



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> JULY, FL1 RM4, IN SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

<b>Present:</b>	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan MacKenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Lorraine Adams	Prospect
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Mary Irvine	PCS
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Office
	Helen Paterson (item 4)	HR Policy
	Lindsay MacPherson (item 4)	HR Operations
	Kirstie Brady (item 5)	Learning & Development
<b>Minute Secretary</b>	Sam Telford	FCTU Office

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Malcolm Currie.

**2. Minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

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

**3. FCTU AGM**

Allan confirmed that the AGM was arranged for 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September, however due to a clash with the England Staff Council this needed to be postponed. It was agreed that Sam would confirm a date with the DC and Area Committees following the meeting.

The group noted that Robert and Allan would discuss the format of the AGM and report back to the group, however Allan said that the meeting would mostly be formal and consist of an introduction from the Chair, a report on work done over the last 12 months from the Secretary and Area Committees and a discussion on the FCTU Strategic Issues Programme and AC constitution.

**Action Required: Robert Beaney, Allan MacKenzie**

**4. Grievance Procedure**

Robert welcomed Lindsay MacPherson and Helen Paterson to the meeting to discuss the release of the Grievance Policy and Procedure. Allan said the DC felt that the new Grievance Policy and Procedure had not been given the due consideration that the committee hoped for and that Lindsay and Helen had been invited to the meeting to allow the committee to voice their concerns to HR. Allan said the DC were concerned that there had been a great deal of emphasis put on the Discipline Policy and Procedure, which the committee commended however the Grievance documents were minimal in their content and the FCTU were given very little time to give feedback. The DC felt that their comments had not fully been taken into account and that the documents were issued before the FCTU were ready to agree on them. Allan said that HR will be going through many policy reviews and if the FCTU are to engage with HR during the reviews, more time is needed and that there needs to be more dialogue between both sides during the consultation.

Helen agreed that the consultation on Grievance had not worked well and that there was absolutely no expectation from HR that this would be a way in which they would repeat their

consultation with the FCTU. Helen said that HR must look to ensure that when policies are being developed and reviewed, they are building in enough time to engage with the FCTU in a constructive way. Helen said that HR and the FCTU will not always agree but by working together through proper consultation, the end result can be something that both sides are comfortable with. She said HR will look to engage with them from the very start of reviews in order to build in effective consultation and to allow the FCTU to acquire feedback from members on the policies that affect them. Allan said the FCTU promotes the fact that members have the ability to change FC Policy and that their opportunity is during the consultation therefore the Unions require a realistic timescale to fully consult with members. Lindsay and Helen acknowledged the importance of this. It was noted that Allan would be working closely with HR on the consultation process.

Following further discussion on the Grievance documents, it was agreed that HR would review the comments on the policy and submit a new draft back to the FCTU for consultation. Helen said that she was also keen to review the Policy and Procedure and reopen discussions in 12 months. The DC agreed that this was the best way forward.

## 5. Staff Survey

The committee welcomed Kirstie Brady from Learning & Development, who would be rolling out the Staff Survey in September. Kirstie advised that a working group had been set up to assess if the questions from the 2005 survey were still fit for purpose and said that Allan was on the group representing the FCTU. Kirstie said that the working group wanted to ensure that they would be able to compare the answers of the new survey to the previous survey, therefore there would be no major changes other than terminology and in way in which some questions are asked. Kirstie added that there would be new optional questions surrounding the six strands of diversity - data which has never been gathered before. She confirmed that the survey would be run 100% online and that following discussion with Allan and Sam in May, they agreed that all staff would be given the opportunity to complete the survey and said that all cost centre managers had given nominations for local survey champions to facilitate the process. Kirstie recognised that there will likely be issues with literacy, IT competence and language barriers but said that she was working on how best to support individuals with any problems gaining access and completing the survey and she welcomed feedback or suggestions from the Unions during the process. Allan said that the FCTU fully endorse the staff survey and that they will look to assist members to enable them to take part. He advised that the FCTU will analyse results of the survey, looking at them from both a GB and Country level with the Area Committees.

The group discussed what was needed for the FCTU section of the survey it was agreed that the final questions would be sent to Kirstie following the meeting.

**Action Required: Sam Telford**

## 6. FCTU Strategic Issues Programme

Allan referred to an email from HR regarding the **Harmonisation of Leave Years** – which stated *'We agreed that we will explain to staff that this was considered and why it was rejected at the time of Unification, and that we have now revisited the issues and decided the time is right to make the change. With effect from 1 April 2010 all staff would be moved onto an April to March leave year. Those currently on other leave years will receive a pro-rata interim leave allowance this year and then their full allowance from April.'*

*To avoid hardship, staff in those other leave years will be permitted to anticipate additional leave from their 2010/11 allowance. Similarly, they will be allowed to bank any unused leave from their interim allowance as at 1 April 2010'*

Allan advised that HR were planning to introduce **Buying/Selling of Annual Leave**, by using a trial period for three years allowing staff to buy/sell up to 2 days leave in any leave year (or the pro-rata equivalent for part-time staff). Allan raised concern that experience in other Departments suggests in broad terms the low paid typically sell their leave and the better paid buy more leave. He said that after a three year pilot HR were planning to review the take-up, including analysis by pay band and gender etc. Roy concurred with Allan's concerns and

following discussion it was agreed that the DC would have to consult with the constituent Unions to determine if they could support HR's proposal or not. Allan asked that this was carried out as soon as possible in time for the next meeting.

**Action Required: Roy Laird, Mary Irvine, Lorraine Adams, Robert Beaney**

Allan said that HR were also reviewing the **Banking of Annual Leave** due to concerns that leave banking arrangements may be being misused by staff who are not able or willing to use their annual allowance. He said that HR were pulling together proposals and that they would be discussed with the FCTU at a later date, however Allan said HR wanted to present the three potential changes in leave as a 'package' of measures i.e. announce the changes of Harmonising, Banking and Buying/Selling together.

**Threats To The Forest Estate** – Robert advised that Andy had been considering political threats to the estate and financial difficulties in England. Robert said he has asked for a strategic view as to where these threats will come from and further thought on sustainability and the future of FC jobs. Allan said that Andy will be involved with FCTU England in working on the Public Forest Estate Study and Operational Efficiency Programme.

**Communication** – Roy advised that he had contacted Radio & Electronics Branch to ask if a system was in place that allowed text messages to be sent to all or groups of FC staff. Lynn Ford had advised that there was a company they were registered with who provide this service, however this was noted to be costly. Roy said that he could however be provided with a list of FC mobile numbers if required.

**Harassment & Bullying** – It was agreed that the committee would reassess H&B following the staff survey.

**Occupational Health & Safety Reps** – Robert thanked Lorraine for the paper on the Essential Health & Safety Awareness course in FR. Lorraine said she would enquire into costs.

**Efficiency Programmes** – It was noted that Lorraine and Mary would be meeting later in the month to discuss.

**Recruitment** – Lorraine reminded the committee that a meeting was to be held between the DC and organisers from each of the Unions. Sam said he had contact details for organisers in PCS, GMB and Unite and Lorraine advised she would contact the organiser in Prospect.

**Area Committees** – Sue advised that she was revising the 2008 review of the Area Committees. Sue said there would be an emphasis on demonstrating relevance and raising the profile whilst looking at the constitutions, roles and facility time agreement. Sue said that the ACs were undergoing an election process and said it was vital that reps on the committees understand what they are taking on and the commitment involved. The DC concurred. Sue added that she was acting Secretary for FCTU England and that Allan was acting Chair.

## **7. England Reviews**

Allan said that the PFE study in England was live and active and that the consultation period was underway, with online resources available to allow people to put their views forward and regional events for which key stakeholders were invited to engage with the consultation. He added that there were also staff meetings being held and that Dominic Driver was providing information to the FCTU on the study. Allan advised that the study itself will not alter terms and conditions but the outcomes from recommendations enacted by the Minister may do, and the danger for Union members is to do nothing now and then have to react to outcomes that members did not try to influence when we were given the chance. Allan said that FCTU England had work to do to ensure as many members as possible send a response and that they would be putting forward their own response forward as was done against the leasing proposal in Scotland.

Allan reported that the Operational Efficiency Programme (OEP) was also running. He expressed concern that dangers were involved in this programme as it is looking at getting greater commercial benefit, which will likely put pressure on the FC to become more commercial. He said that a paper that was presented to the England Staff Council broke FC

England's activities into five strands and that there would be a working group looking at each strand in their commercial aspects. Allan said FCTU England felt that there are fundamental dangers in looking at these strands in isolation and that they would be alerting members to these concerns and what it means for them. Allan advised that the OEP was being run by Simon Hodgson in partnership with Executive Stakeholders and that he would be asking for information share on work streams. He said that this will form part of the pre-budget statement in November therefore whatever comes out of the OEP will be Government policy and the FCTU need to ensure that the FC is not in any way disadvantaged by the process.

In response to a question from Lorraine, Allan said that the Period of Reflection meeting in Cambridge would be held on 30<sup>th</sup> July in the Cabinet Office with Jean Lindsay, Sarah England, and Ian Lamb from the management side, Allan, Crispin Thorn and Stuart Grainger from the FCTU and Charles Cochrane from the CCSU. Allan said that the Cabinet Office will ask the FC what they have done, how they have managed to avoid potential redundancies, what they have put in place to attempt to redeploy people and what training has been given etc. Allan said if the Cabinet Office or Unions are not satisfied with the answers then the Period of Reflection could go on for a number of weeks.

## **8. AOB**

### **8.1 Funding**

Roy referred to the Forestry Unions Action Group account and said it had been some time since any of the Unions added funds to it. Following discussion it was agreed that the DC would consider ways of raising funds and that it would be discussed further at the next meeting.

**Action Required**