



MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER, FL1 RM3, IN SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present:	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan MacKenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Lorraine Adams	Prospect
	Mary Irvine	PCS
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Audrey Campbell	Unite
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Network Manager
Minute Secretary	Sam Telford	FCTU Network Support

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Malcolm Currie and Danny Williamson.

2. Minutes of 19th August 2009

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

3. Matters Arising

3.1 FCTU AGM

Allan said that the evening meeting on 24th November would focus on recruitment and it was agreed that Lorraine and Roy would forward Prospect and GMB DVDs to Allan.

Action Required: Lorraine Adams, Roy Laird

In response to a question from Roy on the constitution for the AGM, Allan advised that he would check the relevant section of the FCTU constitution.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie

It was noted that Sue would be writing out to the Area Committees to stress the importance of attending the AGM.

Action Required: Sue Gillingwater

3.2 FUAG Funding

Robert said that Roy had raised the subject of joint unions funding at a previous meeting and the constituent unions were asked to consider ways of raising funds for the account. Lorraine and Robert advised that funding would be available from Prospect and Unite. Mary said that she was awaiting a response from the PCS Group Treasurer and would report back. Roy proposed that £500 should be the target figure and the committee agreed.

4. FCTU Action Plan

Allan referred to the Action Plan paper and said that it was created to show what activities the FCTU Office were engaged in and to keep the DC informed as to where they are with particular tasks, who it involved and what the priorities are. Allan said that it was up for discussion and proposed that the DC go through the document in detail, checking that they are happy with the content and priorities.

The committee discussed each element of the document and the following action points were noted:

Action Required:

Allan to modify the format so that updates are clearly defined and easy to track.

Facility Time

Roy Laird to seek out and send to Sue a paper giving the breakdown of facility time allocation for specific reps.

Communication

Allan to send draft Christmas Slasher article to DC members.

Reviews

Lorraine to act as the FCTU representative on the FC Diversity Forum.

Lorraine and Mary to contact BU to ensure correct protocols are followed.

Sue to send FCTU document template to Mary and Lorraine.

5. FCTU Strategic Issues Programme

The committee discussed progress on each strand of the Strategic Issues Programme being dealt with in 2009/10.

Threats to the Forest Estate - Allan said that as current threats to the Forest Estate were in England, FCTU England would be dealing with all related issues. Robert added that if the threats became national due to a political shift then the DC would look to nominate a lead rep.

Communication – It was noted that the communication strategy was being formulated in the FCTU Action Plan and that when this was completed, Roy would be able to take a lead on delivery. Roy asked that the FCTU branding was added to the Communication Strategy section of the SIP and Action Plan. This was agreed.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie

Harassment & Bullying – The DC agreed had previously agreed that H&B would be reassessed following the staff survey.

Occupational Health – Robert said that the H&S meeting with Emily Ramsay had taken place and that he would be meeting again to finalise the structure of the bespoke training course for reps. He said he would also be meeting with Lorraine to discuss Forest Research experiences with their H&S training and it would be taken forward from there.

Efficiency Reviews – Mary said that a letter had been sent to the Director General, highlighting the FCTU's concerns. The DG had however advised Mary and Lorraine to write to the HR Business Partners and Mary said another letter and terms of reference had been drafted. It was agreed that Sue would send an FCTU headed template to Mary and Lorraine in order for the letter to be formalised.

Action Required: Sue Gillingwater, Mary Irvine

Recruitment – Lorraine said that an organising meeting with the full time officials would be set up and that she aimed to have a date confirmed by the next meeting. Allan reminded the DC that they were asked to draft ten reasons to join a union. Lorraine asked that they consider new reasons as to why someone would join and try to steer away from the typical promotion of pay and pension related reasons. It was agreed that the drafts would be sent to Sam for collation in time for the next meeting.

Action Required: All

Absence Management – The DC discussed the recent analysis of absence records that were released and Allan said that with the results of the staff survey, the FCTU may need to write a paper to the Departmental Staff Council to raise concerns.

Area Committees – Sue said that the review was ongoing, with FCTU Research and England being the current main priorities and said that the DC would be kept up to date with progress at each meeting.

6. Departmental Staff Council

Robert said that the DSC would be held on 4th November and asked that agenda items were submitted to Allan by 8th October.

7. England Reviews

Allan reported that the consultation for the Public Forest Estate Study would end on 28th September and that FCTU England's draft response was available on the FCTU website and would be finalised following the DC meeting and submitted.

Allan gave an update on the Operational Efficiency Programme and said that the next England Staff Council would take place on 1st October, at which FCTU England would be looking to find out more information on the programme. It was noted that members were being kept informed on the study and OEP via the FCTU Website.

Allan said that the 2nd Period of Reflection meeting for the Cambridge Office closure confirmed that a further member had agreed to acquiesce and one member had secured another role within the wider civil service. He said the meeting therefore focussed on identifying actions to support the remaining two staff seeking redeployment and this included discussing potential options with other civil service employers and the identifying support available from HR.

Allan detailed the key points, which included:

1. The collective concerns over the proposed changes / consultation to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. If this is introduced anyone departing after March 2011 could potentially end up on the new terms. The aim is that anyone departing before this time would depart on the existing terms (the FCTU were awaiting formal confirmation). The CCSU are considering a Judicial Review on the changes if they are imposed as detailed in the consultation.

2. Management attempted to refuse to consider those staff who fall under the mobile category as forming part of the PoR process. The FCTU argued that the mobility clause could be challenged and that management are using this as a mechanism to reduce the redundancy terms of individuals from compulsory to voluntary early severance. The Cabinet Office stated that it is normal to try and consider all staff involved in the closure although the PoR meeting was not there to address the specifics of how the mobility clause is being implemented.

3. The FCTU welcomed and supported the proactive approach to seeking effective redeployment. This was particularly important given the redundancy notice date of the 24 November 2009. The FCTU also highlighted the need to secure the terms of those wishing leave through redundancy.

Following discussion, Mary advised that she would confirm if the Abolition of Office rules still apply and report back to the next DC meeting.

Action Required: Mary Irvine

8. Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS)

Allan reported that the CCSU have now approached their lawyers to invoke a judicial review and that this would happen as soon as possible after the close of the consultation on 5th October. Allan said that the unions had asked their members to send their objections to the Cabinet Office and that PCS had been copied into around 7000 responses. He said that the proposals were causing serious concern for FC staff, particularly in Cambridge and FAS at the moment. It was noted that although the FCTU will support members with issues, initial enquiries were being dealt with by the HR Pensions Officer.

Allan said that members would be kept up to date via the FCTU website and said that a number of PCS branch meetings were taking place.

9. Mandatory Retirement Age

Robert referred to the paper on the removal of the Mandatory Retirement Age and said it had been prepared following a meeting between HR Policy and the FCTU in August which considered the work required to remove the mandatory retirement age for staff (below the Senior Civil Service) by March 2010 and instigate dialogue on the implications this may have. Allan asked that the DC obtain feedback from the constituent unions on the paper and report back at the next meeting.

Action Required: Senior Lay Reps

10. Swine Flu

Allan said that swine flu had been a topic at the last Efra Trade Union Network meeting and trigger points on sick absence records was discussed. Allan said that he had written to HR to ask if they planned to suspend trigger points for staff who had been diagnosed with swine flu and said he would report back.

11. Risk Assessment

Allan reported that he had recently attended an HR Health & Safety meeting, at which the lack of risk assessment in HR had been flagged up. Allan felt that the FCTU needed to recognise the importance of risk assessment, be much better at managing risk and ensuring people on union activity are safe. He said that everyone should be aware of the health and safety guidelines for meeting rooms and offices and that risk assessments should be completed for outward journeys. Following discussion it was agreed that generic FCTU risk assessments could be made and it was noted that Lorraine would forward her risk assessment papers to Sue.

Action Required: Lorraine Adams

12. AOB

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