

Paper 1

MINUTES

RPA Strategic Review Group Meeting – 4 May 2007

Members: Nigel Hamilton (Chair)
John Hunter
Bruce Robinson
Stephen Peover
Aideen McGinley
Alan Shannon
Will Haire
Paul Sweeney

Present: Don Hill (for Andrew McCormick)
Noel Lavery (for Stephen Quinn)
John McMillen
Michael Daly
Damian Prince
Bernie McCusker
Eamonn McConville

Apologies: Andrew McCormick
Stephen Quinn
Malcolm McKibbin
Gerry McGinn

1. Welcome

1.1 Nigel Hamilton welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Bernie McCusker who had recently joined the RPA Central team. He began by highlighting the need to get an early steer from the Executive regarding the direction and handling of RPA. He asked for a paper to be produced to address these matters.

2. Item 1 – ToR of the RPA Strategic Review Group

2.1 John McMillen introduced the paper highlighting the defined responsibilities and membership of the group. The paper was unanimously accepted.

3. Item 2 – Response to Healthcheck Report

3.1 John McMillen introduced this paper and explained that as a result of PSG's 16 March decision to move RPA away from formal programme management arrangements, it would be necessary to respond accordingly to OGC's recommendations. The paper reflected those

aspects of the report which were of particular value. The paper was unanimously accepted.

4. Item 3 – Progress Update Reports

- 4.1 Stephen Peover reported that work would be on-going with the new minister to gain clarity how RPA would progress within DOE. He added that some background work had been done on the implications of moving away from the 7-council model including the impact on timescales and the transferring functions.
- 4.2 Will Haire reported that DE would also be working with their new minister on the direction of RPA. He added that there were still resource difficulties. DE's legislation would be broken down into at least 2 parts and the instructions for the first Bill completed by mid May. Will went on to say that the other reforms within DE were somewhat dependant on progress within RPA.
- 4.3 Alan Shannon reported that DSD were up to speed on all aspects of RPA and that their legislation had been completed. He remarked that the issue of getting staff to move into transferring function was still a problem.
- 4.4 Don Hill reported that arrangements were well progressed within DHSSPS, with the Trusts having 4th tier posts in place. The legislation consultation process was now complete and work was on-going on making provision for a shared service. Don added that senior HSA staff had also been appointed.
- 4.5 Paul Sweeney reported that the Libraries Bill was ready to go and could be seen as an early success for the Executive. There was a preferred candidate identified for the Chief Executive of the Libraries Authority. He would be meeting with the new minister to discuss taking RPA forward within DCAL.
- 4.6 Bruce Robinson suggested that any discussions with new ministers should include financial consequences, although it was recognised that these could not be articulated in great detail at this stage.
- 4.7 John McMillen reported on the cross cutting themes. He informed the group that at a workshop in March with the cross cutting SROs, it was recommended that the DOE lead themes should no longer be included as cross cutting themes. He reported that the costs and efficiencies theme was behind schedule but work was on-going between DFP and departments. Work was continuing on building the Equality database. The Information Commissioner had been contacted to seek a legal position on the information being requested.

5. Item 4 - PSC Update

- 5.1 Michael Daly reported that contacts were on-going with PSC regarding dispute resolution; severance scheme; and staffing provisions in the Libraries Order. There was a need for government clearance to progress these issues. It was agreed that an Executive steer on these matters should be obtained.
- 5.2 John McMillen reported that the RPA Central team are going to facilitate a workshop to take another look at the scope of the Affected Group. Michael Daly added that the clearing house idea could be included in the workshop discussions.
- 5.3 John McMillen then advised that the Central Unit was working with PSC to do some research into how PSC principles are being understood on the ground; staff experience of RPA to date; and the issues that are causing most concern. It was agreed that departmental HR personnel staff could be approached in order that an appropriate sampling frame can be developed.

6. Item 5 – Update on Location Consultation

- 6.1 John Hunter reported that the consultation process completed on 20 April but that comment would be taken in account up to the end of April. The workshops in particular generated some debate from stakeholders. There were 38 written responses with comments supporting the integrated and coherent basis for making decisions.
- 6.2 One issue that was being raised consistently was the desire to see a proactive policy on the dispersal of public sector and civil service jobs.
- 6.3 The 8 criteria were to be reduced to 4, although this was largely to be achieved by combining 2 or more existing criteria.
- 6.4 A methodology on how the principles would be implemented in practice will be developed and a summary report will go to Minister Robinson before being presented to the Executive Committee.

7. Item 6 – Benefits Mapping Exercise

- 7.1 Damian Prince introduced the paper and explained that the intention was to do some initial work until political decisions were forthcoming. John McMillen added that the issue of shared services had been included.
- 7.2 It was agreed that contact with departmental project offices would be essential and Bruce Robinson asked that the work synchronise with work already undertaken in DFP.

8. Item 7 – Capacity Building Proposal

- 8.1 John McMillen introduced this paper and explained the desire for training aimed at very senior staff around transformational change and working outside departmental boundaries. Work had been carried out with FEI and the paper sought approval to proceed to firm costings.
- 8.2 John elaborated on the content of the programme, which would aim to complete by April 2008, with some places being made available to senior people in the voluntary sector at zero cost.
- 8.3 There was a healthy discussion about the merits of FEI; the value for money aspects of the programme; where the transfer of training skills would be retained; the source of funding; and the need for connections to be made to political decisions.
- 8.4 Nigel Hamilton remarked on the merits of such a programme in bringing the wider public sector together and asked for some further work to be done on: the content of the programme; the links to Executive decisions; the basis for funding the programme; the legacy aspects; and the unique merits that FEI would bring to such a programme.

9. Next Meeting

As there were no issues under any other business, Nigel Hamilton thanked everyone for their contribution. The next meeting will be on 1 June 2007. The venue will be determined by the PSG meeting that day.

Action	Detail	Responsible / Timing
MAY.1	Prepare a paper to obtain a steer from the Executive in relation to the direction and handling of RPA.	Damian Prince – for presentation at Exec 24 May meeting.
MAY.2	Prepare a detailed paper in relation to the FEI proposal.	John McMillen/Aideen McGinley – for next SRG meeting.