

JOINT FORUM

MEETING HELD AT 2:30 PM ON 26th OCTOBER 2006 IN MINISTER'S ROOM, CASTLE BUILDINGS

In Attendance

Dr Andrew McCormick (Chair)

Mrs Mary Hinds

Mr David Bingham

Ms Breedagh Hughes

Mr Michael Daly

Mr Danny Lambe

Mr Jim McKeown

Mrs Janice Smyth

Mrs Mary Moreland (Minutes)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr McCormick welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened the discussion. He provided a synopsis concerning the link/s with the Central Joint Forum (CJF) and NIC ICTU and set the context of the group; he stated the importance of having all the right processes in place to ensure full sectoral and cross-sectoral engagement.

Dr McCormick welcomed this opportunity to listen to, explore and address relevant issues, however, it should be noted that Departmental officials must work within the limitations of Ministerial remit.

While there are formal procedures in place there is also the opportunity for the group to engage in informal 'without prejudice' discussions as a means of teasing out any complexities which may surround some issues. It was agreed that the forum should try to maximise this informal process.

Trade Union Side stated that BMA, RCN and RCM together represented 40% of the HPSS staff. They endorsed the opportunity to meet and expressed their appreciation of the effort made to facilitate the meeting. Trade Union Side stated the importance of being able to have constructive debate, however they displayed concern in relation

to CJF and queried CJFs commitment to the process. Trade Union Side were annoyed by their exclusion from CJF and had difficulty in understanding the effectiveness of having two separate groups.

It is important to be mindful of how equality issues will impact on staff and to ensure that the implementation process for Health is appropriate, as this will set a precedent for other public sector bodies that follow.

Trade Union Side requested earlier papers from the CJF and it was agreed to look at the associated papers within the CJF minutes and issue to Trade Union Side as soon as possible

Action

01/06 It was agreed to issue to Trade Union Side all available papers including a flow chart of the sequences followed. It is anticipated that all papers will be available by Friday 10th November 2006.

(Secretariat)

2. Terms of Reference

Trade Union Side recognised that the Terms of Reference (ToR) closely reflected the CJF Memorandum of Agreement, however as the ToR had only been received the day before the meeting they requested more time to evaluate them.

Agreed

3. Linkages with NIC ICTU CJF

Item 3 was covered in the welcome and introductions.

4. Discussion on PSC 4th Guiding Principle

Mr Daly provided a comprehensive analysis of the 4th GP for the group, which was followed by a full discussion.

Trade Union Side expressed concern regarding the effect of the PSC's role and recommendations. Trade Union Sides duty was to ensure their members were not disadvantaged due to the lack of consultation. It

was agreed that Trade Union Side would be included on the distribution list for the Guiding Principles.

Mr McKeown informed the group that there is sometimes a very short turnaround time for comments on the Guiding Principles with responses required a week before the date of the PSC meeting. The next meeting of the PSC is scheduled for 29th November.

Trade Union Side stated that it was perceived as unfair to ask health to participate in a process without a full understanding of the rules; while they were not trying to be obstructive they wanted to register their concern. Dignity, respect and equality for members should not be underestimated.

Dr McCormick stated that equality was specifically mentioned within the PSC Terms of Reference and it is their duty to reflect the need to act to minimise redundancy and promote equality in their recommendations to Government.

Action

02/06 It was agreed that contact details for the Joint Forum would be sent to Mr Daly who would arrange to have all papers circulated to the Joint Forum at the same time as CJF.

(Secretariat/Mr Daly)

5. Discussion on PSC 3rd Guiding Principle

Dr McCormick tabled the paper (03/06) 'Working Draft as at 3rd Oct'.

Mr Daly provided a full analysis of the 3rd Guiding Principle explaining the areas covered. He informed the group that a set of generic HR Principles are being produced and will be factored into the legislation required to implement RPA. The group engaged in a full discussion and were informed that the second edition of the RPA bulletin is being issue on Monday afternoon. It was agreed to issue this to Trade Union Side for comment by Monday morning.

Action

03/06 It was agreed to issue the second edition of the RPA Bulletin to Trade Union Side for comment by noon on Monday 30th October 2006.

(Secretariat)

6. Implementation Update

Mr McKeown tabled the paper (04/06) 'Review of Public Administration – Implementation' and updated the group on progress

There was a comprehensive discussion around management - structures within the new organisations and while Mr Sissling has shared his initial thoughts the full senior management sub-structure has not yet been designed. This important work is just beginning; the intention is to involve the relevant forum, including Trade Union Side to bring together emerging thoughts and ideas.

The group were informed that the HR Framework has been issued for consultation.

7. Cross Sector Group Update

Mr Daly informed the group that most of the up-to-date information on the issues is included on the website, this has proved to be a very useful tool. The role of the cross sector forum is to identify, and consider emerging HR issues and has links to 150 employers. Representation includes Mr Bingham as the health representative; there is also representation from Local Government, Education, etc. with some of the smaller groups not wishing to be at the table but these groups receive all communications.

8. Equality Update

While equality was on the first agenda there was nothing to report. It was agreed to arrange for a nominated person to attend future meeting to provide a regular update.

Action

04/06 Arrange to have a nominated person attend future meetings of the Joint Forum to provide an update on Equality.

(Secretariat)

9. AOB

a) Dates of the next meetings

Thursday 23rd November 2006 @ 2:30pm, Castle Buildings

Thursday 14th December 2006 @ 2:30pm, Castle Buildings