

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 18TH AUGUST 2011

Present:	Antony Griffiths	Chair
	Chris Edwards	PCS
	Barbara Anglezarke	Prospect
	StJohn Ashworth	PCS
	Eric Williams	UNITE
	Gavin Queen	Prospect
	Mike Kennett	Unite
	Richard Davies	PCS
	Rhian Evans	PCS
Minute Secretary:		
Apologies:	John Williams	UNITE
	Chris Tucker	UNITE
	Paul Finch	PCS
	Allan Mackenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Alan Hubbuck	PCS
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Office
	Tony Egan	Prospect

1. Introduction

2. SEB Background

First meeting January, April then once a month. Lot of information not widely shared with the FCTU group. Difficult to judge relevancy. Meetings are a 'tick box' exercise, not divulging much info. Matthew Quinn no right to discuss anything, just passing information on.

Could be too late when a CEO is appointed. Programme papers have come through this morning. Unsure whether full time union officers have them. AG representing PCS for FCW, Nia Blackwell for CCW, EA don't have combined union meetings such as FCTU. People attending from the different unions, only one from UNISON so all unions not represented for EA.

Robert Beaney and AM agreed that AG shouldn't have decision making powers from attending the meetings. BA said there are outstanding questions that need to be asked, and GQ said that maybe there should be

a full time union official present at these meetings.

It's been difficult to engage PCS at this level, and it is unclear how PCS can reflect the three bodies' views as they may be different. FCW employees would lose their Civil Servant status, as well as their Civil Service pensions. Why did the pension choices result in saying that it would be too difficult to keep everyone in their current schemes but it was too expensive to bring EA up to that level. Many different schemes within the WG, so why should it be too difficult to keep everyone in their own schemes?

Treasury will be asked if everyone can keep their civil service pensions, but it's unclear whether it would be frozen and a new scheme taken up or carry on as it is. Concern about keeping a job never mind a pension after the merger. Concern about foresters being unable to try for jobs in other areas ending up in a pool with very few opportunities. AG has been told that there will be plenty of opportunities in the new body but roles could change.

CE said that MQ has said that the government would benefit from having a pool of forestry knowledge and experience of UK forestry. No negotiation available at the moment through the forum, the only other way is through ministers, press etc. Are they legally obliged to consult with unions before the decision is made? This needs to be confirmed so that a challenge can be made as it's not being mentioned during this process of decision making.

There is a need to find a way to influence the minister that taking the FCW into the SEB won't work. We do the work to fulfil the targets and this is for the minister, so he should be told that. RD says that in the Labour manifesto it is stated that the three bodies will be combined in one new body.

A meeting will be arranged with Edwina Hart who has expressed concern at the impact of FCW being pulled into the SEB will have on her role. This will be a joint meeting with ConFor. Kath McNulty has met Edwina Hart previously so it is suggested that she arranges the meeting. AG, BA and CT have a meeting arranged with Elin Jones AM, who is fairly close to Edwina Hart. Direct contact with ministers is the best chance of influencing the decision, not through the forum. Director Wales has written to the minister stating why FCW shouldn't be part of the SEB.

Political questions need to be asked and this is where PCS could come in. If FCTU don't want to get involved, which would be the best option, PCS could do this. BA wants us as a group to gather our thoughts as to why this is a bad idea and sign up to it. Peter Harris will facilitate an FCTU or PCS member sitting on the panel of the Labour party.

Too much for one full time person to do, need to keep getting together and sharing what we know. BA said we need to agree how to work together and stick to it. Constituent unions have a role to play but there's nothing to stop other unions 'borrowing' an idea.

FCTU can't really work if constituent unions are going different ways. Need to work to ensure consistency in views etc. Public support would probably be strong if the emphasis is on potential loss of access to recreation in the woodlands, not terms and conditions for staff.

Equality Impact Assessment needs to be flagged up as it's likely to be women losing posts from shared services. Conference on 26th September when the minister will be answering questions about the SEB. Need to get questions prepared for then.

Other business

Contact Centre – Not a full complement of staff appointed. This was promised when the centre was moved to National Office. To be raised with Steve Burton and then escalated to SC if no reply is forthcoming. Were the FTA's with the option of permanency? Switchboard operators should have knowledge of the organisation, and this can't happen if the jobs keep changing.

Classification of Welsh essential. There is a rumour that this will be downgraded, but then posts in districts are being pushed up with Welsh essential. Gradings need to be discussed and agreed.

Gwydyr Uchaf – Staff to be moved to new WG building in Llandudno Junction. Gwydyr Uchaf is to be sold. A report was put together in 2010 looking at options in the Llanrwst area, e.g upgrading GU, space available for renting. The conclusion was that it was not recommended to move staff to Ll. Junc. If that was the summary of that report, why has it been ignored and the decision taken to move them? Also the timing – unknown what will happen with SEB so why not wait?

Accommodation in National Office – Should be 8 desks for 10 people, only had your own desk if you were completely office based or had a special need to have your own desk. Majority do not have their own desk. Breakout areas were provided so that people could sit and eat food there or have a break etc. There are more people there now, so a meeting table is to be taken away and another 8 desks placed there.

This will have a significant impact on the staff, and the answer would be to rent more floor space. This is being imposed on staff, they haven't been consulted. Tables are not in yet, so staff are asking FCTU to take it forward as an example of the MB ignoring any consultation again. – AG to write a letter to SB, copying Shaun Mather in.

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