

**FUTURE NATIONAL OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS
JOINT TUS WORKING GROUP
MINUTES OF THE 1ST MEETING
PRIORY ROOMS, BIRMINGHAM
2 December 2008**

Present: Sarah England
John Scotney
Ian Lamb
Edward Shephard
Crispin Thorn
Stuart Grainger
Mick Hoban
Pauline Marchington

Apologies: Tim Gill, Steve Smith

1. INTRODUCTION

Sarah England welcomed colleagues to the meeting. She said that as this was the first meeting of the group, much of its content would be about information sharing at this early stage. Edward Shephard suggested that item 2 on the agenda (response to questions) be dealt with as the last item of the day, as the days discussions would no doubt contribute to answering some of the questions raised. Stuart Grainger produced a further set of questions that the TUS would like comment on and Edward Shephard confirmed that there were still a number of questions of a high level nature that the TUS would like answered. Many of these surrounded the TUS's feelings of disappointment on how the decision making process for closure had been handled. However he said that he would like to reflect on how best to handle the way forward this at the end of the meeting. Mick Hoban added that the TUS had been shocked at the breakdown of normal consultation on the closure which had left many of the staff affected stunned. Sarah said that whilst she and her colleagues present would do their best to answer these during the meeting, some of them may have to be taken back to Paul Hill-Tout for a response.

2. JOBS "IN SCOPE" FOR NEW NATIONAL OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS

John Scotney tabled a paper, which gave details of all of the posts that were currently working out of Cambridge or Bristol affected by the closure. The document provided gave details of where posts would be located after 24 May 2010. He explained that the reason for the date was that he would like the TUS to consider using this date as our implementation date for calculations etc the 24 May 2010 being the actual expiry date of the Cambridge lease. The TUS agreed to reflect on the date as the meeting progressed. He said that the purpose of the document was to try and set out which posts would be affected directly (i.e. in or out of scope). He explained that it was his intention to take the TUS through each post on the list and explain the rationale for each post's future location.

Before starting on the detail he reported that following the decision to close the Cambridge office, MGUI have now decided to close their Keynsham office and move their staff into the new Bristol site in February 2010 or 2011, depending on final lease arrangements. The posts affected were therefore included in the document tabled.

Details of the rationale by section and the TUS comments were as follows:

Directors Office

PB4 HR manager post - this post is part of a geographically based team delivering HR services across England and will be based in the East England -TUS indicated that this seemed sensible, subject to the decision being consistent with other posts.

Communications and Secretariat

All post will be based in the new Bristol Office - TUS indicated that this seemed sensible, subject to the decision being consistent with other posts.

Finance

Two posts will be lost - PB2 Projects Officer -This post has been carrying out work relating to accommodation (most recently the Cambridge office). This work will come to an end in 2010. PB5 - Building Facilitates and Contracts Manager for GEH, which will no longer be required once GEH closes.

All other posts in this section will be Bristol based - TUS indicated that this seemed sensible, subject to the decision being consistent with other posts.

Grants & Regulations

PB1 Head of Regions - This post is based at Clifton Moor and is out of scope along with the other posts there. As this will be the lead post for the Regions there is a need for it to be based in a region in order to understand the regional perspective. TUS - The TUS expressed some concern that this rationale could be applied to a number of posts and that it would need to be assessed in this wider context..

There were three posts in this section considered to be out of scope - PB3 National G&R Manager (West), which is already based in Bristol. The PB3 G&R Development Manager post, which for management purposes is based in York; much of the work requires a link to Silvan House. Finally the PB4 Country Analyst post, which again has a strong management need to be linked to Silvan House. Crispin Thorn expressed concern about the consistency regarding the G&R Managers role and whether or not it is regional. He asked for more clarification on the rationale.

Edward Shephard asked if the Clifton Moor posts could be included on the list to show the full 'out of scope' picture. Stuart Grainger expressed his concern that the new set up in Bristol would not be an improvement on the existing arrangements if the number of G&R people did not increase on a daily basis. John Scotney stressed that this was not the case and that it was the intention to implement the G&R resilience plan fully, as quickly as possible.

MGUI

All posts to be based in the new Bristol Office - TUS indicated that this seemed sensible, subject to the decision being consistent with other posts.

Programme Group

All posts listed will be located in the new Bristol Office. John Scotney stressed that this meant the post and not the person, reminding the group of question 6 in the recently issued Q&A. Crispin Thorn asked if home working was still going to be an option in the future. Sarah England confirmed that this would still be option but said that she felt that we had at times been too flexible with this approach and that this had led to the fragmentation of the national team. It was more likely that posts would have a base, with flexibility to work from home, rather than a post being home based.

Crispin asked again for clarification over the Clifton Moor staff. John Scotney said that they were clearly 'out of scope' in this exercise. Edward Shephard asked if all of the Programme Group posts could be added to the list for completeness and that the list show current location for each post. John Scotney agreed to take on the board the TUS's additions and request for more clarification on the rationales used for each post with a view reissuing the list for consideration by the TUS as soon as possible.

Action: John Scotney

3. BUSINESS RULES FOR AFFECTED STAFF

Sarah England said she was not yet able to confirm the position on the mobility clause. She explained that as Civil Servants, all our contracts for staff at PB5 and above contain a mobility clause and that it is FC management's view that this could be enforced. Sarah explained that any decision not to invoke it given the nature of this particular move would need careful consideration given the fact we operate as a GB organisation. Sarah confirmed that the mobility clause issue would be discussed at the next GB Executive Board on the 10 December.

In view of this Sarah said that any discussion around business rules could only be limited at this point; however at the TUS's request she set out her initial views which were as follows:

All staff, regardless of whether they have a mobility clause in their contracts or not who wished to relocate to Bristol, would be invited to do so on public interest terms. As set out earlier there would only be two posts lost which both have duties attributable to GEH; compulsory redundancy terms would apply if suitable redeployment could not be found. All non-mobile grades would be classed as compulsory redundancies/early retirements as a last resort, if no suitable alternative employment could be found. For staff who would prefer to be found other posts, HR would do everything it could to offer redeployment within the FC and other departments. Support would be given as appropriate, including training, professional help with CVs etc.

Edward Shephard said that the TUS would only accept severance (redundancy/retirement) to be on compulsory terms as the FC had always applied this in the past. The official side noted their position, but confirmed they were unable to make such a commitment.

John Scotney said he was still keen to agree the implementation date as previously discussed. Edward Shephard confirmed that the TUS were happy to use the 24 May 2010. Sarah England promised to come back to the group with an update on the mobility clause as soon as possible after the GBEB meeting.

Action Sarah England

4. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD ON IMPLEMENTATION

Information Giving Sessions - Sarah England said that we proposed to hold a workshop on the relocation package for staff in Cambridge on the 17 December. This would be run by representatives from the Silvan House HR team. More dates would be planned in the New Year for repeat sessions, depending on demand.

We were also planning a trip to Bristol for all staff in mid January, to allow staff to see the new office, meet existing Bristol based staff and get a feel for Bristol and its surrounding area. The TUS said they were very supportive of these initiatives and would do all they could to encourage staff to attend.

Preference/Options exercise - Sarah explained that management would arrange to see all in scope staff as soon as possible in the New Year. She was keen for these discussions to be carried out by someone the person knows unless another preference is stated. This means that John Scotney or Sarah England will carry out most of the preference exercise interviews, with either Lynn Carty or Lindsay MacPherson from HR Services. Colleagues will of course have the option of having someone to accompany them if they so choose, including having their manager present if desired.

Potential knock on consequences - Sarah said that obviously as colleagues choose their options this might have an impact on the structure of each team, especially in the admin grades. Management would need to consider if as a result of these impacts, team structures would need to change and wished to reserve management's right to do so in consultation with TUS. This was accepted.

Setting up of the new office - Stuart Grainger expressed some concern about the setting up of the new office and the need to ensure that new staff are properly integrated. John Scotney reassured colleagues that he would be working with Steve Meeks in Bristol to ensure that full integration was achieved and would ensure that this issue was fed back to Steve.

Action: John Scotney

5. FUTURE JOINT COMMUNICATIONS

Sarah England offered to draft a joint communications note of the meeting if TUS felt able to consider a joint communication from the working group. Edward Shephard accepted on behalf of the TUS.

Action: Sarah England

6. RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ALREADY POSED BY STAFF COUNCIL

John Scotney tabled the answers so far to the questions received to date from TUS. The TUS agreed to take away the responses and reflect on their content in light of the meeting. On the subject of higher level questions Edward Shephard said that the TUS would be considering seeking separate meetings with Paul Hill-Tout and the Chairman with a number of key questions relating to the decision itself to close the Cambridge office.

Action: Edward Shephard

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Telephone conference - 10.30.a.m Monday 15 December 2008, primarily to update on discussions surrounding the mobility clause.

Next meeting: To be confirmed, but it was noted that we have a Staff Council meeting on 22 January 2009 anyway, so may link in with this.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Meeting closed 15.00