

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RPA CENTRAL JOINT FORUM

25 September 2007

Present: John McMillen (Chair) John Corey
 Eddie Rooney Patricia McKeown
 Andrew McCormick Peter Bunting
 Stephen Peover Brian Campfield
 Patricia Carey
 Damian Prince
 Michael Daly

Apologies: Will Haire, Cynthia Smith, Thomas Mahaffy, Albert Mills and
 Steve Tweed

Minutes of the meeting on 27 July

1. The minutes of the meeting on 27 July were agreed as drafted.

Matters arising from meeting on 27 July

2. Paragraphs 13 & 14 – Management Side reported that information in relation to the costs of consultancy and an estimate of planned expenditure had issued to Trade Union Side in August along with information in relation to how Trade Union Side would be consulted in relation to the DOE review. Trade Union Side acknowledged receipt of the information and outlined that would take it under consideration as appropriate.
3. Paragraph 22 – Management Side referred Trade Union Side to the paper issued to them in advance of the meeting and advised that an RPA Communications paper was currently being drafted. Trade Union Side outlined that their concerns in relation to breaches of the 1st Guiding Principle (An Effective Communication Strategy) remained.
4. Paragraph 23 - A paper outlining arrangements, post decisions by the Executive, on overall RPA implementation issued to Trade Union Side along with the agenda for the meeting.
5. Paragraph 25 – The issue of re-examination of the 2nd Guiding Principle and the draft Code of Practice on Staff Transfers were dealt with at the tripartite and bilateral meetings held since the last meeting of the Central Joint Forum. Management Side outlined that the latest draft of the Code of Practice on Staff Transfers had issued yesterday to Trade Union Side for comment.

6. Paragraph 28 – Management Side clarified that this action point related to the Health and Social Care HR Framework, on which there had been extensive consultation. There was discussion in relation to the need for consultation in relation to EQIA and screening. Trade Union Side affirmed their view in relation to Equality and RPA and outlined that they wished to be provided with information in relation to what had been equality screened and equality assessed to date for RPA in Health.

Action: Management Side

7. Paragraph 29 – A letter had issued to Trade Union Side early August outlining the nature of the concerns raised by employers in respect of the information being requested for the equality database and where the problems lay in this regard. Management Side advised that this would be picked up under the Equality item on the agenda.
8. Paragraph 31 – The issue of equality assessment had been placed on the agenda for this meeting as per Trade Union Side's request.
9. Paragraph 31 – Management Side advised that the FAQ's on the RPA website had been reviewed in line with current timetables but that publishing of the FAQ's would be held back until the Executive had affirmed its commitment to the previous Guiding Principles.

Equality

Equality Assessment

10. Management Side provided a brief update in respect of the database. They advised that work was continuing in this regard but that a number of issues had delayed work, namely:
 - reaching agreement with the National Insurance Number Board to use National Insurance numbers as part of the exercise;
 - discussions with the Information Commissioner regarding whether staff have to expressly opt in/out of having their data included in the exercise; and
 - a response from Trade Union Side showing support for the database and its uses.
11. Management Side also requested a response from Trade Union Side to its letter of 03/08/07, showing support from TUS for the database and its uses.

Action: Trade Union Side

12. Trade Union Side accepted that a response was owed but that, in principle, they agreed with and did not have a problem with the database. Trade Union Side outlined concerns that had been raised to them by staff and suggested that the issues may need to be further

explained to people. They further suggested a re-wording for the last line of the draft letter to staff.

13. Management Side stressed to Trade Union Side the urgency of the need for a formal response. They confirmed that Trade Union Side would be updated in respect of the position of National Insurance Number Board and Information Commissioner.

Implementation Update

14. Management Side referred Trade Union Side to the paper issued to them in advance of the meeting. It was highlighted that the present aim was to draw a line in the autumn of 2007 so that direction would be forthcoming by Christmas time. Management Side clarified that whilst the Executive had overall responsibility for RPA, individual Ministers were responsible for their Departmental business.
15. There was discussion in relation to protocols, common boundaries and shared services principles. Management Side confirmed that whilst DOE was leading on common boundaries, other sectors must have a willingness to look to it in terms of co-terminosity.
16. In respect of DHSSPS, Management Side reported that the Minister was carefully considering the situation, he recognised the urgency of the matter and as such hoped to make a decision soon. Trade Union Side pointed out that they did not feel part of the process and emphasised that staff, particularly in Health Boards, were uncertain of their situation. Trade Union Side pressed for Management Side to state whether it could be definitively said that the current timescale of April 2008 would not go ahead.
17. In response, Management Side outlined that it was not possible to pre-empt the Minister and that meetings with the relevant Trade Unions had either taken place or were due to take place.
18. Trade Union Side highlighted that difficulties were being caused with issues such as the interpretation and application of the guiding principles. Management Side confirmed that all employers were obliged to comply with the Guiding Principles and asked for any cases of non-compliance to be passed to them. Management Side confirmed that they would be in touch with staff side in advance of the Ministerial decision on the way forward in DHSSPS.
19. In respect of Education, Management Side advised that a longer timeframe now applied. Whilst the key structural elements would be in place by April 2009, a lot of development work was ongoing in the interim. Management Side outlined that work was currently ongoing in relation to the composition of the new organisation, Trade Union Side highlighted the need to be mindful of legal requirements in relation to consultation with Trade Union Side in this regard.

20. Trade Union Side further highlighted that there was a need for recognition of the ongoing discussions between Trade Union Side and Management Side in relation to staff transfers in the NICS. They further stated that it would make sense to hold back on the Library Authority to allow for linkages to ESA.
21. With regards Local Government Reform, Management Side referred Trade Union Side to the update paper they had received in advance of the meeting. They advised that the sub-group had met last night with the aim of finalising a first findings paper to bring forward to the Executive in October. Management Side highlighted that initial decisions were anticipated early October with final decisions at the end of the year. Management Side advised that in practical terms the anticipated timescale would most likely be 2011.

Cross Sector HR Update

22. Management Side outlined the intention to clear the addendum to the 3rd, 7th, 8th and 9th Guiding Principles. They advised that the draft 10th and 11th Guiding Principles had been merged into a comprehensive draft and was currently out for comment. Management Side outlined that the 5th Guiding Principle was currently on-hold until Trade Union Side had their opportunity to meet with FM and dFM. In respect of the 2nd and 4th Guiding Principles, Management Side advised that updated versions of these were the subject of ongoing discussions with Trade Union Side and the PSC.
23. Trade Union Side outlined that they had received the draft Code of Practice but had not yet had the chance to fully consider it. They outlined that they felt they would like to stick to a sequential format if possible. In respect of the composition of appeals panels, Trade Union Side reaffirmed their position in respect of three person appeal panels. Management Side confirmed that this issue was still the subject of consultation but that their position had been made clear to consultees.
24. Trade Union Side re-stated their position in respect of no compulsory redundancies and outlined that, as previously stated, they intend to raise the issue with the Minister next week.

AOB

25. No other issues were raised.

Date of Next Meeting

26. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 27 November at 2pm. It was agreed that bilateral meetings would be held in the interim as necessary.

[October 2007]