

JOINT FORUM

**MEETING HELD AT 3:00 PM ON 26th JULY 2007 IN CONFERENCE ROOM
D2, CASTLE BUILDINGS**

In Attendance

Ms Patricia Carey

Mrs Breedagh Hughes

Dr Andrew McCormick (Chair)

Mr Danny Lambe

Mr Michael Daly

Mrs Maureen Scott

Mrs Mary Moreland (Minutes)

Mrs Lorraine Owens

Mr Damian Prince

Mrs Vivienne Walker

Apologies

Mr David Bingham

Mrs Mary Hinds

Mrs Janice Smyth

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr McCormick welcomed everyone and noted apologies.

2. Matters arising from April/May/June

There is little new to report since the last meeting of the Forum (26th April 2007). However, Dr McCormick believed it was beneficial for the Forum to meet.

It was noted that the CJF had postponed two meetings and their April minutes are still to be cleared and published.

Dr McCormick advised that Minister has issued a letter to all staff in the HSC (Tab A) and at present is exploring the RPA proposals in depth. Minister is content with the Trust structures and is expected to be in a position to make a decision on outstanding issues in the early autumn.

Minister is concerned that too large and elaborate structures could be formed; he has taken views from various groups including Trade Union Side organisations on areas such as commissioning, performance management, and changes to the Boards.

The importance of quick clear decisions was noted as any delays may have a major impact on staff morale.

1st April 2008 is still achievable although realistically there is likely to be a degree of delay; however it will be important to identify to what extent.

Trade Union Side expressed concern about the pace of change, structures and tiers; effect on Board staff and protection arrangements. The situation is not ideal and will require meaningful consultation.

Recruitment in Trusts was progressing and it was noted that agreement had been reached on a process for recruiting below 4th level. This would be issued shortly.

With regards to Voluntary Early Retirement claims Mrs Owens reported that 39 claims had been received, of these 15 had chosen the transitional arrangements while the remaining 24 had chosen the new arrangement. Under the current arrangement the first phase of the implementation of the new arrangements will end on 30th September 2008

3. Equality Update

Ms Carey provided the Equality update.

The Equality Rights and Good Relation Forum scheduled for 26th June did not take place and has been rescheduled for 28th August 2007. It is hoped that a written update will be available at the end of July. Screening exercises and equality impact assessments are on-going with a coordinated approach; the intention is to include the information on the RPA website. Work is on-going and continues to move ahead although slower than anticipated.

Work on the Database continues and the information will make it possible to provide analysis to Departmental bodies, public authorities and staff side organisations.

It has been confirmed that Data protection does not preclude the inclusion of National Insurance numbers; however, this information is very sensitive and reassurance needs to be provided about access, storage and analysis. Agreement is required from the Strategic Review Group.

Some members of the Forum expressed concerns about the extent of the information being sought and whether or not it would be available. The possibility of being able to link salary information with NI numbers illustrates the sensitivity of the exercise. Other concerns related to gathering postcode information for work and home e.g. for anyone who resides in the country a postcode may only cover one house and the individual may therefore be identifiable. Much of the information sought is not collected by Health and Social Care employer organisations and that which is, is likely to be incomplete. Informed individual consent (as indicated in the Data Commission's letter) will be required to release of the information.

Trade Union Side considered it important to know why the information is needed and how relevant the information collected is to meet that need.

It was suggested that some of the information could be gained by 'proxy' e.g. to meet Section 75 obligations it may be possible that the Equality Commission already hold much of the information on gender and community. The commission also provides guidance on obtaining information on S75 groupings. It was felt that it may be more productive to work on a S75 reporting specification for new staff systems as part of the preparation for their procurement.

Ms Carey welcomed the views and comments and agreed to explore ECNI reports and also report the concerns expressed back to the Review Group.

4. Implementation Update

Mr Prince provided a synopsis on implementation. Since the re-establishment of the Assembly in May Ministers are spending a lot of time developing their knowledge base on the issues involved surrounding RPA.

At the moment it appears likely that Education will be completed in two steps; expected to be 2009 and 2010. Local Government will follow, perhaps in 2011.

Monitoring of the Guiding Principles is continuing and a set of final decisions is needed to ensure there is built in governance procedures.

5. Cross Sector Update

- a) Legislation – the Libraries Bill has gone through the 2nd stage of the Assembly and is expected to go through the Committee Stage in September
- b) There are a number of issues upon which the Executive needs to decide its position:
 - Code of Practice on the accepted 3rd Guiding Principle (Staff Transfers). The issues here relate to the scope of 3rd party dispute resolution arrangements, how they should be administered and how long they should remain in place.
 - A formal response to the PSC's draft Addendum to the 3rd Guiding Principle (Staff Transfers).
 - A final response to the draft 5th Guiding Principle (Severance).
 - A final response to the draft 7th Guiding Principle (Location).The remaining issues to be addressed concern how staff should

be compensated in the event that they have to re-locate as a result of the RPA.

- c) Executive Responses to the 8th (Equality), 9th (Capacity Building), 10th (Employment Relations) & 11th (Reorganisation and Implementation of Change) Guiding Principles are currently under consideration.
- d) It is anticipated that all these issues will be addressed in September.

6. AOB

a) Trade Union Side raised two issues:-

- i. What will happen to staff already appointed to the HSCA designate?

Dr McCormick confirmed that staff have been appointed to the HSCA designate as secondees.

- ii. It is not helpful that Trust's appear to be pressurising individuals to take jobs.

Dr McCormick expressed concern that 'pressure' is being used to describe what should be the dissemination of information. Mrs Walker agreed to follow this up and requested that the specifics of the cases involved were passed to her to enable investigation.

b) Date of next meeting/s to be confirmed.



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