



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2008, IN SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

Present:	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan MacKenzie	PCS
	Andy Phillips	FCTU Wales
	Peter Fullarton	FCTU Scotland
	Glenn Brearley	FCTU Research
	Alistair Gillies	FCTU Business Units
	Edward Shephard	FCTU Secretary
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Office
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Malcolm Crosby	PCS
	Andrew Stewart	Prospect
	Mary Irvine	FCTU Silvan House

Minute Secretary: Sam Telford FCTU Office

Apologies:	Barbara Anglezarke	FCTU Wales
	John Winterbourne	FCTU England
	Tim Gill	Unite
	James McDonald	GMB

1. Introduction

Robert welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Council gave their best wishes to John Winterbourne for a full recovery from illness.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from those detailed above.

3. Minutes of 25th June 2008

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

4. Matters Arising

Council had no further issues to raise.

5. Election of FCTU Secretary

Robert expressed a big thanks to Edward for the excellent work he has done as FCTU Secretary over the last nine years and the support he has given him. Robert said that Edward had taken the joint unions a long way forward and Council concurred. Edward said that he had thoroughly enjoyed his time as Secretary and felt that the joint unions had achieved a great deal in this time. Allan added that he had always found Edward to be highly professional and forthright in defending members' interests, and going that extra mile to obtain the many benefits that members require. Council wished Edward a happy and prosperous future.

Robert advised that the procedure was to now to select Edward's successor and there was 1 nomination, Allan MacKenzie. **Council voted unanimously in favour of electing Allan as**

FCTU Secretary. Allan will take up post on a date to be agreed between himself, Edward and Robert.

Allan said that he was honoured to be nominated for the post and was very pleased with the vote of confidence Council had given him. He said that he looked forward to the challenge that the post will bring and stated that he will strive to ensure that the FCTU operates effectively and efficiently and that it remains fit for purpose. Allan felt strongly that this was a team effort and stressed the importance of the FCTU Office and reps throughout the organisation working on members' behalf. Allan hoped that over the next few years the FCTU would see greater benefits for members such as fair pay for all and greater equality.

6. FCTU Constitution

Robert referred to the draft constitution circulated prior to the meeting and following discussion Council unanimously endorsed the paper and **agreed** to adopt the new constitution from the close of this meeting.

Edward advised that under the new constitution, the FCTU was moving away from the larger periodic standing committees to a more dynamic method of working, and that over the last few years the focus of GB joint union work has switched to the Core Group. He said that the constitution was now looking to strengthen the role of the Core Group and build a stronger link to the Area Committees into this.

7. Core Group Report

Robert and Allan provided Council with a summary of the key issues being dealt with by the Core Group. Minutes of Core Group meetings can be found at:

<http://www.fctu.org.uk/AboutUs.asp>

8. Area Committee Reports

Members from each Area Committees gave an update on issues in their area for information.

Information on the Area Committees and minutes of meetings can be found at:

<http://fctu.org.uk>

9. Pay 2008

The group held a confidential discussion on the details of the pay negotiations. Edward reported that in an informal meeting, management had outlined what the main elements of this year's offer might be and indicated that they were still awaiting approval from Treasury. It was noted that the next pay negotiations meeting would take place on 21st October.

10. FC Finances

Edward said that Shared Services had received a budget settlement. He reported that FC England and Forest Research were the problem areas and gave an update to Council on the financial concerns.

Malcolm reported that the Scotland Conservancy Staff Council had received a briefing from management advising of a £4m deficit in Forest Enterprise, due to the rise in fuel prices and a drop in timber income.

11. Discipline and Grievance Processes

Edward confirmed that outline agreement had been made on the principle of delegation to unit managers to handle issues of serious and gross misconduct and for appeals to be handled at senior management level. He said that they were yet to agree on some processes involved such as issues surrounding investigations and the disclosure of paperwork throughout the process. Edward said that he would be meeting with HR later in the week to discuss issues further.

12. PCS National Campaign

Allan provided Council with an update to the PCS National Campaign. He reported that the National Ballot from 24th September to 17th October will be for discontinuous strike action and discontinuous action short of a strike, such as an overtime ban. Allan said that negotiations

are still ongoing but a YES vote will allow PCS to step up the pressure on the employer and pay. Allan listed the hard fought successes in the campaign so far:

- Successful defence of the pension scheme
- The Government announced the abolishment of sick pay in the first days of sick absence and this was prevented.
- The recently endorsed job security national agreement provides additional protection against the threat of redundancy and subjects privatisation plans to scrutiny and negotiation.
- Recent pay awards have been short of bargaining objectives but pay settlements broadly matched inflation until 2007.

Allan reported that PCS have used the inflationary crisis to ensure that Ministers fully understand the mess that they have made of Civil Service pay bargaining and why it is the Civil Service is losing its real value even faster than other parts of the public sector.

It was noted that the Council of Civil Service Unions wrote to Treasury Chief Secretary and the Cabinet Office Minister, seeking urgent talks about changes to the Pay Remit Guidance for 2008 and Allan summarised the demands made for changing the pay regime. Council heard that the unions met the Chief Secretary on July 15th to have detailed discussions and no positive response to the core issues was made, and that the promised reply to the CCSU letter has yet to be received. Allan confirmed that Gus O'Donnell would not give assurances on pay therefore the pressure on the employer must be increased.

Allan advised that if PCS members vote YES in the ballot, the union will call for action and that there will be one or possibly two days for national strike action.

13. DG's Report

The item was not discussed.

14. Any Other Urgent Business

14.1 Performance Management

Robert reported that he had attended the first of the PMS Working Group meetings and that results of the survey had been posted with 500 responses. He said that the Working Group intended to create an entirely new system, abolishing all elements of the previous system. Robert added that it would be simpler, user friendly, less time consuming, without performance related pay and with a strong link to the Competency Framework.

Robert said that the group recognised that the current system was not bought into or accepted by staff in the lower Pay Bands. He encouraged Council members to obtain feedback from staff in Pay Bands 5-7 and ask them specifically what they would look for in performance management that would give them confidence in the system.

Allan felt that although the system can be made more transparent and fair, it was vital that there is also cultural change in the Forestry Commission for the system to function. Robert concurred and said that it was a key issue and that was being discussed in detail with the Working Group.

14.2 Staff Benefits

Malcolm gave Council a summary of the discussion at a Benefits Focus Group meeting in September. He felt that HR needed to clarify to staff that money from non-pay benefits is not available for salaries. Council agreed that there was a broad lack of knowledge of this and Malcolm confirmed that this was discussed with HR at the meeting.