



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' CORE GROUP  
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2007, ROOM 3, 1ST FLOOR, IN  
SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

<b>Present:</b>	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Edward Shephard	FCTU Secretary
	Allan Mackenzie	PCS
	Tony Cousins (by telephone)	Prospect
	Tim Gill (by telephone)	Unite
	Glen Dobson	Prospect F/T Official
<b>Minute Secretary:</b>	Sam Telford	FCTU Office

**1. Introduction**

Robert welcomed the Core Group and thanked everyone for attending.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Roy Laird.

**3. Minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007**

The above were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

**4. Pay**

It was noted that a response was yet to be received from HMT after Edward had written to raise concerns with the implementation of the FC's pay system and asked to enter discussions to attempt to resolve issues.

Edward reported that he had recently met with HR to discuss issues that may need addressing as part of the pay and reward strategy. He advised that the key elements discussed were mainly benchmarking, pay bands, equal pay, performance pay, overtime, allowances and total reward. Edward said that the discussion had been both positive and productive, particularly on the subject of performance pay on which the idea of implementing a nomination system for top performers had been discussed. It was suggested that there was potential to have a range of awards and that these could be celebrated across the organisation. The group **agreed** that although a huge amount of consideration on criteria, consistency and transparency would be necessary, the principle of a nomination system was desirable and more favourable than the current performance pay system.

Edward was awaiting notes of the meeting from HR and said that he would circulate these to the group when received for comments and suggestions.

**Action Required: Edward to circulate notes of meeting with HR**

The group **agreed** that these elements needed to be explored further with HR before gaining feedback from members and recommending any options.

## **5. Efficiency Review Update**

Edward said that there was little to report on the Efficiency Review but advised that the timetable for the Westminster settlement for DEFRA would likely settle at the end of October.

Edward and Robert informed the group of a recent discussion with Keith Gliddon on Efficiency and in particular, value for money in public sector corporate services. Edward summarised key points from the discussion and said that audit agencies have been working to develop indicator sets for measuring the value for money of five core functions: finance, HR, ICT, estates management and procurement. He added that these indicators were designed for use by senior managers across the public sector to help them monitor and improve the VFM performance in their organisations' corporate services. Edward said that he would send copies of the document produced by National Audit Office to the group for information.

**Action Required: Edward to circulate booklet**

## **6. Health & Safety**

Allan presented his paper on occupational health, questioning if joint unions should be engaging more in health issues such as the possibility of eye damage resulting from computer use and toner spore damage. He stressed that a recent Japanese study identified a potential link between heavy computer usage and glaucoma. Allan felt that it should be joint unions' intention to assist the FC in achieving the best possible conditions for staff who use computers.

The group **agreed** that the FC is committed to achieving high standards in occupational health and that unions should attempt to be involved in all aspects that will bring about improvements for members. Allan added that unions should insist upon researching within the department to assure members that legislation surrounding the subject is being adhered to at all workstations.

Edward suggested that the subject be raised at the FCTU Council in October to seek a suitable method of switching more focus to occupational health and how to best manage H&S co-ordinators and reps. On reflecting on the H&S discussion at the Core Group meeting in July, it was noted that Robert had already begun work to identify where additional resources for reps and co-ordinators were required.

**Action Required: Robert to produce H&S paper to FCTU Council**

## **7. Communication Meetings**

The group re-visited the plan of organising discussion sessions with staff and Robert presented an updated spreadsheet detailing target locations, dates confirmed and workplaces already visited. Edward said that he felt the plan was working well and that both members and non-members were showing interest in union activity. Robert concurred and added that he had felt welcome at team meetings and reported that many staff members offered feedback and asked questions on issues.

It was agreed that the item would remain on the agenda and that the approach to staff at team meetings is reviewed at a later date when more workplaces have been visited.

**8. AOB**

There were no further items to add.