



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, FL1 RM4, IN SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

<b>Present:</b>	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan MacKenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Lorraine Adams (by telephone)	Prospect
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Mary Irvine	PCS
	Andy Patmore (by telephone)	Unite
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Office
<b>Minute Secretary</b>	Sam Telford	FCTU Office

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Malcolm Currie.

**2. Minutes of 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009**

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

**3. Election of FCTU Chair**

Allan referred to the letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> April regarding the FCTU Election. Allan confirmed that one nomination was received from Unite for Robert Beaney to stand as Chair and explained that PCS, GMB and Prospect were to cast a vote. PCS and Prospect voted in favour of the nomination and GMB voted against and as a result, Robert Beaney was elected as FCTU Chair for a further five years. The committee express their thanks to Robert for his excellent work during the last five years and Allan said that he looked forward to working closely with Robert in the future. The committee concurred.

**4. Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures**

Allan advised that the FCTU's comments on the Disciplinary and Grievance Policies and Procedures had been sent to HR prior to their release on 1<sup>st</sup> June and expressed concern that the FCTU had not received any response from HR before the new policies were publicised. He said that it was unclear if the comments had been taken on board and that there was no recognition that anything had been agreed with the FCTU. However, Allan said that he had raised the issue with HR and later received a letter apologising for the oversight and delay in responding, stating that it should have happened prior to the publication. HR had added that they were working on a review of policies and procedures which should ensure that nothing is published until all consultation is complete.

Following discussion on HR's response to the FCTU's comments, it was agreed that there were still issues with the Grievance Procedure. Allan advised that he would raise the issues with HR and report back to the group.

**5. FCTU Strategic Issues Programme**

Allan reported that the FCTU office have been considering how best to manage the strategy and advised that he would prepare an opening document for each strand of the strategy for the lead rep responsible for its delivery. This would detail the background, what work is required, and what the future is. The documents would be stored electronically in the FCTU office and will be updated when progress is made.

## **Action Required: Allan MacKenzie**

Allan said that the constituent unions and full time officers should be able to feed into the strategy as it is a live document.

## **Action Required: Senior Lay Reps to send strategy document to Full Time Officers**

### **6. Cambridge Office Closure**

Allan provided the group with an update on the future of the national office arrangements. He said that there had been a staff meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and referred to the response from Sarah England on the questions asked at the meeting:

#### **Leave**

I appreciate that this is an unusual scenario, which is not covered in the Staff Handbook. However before we can decide how best to deal with this situation we need more information about the extent of the issue. We have already issued a note to staff asking them to let us have details of their leave entitlements, including banked leave and their likely plans. As soon as we have assessed the returns we will let you have our proposals for dealing with this matter.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Preference Interviews, Calculations & Letters.**

John Scotney has already carried out a number of meetings with colleagues who wish to go over their figures and any queries arising from this will be dealt with as quickly as possible, together with any outstanding questions.

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Preference Interviews colleagues will be given a written note of their preference decision clearly stating their choice as soon as practically possible after 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009. I should stress that not all decisions are required by the 31<sup>st</sup> July. The only final decision that we really need is whether colleagues are opting to move to Bristol or not. This is for business continuity purposes. Other choices such as redeployment or exit can be handled later.

I have asked HR in Silvan House for a copy of the form of words that will be used in the notice letters. I will pass this onto you as soon as it is available.

#### **Assurance of continuity of work.**

We will be looking to keep all colleagues who remain in Cambridge employed until the closure date. We are confident that there will be sufficient work for those colleagues staying until the end. There will of course be a need for colleagues to remain flexible in their duties as we move into the later stages of this year and next, as some work will inevitably transfer to Bristol sooner rather than later.

#### **Q&A**

We will revisit the Q&A and do our best to improve the content as requested.

#### **Definition of Civil Service**

I can confirm that the Police, Local Authorities and the NHS are not part of the Civil Service and as such would not be of any concern to colleagues taking severance payments should they apply for employment with these bodies. I should point out however that all of these three examples do have similar pension schemes and it may be possible to transfer your pensionable service into their pension schemes.

#### **Agency Staff**

I do appreciate that some recent job vacancies may have looked like a possible chance for colleagues to try out in a new role by way of a development opportunity. We will of course keep this in mind for any future vacancies that arise but colleagues will have to understand that with sections likely to lose experienced staff, managers will be under increasing pressure to fill vacancies with staff who can step into the role immediately.

### **Line Management**

I recognise colleagues concerns and we will be working very hard with managers of our teams to ensure that proper line management roles and responsibilities are carried out fully and correctly.

Allan said that Stuart Grainger (FCTU rep on the Cambridge working group) had welcomed the response and Allan said that would be would continue to engage in the process and keep the DC updated.

## **7. Membership Mapping**

Sue referred to the Mapping Density Analysis paper and gave an overview of changes in membership across GB over the previous six months. Sue said that the figures were broken down by union, area, age, grade, gender and appointment type. It was noted that overall membership density has dropped to 53.%, however this was mostly due to an increase in headcount.

Allan referred to item 10 of the FCTU Strategic Issues Programme:

### **The Recruitment of New Members**

**Background:** In October 2007 the FCTU debated the need to recruit new members and what would likely happen if we failed to do so. Our current density is a little under 60% and to be really healthy we should aim at a density of 75%. If the FCTU chooses not to address recruitment concerns then our density could plummet to below 40% as our older members reach retirement. The profile and relevance of the FCTU would be placed in jeopardy if our density of union members falls much below 50%.

**Scope:** To actively promote the unions at every opportunity, to establish techniques for attracting young members and to highlight all the benefits that union membership brings with it.

**Timetable & Constraints:** The clock is well and truly ticking, we are at the moment due to unforeseen circumstances unaware of our overall density and further more we are unsighted as to movements in and out of each union overall. We need to develop a simple method of calculating our membership figures and establish a process for conversion to a spatial format so that membership mapping is seen as a map.

**Resources:** FCTU staff time needed to bring our present system up to date and then make use of GIS technology to view the data in a spatial format. Some training in GIS may be required to bring our skills up to speed with these mapping tools.

Allan said that the unions must take every opportunity to recruit new members but added that this will require a concerted effort. He stressed that active members must be given clear leadership in how this is achieved and that the unions have to be more vigorous in recruitment by looking at what works elsewhere, current best practice techniques and following up on those who resist the initial recruitment proposition. Allan advised that the PCS Silvan House BEC will be meeting with the Scottish Organiser to work on recruitment techniques, and that initially Silvan House will be used as a testing ground.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a meeting would be held between the DC and organisers from each of the four national unions. Allan asked that contact details for each organiser are sent to the FCTU office.

### **Action Required: Roy Laird, Lorraine Adams, Robert Beaney**

The group agreed that the unions must demonstrate relevance and continue to raise the profile of the unions, especially on a local level using more face to face contact with potential members. Sue felt that they needed to revamp the message of what the unions do, how they do it and who they do it for to generate more enthusiasm for joining a union. Lorraine felt that the FCTU needed to remove the ambiguity as to which union staff should be joining and that they should be able to give a clear indication on what union is best suited for them. The group agreed.

Roy was concerned that staff may not be differentiating between the Forestry Commission and the Forestry Commission Trade Unions and questioned the strength of the brand and profile of the FCTU and it was agreed that further discussed was required.

Sue advised that she would look into preparing a detailed breakdown of the locations of non members as this would be useful for a more focussed recruitment push.

**Action Required: Sue Gillingwater**

#### **8. Flexibility Savings**

Allan presented a draft letter to be sent to Director HR, asking if any significant savings were identified when the FC took the decision not to pursue any form of efficiency saving flexibility during the pay remit. Allan said that there had been considerable discussion about the FC's use of contractors (consultants/agency staff) and the FCTU applauds the new skills that they bring to the organisation. However, the letter states that members are concerned these appointments have not only been ongoing for a number of years but that the opportunity for the transference of skills has not been taken up or full time employment been offered to individuals. The DC agreed that rather than being restricted to a particular area of the organisation, the issue is widespread and in some instances is difficult to be identified. The committee were also concerned that the completion of the procurement process for the contracts currently in place may not have been as diligent as it could have been and so could leave the FC exposed. It was agreed that they attempt to enter into a dialogue to try to identify the extent of contractor services currently employed in the FC as a whole and to identify where possible any further efficiency savings, which may be available.

Following discussion, Sue agreed that she would make amendments to the draft letter. Allan said that it would then be sent to HR and that he would forward the response when received.

**Action Required: Sue Gillingwater, Allan MacKenzie**

#### **9. AOB**

There were no further items to be added to the agenda.