

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RPA CENTRAL JOINT FORUM**  
**28 JULY 2006**

**Present:**

<b>Nigel Hamilton (Chair)</b>	<b>John Corey</b>
<b>Stephen Peover</b>	<b>Patricia McKeown</b>
<b>Andrew McCormick</b>	<b>Michael Kiddle</b>
<b>Linda Brown</b>	<b>Tom Gillen</b>
<b>Billy Gamble</b>	
<b>Michael Henderson</b>	
<b>(Communications Item)</b>	
<b>Anne McKenna (Acting Secretary)</b>	

**Apologies**

1. Apologies were received from the following:

J Hunter, W Haire, J McKeown, M Daly, C Stewart, M Bunting

B Campfield, T Mehaffy, A Mills, S Tweed

**Chairman's opening remarks**

2. The Chair welcomed everyone attending and particularly those deputising. He also introduced Michael Henderson who is taking forward the communications strands of RPA.

**Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

All action points were dealt with.

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 June**

3. TU Side suggested a number of amendments to the minutes. Management Side accepted the suggested changes with the exception of the final sentence of paragraph 5 – 'It was agreed that documents and submissions from all Departmental groups etc should be subject to formal consultation with Trade Union Side.
4. Following discussion, Trade Union Side offered a form of words, which management found acceptable and it was agreed that a clean copy of the minutes would issue to members to sign off.

**(Action: Secretary )**

## Memorandum of Agreement

5. The Chair referred to recent correspondence from the RCN protesting about its exclusion from the membership of the Central Joint Forum. The Chair agreed that it was unsatisfactory that this group should be excluded but agreed that the Government was not proposing they should have seats on the CJF. A solution would be found which would accommodate non-affiliated groups without undermining the integrity of the Forum. It was recognised that not all affected staff were represented by NIC-ICTU.
6. Trade Union Side reiterated that RCN interest was limited to one sector and there were many other groups in other sectors. The Trade Unions accepted there should be openness and honesty but cautioned that setting up parallel negotiating machinery would be a breach of the agreed MOA. The Trade Unions were not prepared to accept a situation where CJF negotiations and agreements become subject to further consultation at another forum.
7. The Chair reminded the meeting that it was not a decision-making body since it needed either to have a negotiating remit approved beforehand by Ministers or needed to return to Ministers for final agreement on issues. However, the Chair assured the meeting that the CJF position was recognised and any other consultative arrangements made by sector organisations would not be permitted to undermine or second-guess the work of the CJF.
8. The Chair confirmed acceptance of the TU Side statement. Government recognised that NIC-ICTU represents the general interests of staff for the purposes of negotiating and consulting on general staff matters in relation to RPA.
9. The Chair reiterated with the caveat that if new issues emerge which clearly involve the other sectors; discussions would almost certainly take place in advance of the formal meeting of the Forum. Such discussions would not re-open any issues agreed between the Forum and any other organisation.
10. It was agreed to take this issue to the next Tripartite meeting.

**(Action: John McMillen)**

## Communication

11. Trade Union referred to correspondence raising concerns about promulgation of PSC recommendations. Trade Union Side said it was important that once Government accepted a recommendation this should be issued immediately to all employers and staff in a distinctive recognisable style. The Chair recognised that there were concerns around the issues of branding and transparency and how information was promulgated to staff. He also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to be proactive on this issue and ensure gaps are filled. The Chair stated that he would not withdraw his previous

communication. He recognised that the last communication attempted to address too much. The next communication bulletin, which will issue in August will include PSC recommendations 1 and 2 and also appropriately reference the roles of the NIC-ICTU and PSC.

12. However, Trade Union Side was concerned that this response did not meet their concerns. It was important that each PSC recommendation was issued separately on a numbered sequence and separate from other communications. The Chair agreed to provide NIC-ICTU with an advance copy of the next communication bulletin before issue.

**(Action: Michael Henderson)**

### **Protocol for Handling Papers on Staff Issues**

13. The Chair referred to the paper, which had been the subject of discussion at the Tripartite meeting on 26 July. Both sides agreed the need for openness and to operate within a spirit of “no surprises”. Trade Union Side stated the importance of agreeing what information should be shared in draft form and felt it was important that we agree the principles of openness.
14. Management Side stated the arrangements needed to be formal and less formal to accommodate the various strands, working groups and needs of staff across all sectors.
15. Trade Union Side stated the timescale for transfer to the new authorities, particularly in DHSSPS was moving too fast. TU Side also stated that if the timescales cannot be adjusted downwards, the issues being dealt with in the sectors groups will need to be front-loaded to allow for full discussion. TUS reiterated the need to have a fair and transparent system as the main principle of dealing with staff transfers. It was accepted there were pressures on all sides but the Guiding Principles needed to percolate downwards. At the last Tripartite meeting all three parties recognise this is an issue which needs further work.
16. The Chair remitted this issue back to the next Tripartite meeting for discussion on a Future Work Programme which could include draft timescales. Proposals would be brought back to this Forum for agreement.

**(Action: John McMillen)**

### **Managing Vacancies Effectively**

The Chair opened this item up to TU Side for comment.

17. Trade Union Side confirmed acceptance of the PSC recommendation but wanted to record that this should not be taken to imply Trade Union Side accepted that there will be redundancies. TUS would like to see “every possible effort made” to ensure collaboration takes place across

the affected bodies to ensure staff have an opportunity to apply for such vacancies that might arise.

18. A detailed discussion took place, which centred on the process for filling the Director posts in the five new Trusts. TUS expressed concerns about the overarching principle around the need to advertise posts, the principles used and the timing.
19. The Chair stated that Management Side had just taken receipt of legal advice, commissioned by the PSC. Management Side needs to consider the QC Ruling, and discuss the merits and substantive issues with Departmental Solicitors.
20. Trade Union Side suggested an approach which is centred around the need to move from where we are to where we need to be bearing in mind we do not have a green field site. TU Side expressed concerns around the issues contained in the HR document which they feel cuts across central HR principles such as the competition for posts.
21. It was agreed TU Side and Management should exchange views and arrange bi-lateral engagement on the way forward.

**(Action: John McMillen)**

## **Equality**

22. Management asked for representation from TU Side to their August meeting. TU Side agreed to nominate someone but stressed that this must remain firmly between the two forums. TU Side stated they were still looking for an overarching Equality Assessment on RPA.

**(Action: TU Side)**

23. TU Side referenced a November 2005 document which management side were not cited on. Managements Side agreed to track down the 22 November document and respond to TUS.
24. It was agreed that equality would be a standing item on this agenda.

## **Date of next meeting**

The Chair agreed the following dates: 25 August and 22 September.