



FCTU FR MEETING WEDNESDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2009

Present: Glenn Brearley Prospect
Mark Oram PCS
Mike Perks Prospect

Minute Secretary: Lorraine Adams Prospect

Apologies: Nick Fielding Prospect
Joan Webber Prospect
Dave Watterson PCS

1. FCTU FR election process

The election process for the FCTU FR is overdue and this was discussed though it was thought to be difficult to confirm individual's ongoing involvement as we had such a small group for the meeting today. As such it was decided that LA would chair and minute the meeting and that LA would Chair at the Staff Council next week. Despite emailing out to all members there has been no response from any other interested parties in joining the committee. Allan MacKenzie has decided to resign as Chair of our committee as we now have a good relationship for discussions with FR management. It was decided to confirm with everyone who has sat on the FCTU FR in the last year if they wish to continue and that LA would approach Norman Dandy to see if he wished to return. PCS are not currently represented at NRS though it is recognised that Dave Watterson is a PCS member in Scotland.

NB If anyone reading these minutes is interested in joining the FCTU FR please get in touch with Lorraine Adams at Alice Holt or Glenn Brearley at NRS.

2. Draconian Management Style

There has been some small protest at the style of email/wording of management emails/ communications to staff. In particular comments have been made about the screen warning of removing computer facilities if you continue to be 4 or more weeks overdue with entries.

The general feeling of the committee was that TRS is seen as a necessary evil and that we must complete it, however the demonstration of using the information in the system has been quite thin on the ground and this combined with the problems that it has suffered with since the beginning of the year may well be why some people feel disenchanted with it. It was felt that 4 weeks was a suitable cut off point for action of some sort. It was discussed that a joint FCTU FR and management note to staff to encourage this behaviour could be a useful tool to get everyone on board, and reduce the need for the treat of cutting of computer facilities. The 2½ day window in which to enter your time data before the roll over was thought to be far too short, especially considering the transactional costs involved in re-entry of all project

numbers; these costs surely add up with the more senior pay bands as they are out of the office most often.

The tone of the original email regarding the security training has been received badly by some but given the additional information received at the all staff meetings that this was a government target and had been opposed as much as possible before roll out, made this message clearer. And the reminder was thought to be not particularly threatening.

The FREB agenda for November regarding the discussion and action taken after the publication of the staff survey been seen as a little insensitive as it reads “action required following staff survey (if any)”.

Given the importance placed on the completion of the mid year review and subsequent timetable for final review and FJP for next year it was queried how non completion would be addressed and it was thought that this was discussed at the November FREB meeting. Feedback would be requested during the Staff Council.

3. Business Planning

Business planning and finances was discussed extensively especially in line with TRS. It was felt that the implementation of a freeze on M&S and T&S was as a result of successful reporting from TRS and it would be good for staff to see some positive action coming from the data entry into the system and see sensible figures coming out. Financial control is eventually supposed to be under the job heading of the programme heads but the communication and the rollout timetable of this is missing. There is a general lack of information coming out about finances, field stations are unable to extract information, there is a lack of clarity in the job number structure and the terminology used to define work groups is unclear.

The TRS system was not fully operational at the start of the financial year and as such some of the job codes used initially are now inaccurate, how will the transfer of this time etc be handled considering the transactional costs that will be incurred if relatively expensive project leaders have to find and change this data. There was a bottle neck in getting new numbers in the system in April and this also caused some incorrect logging of time.

The spreadsheet of chargeable days is now available but from the information contained it is clear that not all project leaders have completed the business plan process, and in others it is clear that there is not enough funding to cover the business plan. TSU have not seen a single project planning spreadsheet and are working on pre year and mid year requests for TSU support and as such requests for additional staff do not meet up with project planning spreadsheets which is being used to inform this decision.

Next year there will need to be much more communication about funding and work programmes including a schedule for updating a business/project plan and a formal process to inform TSU that there is the budget for work in the individual plans. Also when new money comes in for a project, information needs to filter down from finance to all interested parties to enable updating of work plans and the record of chargeable days. There needs to be improved functionality and integration of the 2 systems (TRS and business plans) so that up to date information is available.

Given that the staff number was predicted to be 230 in the business plan and FR currently stands at 250 how is this imbalance being addressed. It would seem easier for managers to reduce our staff complement than it would be to have 250 staff with fully allocated days. Therefore, is this what is being targeted? There was also a question as to whether the number of chargeable days for staff in pay bands would be reassessed and bench marked for next year.

4. Annual Leave

A Staff notice regarding the changes to annual leave has been issued, it is thought that there are a number of FR staff who have been applying a 50 day bank in addition to their current leave year allowance. With staff needing to take their holiday or lose it in the next 3 years how does FR intend to manage this within the Business plan to ensure that this is possible and is in line with individual's chargeable days, a discussion about ensuring that business plans are created in line with everyone being able to take all their leave and use their TOIL would also be appropriate at this time, especially given that TRS should now provide us with suitable data to ensure that projects are properly financed and resourced.

5. Post Filling Procedures

With the introduction of e-recruitment and the devolved nature of creating and advertising appointments it is thought that a reminder is necessary to management that new positions must be sent through for FCTU FR consultation PRIOR to advertising and this also includes formalising posts after a period of casual employment. A discussion about this is thought appropriate to have at the next FREB meeting.

6. Promotion Procedures

Promotion Procedures are still not fully signed off as negotiated and the procedures have been used twice since the impasse was reached. The interim procedures will be posted in new Staff Handbook format shortly and when agreement is reached changed and set into plain English for publication. It is now an appropriate time to look at them again and take forward member feedback and suggestions to the Staff Council as was agreed in the first meeting with James Pendlebury. This has been timetables for the first Staff Council meeting in 2010.

7. Next Staff Council

The next staff council will be held in Monday 7th December and will be attended by Glenn Brearley, Mike Perks, Lorraine Adams, Nick Fielding and Joan Webber with apologies from Dave Watterson and Mark Oram. Peter Freer Smith is no longer an appropriate member of these meetings and Hugh Williams will be taking his place.