

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RPA CENTRAL JOINT FORUM

6 JUNE 2008

Present: John McMillen (Chair) John Corey
 Stephen Peover Brian Campfield
 David Bingham Thomas Mahaffy
 Will Haire
 Eddie Rooney
 Maurice Dowling
 Grace Nesbitt

Apologies: Damian Prince, Andrew McCormick, Steve Tweed, Patricia
 McKeown, Peter Bunting and Albert Mills.

Minutes of the meeting on 4 April

1. The minutes of the meeting on 4 April were agreed subject to the amendments proposed by Trade Union Side.

Matters arising from meeting on 4 April

2. Paragraph 7 – Management Side advised that the reference to the on-going review of non-departmental public bodies in the ministerial statement on the review of Local Government was in reference to the existing wider review and did not refer to any new initiative.
3. Paragraph 10 - Officials from DOE met with NIC ICTU and provided oral briefing in relation to the details of the roles of the three policy development panels. It was agreed that Trade Union Side would be provided with an extract from a paper agreed at a recent Strategic Leadership Board meeting which outlined this information.

Action: Management Side

4. Paragraph 21 – Trade Union Side advised that they had recently met with Sir George Bain.
5. Paragraph 33 – Trade Union Side reported that there had been exchanges with CPG in relation to the requirement for guidance to be developed for all of the Guiding Principles and advised that they remained concerned about the possibility for confusion. Trade Union Side agreed to reflect on CPG's letter of 30 May.

Action: Trade Union Side

Implementation Update

6. With regards the RPA Central Unit, Management Side advised that the PSC research project was ongoing and that a draft report was expected by the middle of August.
7. Management Side outlined that internal discussions were on-going with regards the future role of the Central Unit and reported that debate centred on whether it would be best to mainstream implementation within Departments in the absence of a tight timescale. It was also reported that the Public Authorities Reform Bill, which contains provisions in relation to the transfer of staff from the Fisheries Conservancy Board, was hoped to be put before the Assembly on the 17 and 30 June.
8. In relation to Health, Management Side reported that Phase 1 was progressing well, with restructuring now at the fifth level. Management Side acknowledged that this had caused a lot of pain for the individuals concerned. Management Side further advised that the Minister was very close to decisions in relation to Phase 2, Boards and Agencies, which would hopefully be taken to an Executive meeting in June.
9. With regards the legislation for Health, Management Side outlined that it was hoped 1st reading would take place on 23 June with the 2nd reading on 1 July and then Committee stage in the autumn. Management Side also reported that it was hoped to brief Trade Union Side on the legislation on the morning of 23 June.
10. Trade Union Side reported that there was a lot of anxiety and concern amongst staff which had been compounded by the effect of the CSR. In addition, Trade Union Side expressed the view that there was a strong view amongst staff that the vacancy control mechanism was being abused. Management Side agreed that it was difficult for staff to distinguish between RPA and CSR and stressed the importance of having a clear definition of RPA affected posts.
11. In relation to Education, Management Side advised that a paper containing the draft legislation was going through the Executive process with the hope that it would reach a meeting before summer recess.
12. In addition, Management Side reported that work was continuing with regards the nature and design of ESA and once again reaffirmed that the headquarters for the organisation was envisaged as being very small. There was discussion with regards location and Management Side emphasised the need for services to be located in a way which would maximise access for the customer.
13. Trade Union Side reported that they had met with the Minister for Education on 30 April and would be putting a further letter to her. There was a discussion with regards staff morale. Trade Union Side

reaffirmed that fears and concerns would be eased if an overarching guarantee of no compulsory redundancies was given.

14. In relation to Local Government, Management Side reported that interviews had taken place for the post of Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and that a recommendation had been put to the Minister in this regard.
15. Management Side further reported that the Strategic Leadership Board process was progressing. They outlined that officials had briefed and met with NIC ICTU the previous week, NIC ICTU expressed their appreciation for this briefing. There was a discussion in relation to the Ministerial commitment to the reform of the planning system which would happen over the same timescale as RPA.
16. NIC ICTU queried the terms of reference for the Deloitte report in Local Government. Management Side advised that they would write to NIC ICTU to provide further details on this matter.

Action: Management Side

17. In addition, Trade Union Side sought information in relation to the work which PWC was engaged in with regards pensions for DCAL and ESA. Management Side agreed to look into the matter.

Action: Management Side

Equality

18. Management Side reported that whilst there was no further progress to report on implementation that it remained a live issue and it was hoped that there would be a clearer indication of timescales by the next meeting. Trade Union Side highlighted that the equality dimension of RPA remained a major issue.

Cross Sector HR Update

19. Management Side advised that it was hoped to issue re-drafted Guidance Notes for Guiding Principles 2 and 4 for public consultation in June. With regards Guiding Principle 5, it was hoped that a paper in this regard would go to the Executive in June. Management Side further reported that a further response had issued to NIC ICTU on 30 May with regards the draft Guidance Notes for Guiding Principles 7, 8 and 9 and that comments were outstanding in relation to the draft Guidance Note for Guiding Principle 10.
20. Trade Union Side stated once more that they remained concerned in relation to the terminology for the promulgation of the Guiding Principles and by way of example outlined their concerns in relation to

the draft Guidance Note for Guiding Principle 10. Trade Union Side advised that they would respond to CPG's letter of 30 May.

Action: Trade Union Side

21. There was a discussion in relation to the draft Code of Practice for the 3rd Guiding Principle. Management Side emphasised the need for the Code of Practice to issue. Trade Union Side put forward a number of suggested amendments to the draft Code of Practice which Management Side agreed to reflect on. Trade Union Side agreed to respond to Management Side with suggested wording for inclusion in relation to transfer schemes.

Action: Management Side & Trade Union Side

AOB

22. No other issues were raised.

Date of Next Meeting

23. The next meeting was scheduled for Friday 1 August at 1pm.

[June 2008]