

Public Service Commission

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 13 May 2008

Boardroom 10 Cromac Place

The Gasworks

Present:

Mr Sid McDowell (Chairman)
Professor Bernard Cullen
Mr Brian Hanna
Mr Jim McCusker
Mrs Brenda McLaughlin
Dr Collim Patton
Mr Desmond Mitchell
Andrew McCormick}
David Bingham} present for item 4

In Attendance:

Mr Brian Martin

1. Minutes of Meeting of 18 April 2008

The minutes of the 18 April meeting were agreed.

2. Matters Arising

2.1

Codes of Practice Update

Commissioners discussed the letter of 29 April from the Director, Central Personnel Group, to the Chairman. Commissioners focused, in particular, on the re-assurance that the lack of published guidance does not prevent employers from implementing the agreed Guiding principles consistently. They concluded that specific evidence of consistent application was required. They also discussed the fact that there had been no developments since officials had agreed at the March meeting to consider the wider issue of compliance with Guiding Principles and discuss further with the Commission. The Chairman advised Commissioners that in conjunction with Jim McCusker it had been decided that the Commission should not comment on the draft Code of Practice on the 3rd Guiding Principle Staff Transfers until discussions between Government officials and Trade Union Side had taken place. Commissioners agreed with this course of action.

Agreed: Chairman to write to Director, Central Personnel Group, asking what specific action employers have taken to implement the revised 2nd and 4th

Guiding Principles. Meeting to be arranged with Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service as soon as possible.

2.2

Research Project Update

Dessie Mitchell updated Commissioners on progress.

Agreed: Chief Executive to advise Project Steering Group that Commissioners would want to attend the appropriate Steering Group meeting when the Consultants were discussing their findings.

2.3

Location of Public Sector jobs resulting from the Review of Public Administration

Commissioners who attended the public meetings reported that they had been useful and informative. The Commission's Guiding Principle on Location had been mentioned during the meetings.

2.4

Education Sector Update

The Chairman reported that there had been no response to the letter the Chief Executive had sent to the Permanent Secretary, Department of Education, after the April PSC meeting.

2.5

5th Guiding Principle Voluntary Severance

The Chairman advised members that the Guiding Principle had not been taken at the Executive meeting in April. It was now hoped that it would be taken at a May meeting.

2.6

Future of Public Service Commission

Commissioners confirmed that they were content with the revised paper which the Chief Executive had circulated following the last meeting.

Agreed: Meeting to be arranged with new Minister of Finance and Personnel when appointed.

2.7

Review of Local Government Staff Commission

Commissioners were advised that no announcement had yet been made about the review.

3. Role of Public Service Commission in Shared Services

Commissioners discussed the letter of 22 April from the Commission's legal advisor, in particular the implications of a private sector shared service solution.

Agreed: Chief Executive to prepare an issues/options paper for discussion at the June meeting.

4. Briefing on Health Sector Developments

Health officials advised Commissioners of developments following the Minister's recent statement. Final decisions on the organisational structure remain to be taken as the public consultation phase has just ended. Implementation of the proposals will be more complex than for the introduction of Health and Social Care Trusts. Officials indicated that lessons had been learnt from the introduction of Trusts which would be applied to the next phase of re-organisation. In particular communication could be improved and top level structures for the new organisations would be determined in advance of them being established. Issues which were discussed with officials included the legislative programme, voluntary severance schemes, the filling of senior posts, the position of staff in Health Boards, location, Trade Union Side engagement, shared services, staffing reductions to date, the value of, and compliance with, PSC Guiding Principles.

Agreed: Health officials to attend future Commission meeting once plans have been firmed up. Health to provide monitoring data to Commission and mention this requirement to OFMDFM officials.

5 Northern Ireland Assembly/Executive Developments

The Chairman advised Commissioners that minutes of evidence in relation to the Libraries Bill could be found on the Assembly website.

6 Date of Next Meeting

Friday 27 June 2008 at 10.30

Sid Keefowell

