholders list and how they should be communicated with. Work over the next 2 months would focus on revisiting the long term vision and benefits of RPA
- 6.3 The issue of conferences being organised by external providers requesting input on RPA issues from Civil Service speakers was raised. There were concerns about the number, cost and suitability of the audience for such events.
- 6.4 John McMillen suggested that there was a need to control the agenda of such events and that by putting some strategy in place around this issue, it would assist in declining future approaches if required. However, he stressed that it was important to recognise the value of such events, and used a recent encounter with voluntary and community sector representatives as an example.

## 7. Programme Management

- 7.1 John McMillen thanked everyone who had participated in the recent Gateway healthcheck. He went on to highlight some of the main findings including:
- the lack of clearly articulated vision, objectives and scope;
  - the need for more work on planning local government restructuring, shared services, transfer of staff, locations, etc
  - the need for robust business cases at programme and project level;
  - the need to intensify communications with stakeholders; and
  - the establishment of a programme board
- 7.2 He summarised the recommendations and proposed actions into 2 main points:
- the need to have a person dedicated to business case preparation, cost/savings and benefits realisation; and
  - recognising the work of the Steering Group, there was a need to establish a Programme Board that had a detailed understanding of the day to day issues within the programme. This was evidenced in the recent Delivering Policy workshop where Programme Directors were able to raise and deal with a number of common issues.
- 7.3 There was discussion on the need to establish a Programme Board, its terms of reference and the business case approach
- 7.4 John Hunter asked that the RPA Central Unit present terms of reference for the Programme Board and further clarification on the business case approach at the next Steering Group meeting.

**Action Point 2:** RPA Central Unit to present Programme Board terms of reference and clarification on the RPA business case approach at the next Steering Group meeting.

## 8. RAG Status & Risks

- 8.1 John McMillen gave a short update suggesting that the escalation of RAG status should be reconsidered along with any further work on the establishment of a programme board.
- 8.2 It was agreed that these issues would be revisited at the next meeting.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

- 9.1 1 December 2006 at 11.00am at Stormont Castle. A draft agenda and request for information will be issued on 17 November 2006.

**Action Points Summary**

<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Nov. 1	To consider shared services options ahead of the December Steering Group meeting.	Bruce Robinson
Nov. 2	To present Programme Board terms of reference and clarification on the RPA business case approach at the December Steering Group meeting.	RPA Central Unit