

Public Service Commission

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 23rd January 2008

Boardroom 10 Cromac Place, The Gasworks

Present:

Mr Sid McDowell (Chairman)

Professor Bernard Cullen

Mr Brian Hanna

Mr Jim McCusker

Mrs Brenda McLaughlin

Mr Desmond Mitchell

Dr Collim Patton

In Attendance:

Mr Brian Martin

Mr Ian Maye, DOE (present for item 4)

Mr James Hutchinson, DOE (present for item 4)

Mr Jackie Lambe, DOE (present for item 4)

The Commission meeting opened at 10.30 am.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 19 December 2007

The minutes of the 19 December meeting were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1

Staff Transfers Code of Practice

Commissioners were advised that NICICTU had now responded to Central Personnel Group and that CPG hoped to issue the draft Code for consultation to the HR Cross Sector Forum in late January. Commissioners and NICICTU will then get sight of it.

Agreed: Commissioners to see final version of Code of Practice when available. Secretariat to let Commission's legal adviser have sight of it.

3.2

Update on draft Guiding Principles

Commissioners were advised that the 2nd [Revised] Managing Vacancies Effectively in Existing Organisations, 4th [Revised] Filling Vacancies and New or Substantially New Posts in New Organisations and 10th Reorganisation and Implementation of Change had been considered by the Executive on 17 January 2008. The response from OFMDFM was awaited.

3.3

Meeting with HOCS – 11 March 2008

Commissioners were advised that the meeting with Sir Nigel Hamilton has been arranged for 11 March.

3.4

Why Public Service Commission should be retained

Commissioners re-iterated their view that the Commission should exist during the implementation of RPA decisions and noted that this would be one of the issues to be discussed at the meeting with HOCS.

3.5

Research Proposal

Dessie Mitchell advised Commissioners that 7 tenders had been received for the project. They had now been evaluated and Central Procurement Division would advise the companies of the outcome soon.

Agreed: All Commissioners to see interim report when available.

3.6

Role of Public Service Commission in Shared Services

Commissioners were advised that the Chairman and the Chief Executive had met representatives of NICICTU to discuss this issue. NICICTU agree with the Commission's initial view that PSC Guiding Principles should apply to the creation of shared service centres as a result of RPA decisions; indeed they consider that the Guiding Principles should apply in all circumstances whether as a consequence of RPA or otherwise. Commissioners considered that although the letter of 20 November 2007 from RPA Central Unit, which reflected the view of the HR Cross Sector Forum, was not unhelpful it fell short of the Commission's initial position. After a wide ranging discussion Commissioners concluded that where a proposal emerges for shared services of functions which are currently carried out by any part of the public sector the presumption should be that PSC Guiding Principles should apply.

Commissioners then discussed the emerging position in the Health Sector and took the view that there could well be a role for the Commission as proposals for future restructuring are taken forward.

Agreed: Chief Executive to advise RPA Central Unit of conclusion above. Also to determine if the Health Sector is committed to applying PSC Guiding

Principles if specific shared service proposals emerge and whether Health will be consulting with PSC.

3.7

Location of Public Sector Jobs emerging from Review of Public Administration
The Chairman advised Commissioners that the meeting with DFP had been arranged for 28 January. The Chairman, Bernard Cullen, Dessie Mitchell, Jim McCusker and the Chief Executive would also attend.

4 Local Government Emerging Findings – Briefing by DOE

DOE officials updated Commissioners on developments since the Emerging Findings document was published. It was expected that the DOE Minister would make a statement to the Executive in early February. A number of issues were discussed. These included commitment to the use of PSC Guiding Principles during implementation, the impact the delay in making decisions was having on staff and services, the need to bring certainty to the process, the need for a power of direction, location and equality issues. DOE officials reassured Commissioners that their Minister was keen to bring certainty to the process and that Guiding Principles would be adhered to during implementation. Officials were aware of the commitment made by the previous administration to take a power of direction. They confirmed that the intention was to take this power as well as examining the need to extend existing powers to cover shadow councils, although their Minister had not yet considered this issue.

DOE officials then updated Commissioners on the review of the functions of the Local Government Staff Commission which would be undertaken by the consultancy Division of DFP. This would start once the Ministerial announcement is made and will take 3 months to complete. In parallel to the review consideration will be given to proposals for a wider Public Sector Commission.

5 5th Guiding Principle Voluntary Severance Arrangements

The Chairman advised Commissioners that the Chief Executive had been in discussion with Government officials about amendments to the draft version dated 30 October 2007. Central Personnel Group was working with the HR Cross Sector Forum to produce a version officials could recommend, but this was not yet available. Commissioners again expressed concern at the length of time it was taking to conclude the Guiding Principle. They accepted, however, that they should consider the re-draft when available, rather than making recommendations which the Executive was likely to reject.

6 Any Other Business

6.1

Delivering Successful Change in NICS

It was agreed that Collim Patton and the Chief Executive would attend this event.

6.2

Libraries Bill

The chairman advised Commissioners that he understood NICICTU had unsuccessfully attempted to raise a number of legal issues with the DCAL Assembly Committee. It was expected that these would also be raised in the Assembly debate. There was nothing to concern the Commission.

7 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 21 February at 10.30am

The April meeting was arranged for Friday 18 April at 10.30am.

Sid Kempwell

