

## RPA Cross Sector HR Forum meeting 28 February 2007

Present: Derek Baker (CPG)  
Michael Daly (CPG)  
John Adams (NILGA)  
Damian Prince (RPA)  
Patricia Carey (OFMDFM – Equality)  
Martin Ingram (DCAL)  
Philip Angus (DETI)  
Ian Maye (DOE)  
Mark Browne (DE)  
Orla Murray (DSO)  
Jacqui Wallace (CPG)

Apologies: David Bingham (DHSSPS)  
June Ingram (DEL)  
Anne McKenna (CPG)  
Maureen Taggart (NIHE)  
Noel Kelly (DSO)  
Michael Henderson (OFMDFM)

Minutes: Laura Armstrong (CPG)

### 1. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The group accepted the minutes of the last meeting.

Section 1 – Derek Baker thanked Forum members for the information they had provided in relation to their redundancy schemes.

Section 3 – It was confirmed that an outside Forum meeting had taken place to consider the issue of the practical difficulties associated with the implementation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guiding Principle.

Section 4 – The draft Code of Practice for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle is currently out for consultation and would be discussed under the third item on the agenda.

Section 4 – Derek Baker thanked John Adams for the information he had provided to CPG in relation to the Local Government appeals mechanism.

Section 4 – It was confirmed that David Bingham had provided CPG with a copy of the HPSS Staff Transfer Scheme.

Section 7 – It was noted that there had been an exchange of correspondence in relation to the proposed conference for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sector. Damian Prince advised the group that Central Unit had carried out work to

define the 4<sup>th</sup> Sector group and to examine the communication mechanisms already in place. He confirmed that they had written to the PSC advising that the 4<sup>th</sup> Sector event would not be going ahead given that it had the potential to confuse the communication already being delivered by the relevant Sectors. The PSC in response stated that they were minded to organise a road show for all staff affected by RPA. Damian advised that they will want to discuss this with the PSC to avoid mixed messages being sent to staff. Ian Maye queried Colm Shannon's views on the proposed event given that he is currently working on refreshing the communications strategy. Damian agreed to follow up on the issue.

### **Action: Central Unit**

## **2. Update on the PSC Guiding Principles**

Michael Daly gave an oral update on the PSC Guiding Principles. In particular, he informed the group that the draft Libraries Order was currently being discussed with Trade Union Side and advised that the draft Code of Practice for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle as well as the 5<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle (Voluntary Severance arrangements) would be discussed separately on the agenda.

In relation to the draft Code of Practice on Employer Statutory Obligations (6<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle), the group was advised that both the PSC and Trade Union Side had anticipated that the Code of Practice would provide a compendium of the statutory obligations on employers. Michael outlined Government's intention to make the Code of Practice more robust but that a compendium of information would not be provided. Michael informed the group that they would be consulted on this.

In respect of Location (7<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle), Michael referred the group to the form of words Jacqui Wallace had issued to them which focused on compensation/reimbursement of expenses for relocation. Subject to the group being content with the form of words, this will then be passed to the Central Unit for clearance by the Minister.

There was a discussion in relation to the difficulties being experienced as we move from principles to the practical application and the impact on individuals. The issue of the RPA Affected Group was discussed in the context of its definition, application and communication. It was highlighted that this area would need to be monitored to ensure that those who are eligible to apply for RPA Affected Group posts are aware of that fact. In addition, Orla Murray advised that when defining the RPA Affected Group, there needs to be awareness of its different uses i.e. to identify staff affected by RPA for consultation purposes and to identify those at risk of redundancy.

It was concluded that CPG and the Central Unit need to:

- a) establish what is happening in practice with regards the definition and communication of the RPA Affected Group; and,
- b) reflect on the continuing validity of the concept, as currently applied, to assess whether the matter would need to be referred to the PSC.

**Action: CPG/Central Unit**

### **3. Code of Practice on Staff Transfers**

Michael Daly outlined the position in respect of the draft Code of Practice on Staff Transfers. Michael flagged up the issue raised at the last meeting in relation to the recourse for employers following the Arbitrator's determination and referred the group to the note issued to them by Jacqui Wallace in this regard.

Michael advised of the issues remaining in the draft Code of Practice. The LRA and DSO have advised that appeals in relation to inclusion/exclusion from a transfer scheme would be most appropriately dealt with internally. In respect of pension disputes in relation to certificates of broad comparability, Michael advised that Government was still in discussion with the Government Actuary.

There was a general discussion regarding appeals in relation to inclusion/exclusion from a transfer scheme. It was concluded that there is a need for robust staff transfer schemes which clearly present who is to transfer and that the criteria underpinning the selection for transfer had to be equally robust. In addition, it was agreed that the dispute resolution mechanism needed to be efficient so as not to impede the RPA process.

Derek Baker advised that this was for CPG to work though and that separate detailed discussions would be taking place with the PSC and NIC.ICTU.

**Action: CPG**

### **4. Draft 5<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle on Voluntary Severance Arrangements**

Michael Daly advised that discussions had taken place with the PSC and NIC.ICTU in relation to the draft 5<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle. The group was informed that PSC and NIC.ICTU were moving from the recommendation of a single severance scheme towards a common set of principles and a safety net for those entitled to statutory redundancy terms only. Michael invited the group to discuss the broad principle given the financial implications of the proposal. In response, the group commented that it was important that the issue was resolved quickly and that it would be necessary to give careful thought to both the start and end date of any proposal. Arguments were made for and against such an approach with the importance of early engagement with Finance colleagues agreed. A discussion also took place which highlighted the need to ensure that equality considerations were taken into account for all decisions in the

RPA process and that there was a need to ensure consistency of approach across sectors as far as was practicable.

It was agreed that CPG would take forward the issue.

**Action: CPG**

## **5. Emerging Issues**

The group was referred to the Emerging Issues brief issued to the group in advance of the meeting. Ian Maye highlighted to the group the potential impact of Devolution on the Local Government agenda as well as the RPA agenda.

## **6. Any other business**

Philip Angus requested from the group a contact for discussions in relation to preliminary work for the NI Tourist Board. The group recommended that NIHE and Health would be useful contacts as well as Michael Daly for a general overview. Philip thanked the group and advised that he would follow up with the identified individuals.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

21<sup>st</sup> March 2007.