

MEETING OF THE RPA STEERING GROUP

FRIDAY 1 DECEMBER IN ROOM GD14 STORMONT CASTLE AT 11.00am

Members: Nigel Hamilton
John Hunter
Will Haire
Stephen Peover
Andrew McCormick
Sid McDowell (Chair, PSC)
Bruce Robinson
Alan Shannon
Gerry McGinn
David Gavaghan

Present: Aideen McGinley
George Gray
Cynthia Smith
Colm Shannon
Rosalie Flanagan
Brian Doherty
Jim McKeown
Eamonn McConville

Apologies: John McMillen
Damian Prince
Maurice Dowling

1. Welcome

1.1 Nigel Hamilton welcomed Cynthia Smith onto the Steering Group as the representative for the Equality cross cutting theme.

2. Minutes of 13 October 2006

2.1 Minutes of the 3 November 2006 meeting were accepted.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Bruce Robinson informed the group that a significant piece of work was underway in relation to Shared Services. An update will be presented at the next Steering Group meeting.

Action Point 1: Bruce Robinson to present an update on the Shared Services work at the next Steering Group meeting.

3.2 Nigel Hamilton reported that Minister Hanson was very keen for early implementation of the Gateway healthcheck recommendations, particularly those relating to programme governance and business

cases. This included establishing a new programme board and liaison group that would deal with detailed programme issues. Membership of the existing Steering Group would be reviewed accordingly.

Action Point 2: RPA Central Unit to present a paper to the next Group meeting with further progress and action points relating to the Gateway healthcheck.

4. Programme Management

4.1 Oral Reports

- 4.1.1 Nigel Hamilton invited an update from each of the key sectors
- 4.1.2 Andrew McCormick reported that good progress was being made on the new organisational structures, including appointments to a number of Director posts in the new Trusts.
- 4.1.3 The draft HR framework was out for consultation and would be subject to further discussion including with the Minister. A Relocation Team was now in place as well as a support team for David Sissling.
- 4.1.4 There was further work to do on schemes for staff transfers, voluntary severance, etc. Consultation will close shortly on draft Trust Transfer Orders.
- 4.1.5 Will Haire reported that the DE would be changing their programme board structures.
- 4.1.6 3 new staff were being brought in to address the resourcing issue on DE's significant legislation work. 20 consultation papers were out with the education sector to establish real debate and the Minister's recent decision had brought clarity to DEL functions transferring into the Education and Skills Authority.
- 4.1.7 Negotiations regarding the Chief Executive Designate post should be completed in the next few weeks. A Chief Executive's team has already been established.
- 4.1.8 Nigel Hamilton commented that it was worth remembering that in Health and Education there were many other policy initiatives having to be delivered at the same time as RPA.

- 4.1.9 Stephen Peover reported that the Minister and Political Panel had agreed the new DOE implementation structures at their 20 November meeting. This included a Strategic Leadership Board and a number of Policy Development panels. The Strategic Leadership Board will have its first meeting on 15 January. Existing structures will then be stood down.
- 4.1.10 Some legislative instructions had been passed to George Gray but others were still awaiting decisions. A main outstanding area was that of governance but the Minister had now met with the political parties and a significant measure of agreement was apparent.
- 4.1.11 Some work was still required to firm up on how engagement with social partners will happen.
- 4.1.12 The Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's work was still running to schedule with the Assistant Commissioners to be appointed shortly. Public consultations would go ahead in the period 11 January – 9 February 2007.
- 4.1.13 Jim McKeown informed the Group about an Assembly debate on the number of councils, which has been scheduled for Tuesday 5 December with the possibility of a sub committee meeting in the same week. If the sub committee meeting proceeds, it may be necessary for officials to be made available at short notice.
- 4.1.14 Rosalie Flanagan gave a brief overview of the structure and purpose of the Programme for Government committee.

4.2 Monthly Progress Report

- 4.2.1 Nigel Hamilton noted and commended the improvement in the quality of reports.
- 4.2.2 The reported issues relating to difficulties in completing drafting instructions had been addressed in the earlier oral updates.
- 4.2.3 Bruce Robinson confirmed that a meeting between the RPA Central Unit and DFP Finance was scheduled for Monday 4 December, which would consider how the issue of costs and efficiencies, in relation to business cases, would be progressed.
- Action Point 3:** Bruce Robinson to present an update on the costs and efficiencies work in relation to business cases, at the next Steering Group meeting.
- 4.2.4 Jim McKeown reported that the issue relating to DETI's progress report had been addressed. No further action was required at this time.

5. HR Issues

5.1 Public Service Commission

- 5.1.1 Sid McDowell reported that good progress had been maintained and that he was hopeful for an early resolution on outstanding issues.
- 5.1.2 In relation to the 2nd and 4th Guiding Principles he said that PSC would need to revisit these as the implementation dates drew closer.
- 5.1.3 The 5th Guiding Principle was currently out for consultation.
- 5.1.4 A 6th Guiding Principle on Statutory Obligations was being prepared.
- 5.1.5 John Hunter commented that in relation to the 5th Guiding Principle that Government would not be able to give a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies and that this position would be confirmed by David Hanson. Government would also reject the concept of a single voluntary severance scheme on the basis that this would inevitably result in an enhancement of benefits to the level of the best.
- 5.1.6 Andrew McCormick added that DHSSPS will have to proceed with approaches to individuals regarding voluntary severance following the Chief Executive and Director competitions.
- 5.1.7 Nigel Hamilton reminded the Group that any papers for the next PSC meeting (12 December) should be forwarded to the RPA Central Unit by 5 December.

5.2 Central Forums

- 5.2.1 John Hunter reported that the last Central Forum meeting had followed the same lines as the meeting with PSC with the 3rd, 4th and 6th Guiding Principles discussed. The 5th Guiding Principle had been discussed briefly but further discussions would be required as Government are unlikely to agree to this Principle.
- 5.2.2 He also reported that NICICTU had expressed their position that, despite decisions having already been taken on Enterprise Ulster, affected staff should have the opportunity to benefit from the Guiding Principles.
- 5.2.3 He advised that the next Central Forum meeting will discuss the locations paper, which had already been discussed with PSC and which was being prepared for consultation.
- 5.2.4 Cynthia Smith remarked that she would be working to mainstream Equality issues within the programme. She asked whether the Equality Forum could see the PSC's draft Guiding Principles at the same time as Government and Trade Unions.

5.2.5 Nigel Hamilton remarked that much of the initial discussions were informal and based on early drafts and that this had proved a very effective approach. He suggested that rather than affecting this process, the Equality Forum could be included in the overall consultation process once a formal Guiding Principle had been presented to Government.

Action Point 4: John Hunter to speak with Cynthia Smith and Michael Daly about including the Equality Forum in the consultation process following the formal presentation of Guiding Principles to Government.

5.3 Staffing Issues on Legislation

5.3.1 George Gray reported that subject to resolution of the HR provisions, drafts of the Library and Public Authorities Reform Orders should be completed soon. The Health Order was also progressing well and could possibly be published in January 2007.

5.3.2 The Education Order was causing concern as timetables had been pushed and this could impact on the target implementation date of April 2008. Will Haire noted that the timetable had always been tight due to the scale of the reform work required.

5.3.3 Progress on the Local Government Order had slowed with some policy areas still to be resolved.

5.3.4 In relation to the Transfer of Functions Order, he explained that ideally this would have been done first, establishing funding, etc. There is some inconsistency in approaches by Departments. Departments were encouraged to address outstanding queries promptly as other pressures on OLC were emerging.

5.3.5 Nigel Hamilton requested Departments to stay very closely in touch with colleagues and George Gray during the coming period. He noted that the elections and the return of the assembly all had implications for impacting on the legislative timeframe.

Action Point 5: Departments to stay in close contact with legislative colleagues and George Gray in relation to progress on the remaining legislation work during the coming period.

6. Cross Cutting Issues

- 6.1 Nigel Hamilton remarked that Legislation and DOE Structures had been covered earlier in the meeting. He pointed out the new format for reporting progress on legislation, as detailed in the Highlight Report, whereby lead Departments would each present a report on the piece of legislation for which they were responsible.

7. Communications

- 7.1 Colm Shannon referred to the Communications Grid that had been produced since the last meeting. He reported that it detailed all communications that would be happening in the next quarter but that it would have to be revisited in light of developments with planned elections. It was agreed that this format would be used to report communications on a monthly basis.
- 7.2 The second bulletin had issued and a third was being considered. Colm reported that concern had been expressed at a communications meeting regarding the language being used in the bulletin, particularly around Guiding Principles and the PSC and how the content related to staff.

Action Point 6: Colm Shannon to speak with John Hunter and Michael Daly about getting the balance right in terms of content and timing of bulletins.

8. Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 5 January 2007 at 11.00am at Stormont Castle. A full programme management dashboard report would not be feasible for this meeting but there were a few important items to discuss. A draft agenda and request for information will be issued on 15 December 2006, to accommodate holiday arrangements.

Action Points Summary

	Action	Responsibility
Dec. 1	To present an update on the Shared Services work at the next Steering Group meeting.	Bruce Robinson
Dec. 2	To present a paper to the next Group meeting with further progress and action points relating to the Gateway healthcheck.	RPA Central Unit
Dec. 3	To present an update on the costs and efficiencies work in relation to business cases, at the next Steering Group meeting.	Bruce Robinson
Dec. 4	To speak with Cynthia Smith and Michael Daly about including the Equality Forum in the consultation process following the formal presentation of Guiding Principles to Government.	John Hunter
Dec. 5	To stay in close contact with legislative colleagues and George Gray in relation to progress on the remaining legislation work during the coming period.	Departments
Dec. 6	To speak with John Hunter and Michael Daly about getting the balance right in terms of content and timing of bulletins.	Colm Shannon