

**MINUTES OF THE 1st FORMAL MEETING OF THE ENGLAND STAFF COUNCIL
HELD ON 20 APRIL 2005 AT RUTLAND SQUARE HOTEL, NOTTINGAM.**

Present: Official Side

Paul Hill Tout, Chairman
Ken Milsom
Rod Leslie
Pauline Marchington, Secretary

Trade Union side:

Tim Gill, Vice Chairman
Mick Hoban
Dick Gossling
John Winterbourne
John Broatch
Martin Johnston
Julie Saunders

1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

Paul Hill-Tout welcomed everyone to this formal TU briefing. Apologies were received from Crispin Thorn and John Scotney. Tim Gill said other TU members were not in a position to come but the papers for this meeting had been copied to them for information. Everyone at the table then introduced themselves.

2. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

Paul Hill-Tout apologised for the delay in getting out the notes from the meeting held on 18 January. The following points were clarified.

- a. Para 2.2 – Paul Hill -Tout said this statement referred to the principle evolving in England and to practical ways it will be put in to effect.
- b. Para 3.9 – The paper, promised for February/March, is being drafted by Ken Milsom & John Scotney.
- c. Para 4 Finance – Dick Gossling asked for clarification on the SSSI bid (4.2). Rod Leslie explained, the FC starts in a strong position managing these areas but the main problem is from Deer damage. However, the FC is in the best position to deal with this problem.

- d. Outcome of 2004 Spending Review – Paul Hill -Tout confirmed Defra is now committed to covering the FC shortfall in timber receipts on a year by year basis for the next 3 years. Adding that the FC has received other grants from ODPM to help support partnerships and he is confident in the FC deliverance of this. He continued, confirming the FCs is committed to the Asset disposal including housing and woodlands. Rod Leslie added the FC is in a strong position here and is ahead of the game for the next FY. Tim Gill said FC key personnel need housing. Mick Hoban said there is increasing awareness in the Rural Agenda for affordable housing in rural areas. Rod Leslie said we can be engaged with Partners or Promoters in offering sites and lands for smaller houses. Martin Johnston asked if the General Election and a possible change of Government would have an affect on the 2004 Spending Review. Paul Hill-Tout confirmed that the FC is locked in to the Spending Review and a change of Government will not effect it.
- e. Para 5.1.6 – Paul Hill-Tout confirmed the Q&A to staff had not been issued but that it will be soon.

3. FUTURE STAFF COUNCIL ARRANGEMENTS IN ENGLAND PAPER 03/05

Tim Gill thanked Ken Milsom for his work on this paper. Mick Hoban said the paper is a useful document and a good vehicle to discuss and develop TU thoughts. Tim Gill proposed future Staff Councils meet twice a year and they are made up from up to 20 people of various grades and locations from FE & FA. A sub committee, involving these representatives will meet first to discuss the issues and then a smaller group will meet the management side later in the day. Paul Hill-Tout said that it would be wrong for him to be involved in FE and FA meetings and should only become involved in the wider discussion but if issues cannot be resolved locally, then it would become a Pan England subject. He added that this proposal has potential. Rod Leslie also said the structure of the proposals is good to build on. Ken Milsom asked how the agenda would be constructed. Paul Hill-Tout suggested that we go in this direction and that a Sub Committee could get together to work on the practical points rather than work on these today. Tim Gill agreed this is the way forward. Ken Milsom suggested that Edward Shephard could be contacted for his advice as he was involved in the setting up of the new Staff Council in Scotland and Wales. Paul Hill-Tout said that the FC meeting on 26 May should be referred to as FA and not FC and in future the Pan England meetings will be called FC. It was agreed that the FA meeting, scheduled for 26 May and the FE meeting on 12th May will go ahead.

Action Ken Milsom & Tim Gill

4. FUTURE ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Paul Hill-Tout said this paper sets out the framework for the organisation's future arrangements. The job descriptions for the 3 Senior posts have been prepared and discussed with the DG. Once the senior posts have been filled the second phase can be worked through with the framework principles. Dick Gosling said the TUS did

not have a chance to discuss the paper at the pre-meeting. It was decided to discuss the full paper at this meeting and to then take the paper forward to the next separate FE & FA TU meetings.

Paul Hill-Tout said the priority is to avoid overloading colleagues with work and to get the vacant positions filled as soon as possible. The first 10 paragraphs update on the operational environment we are working in. Dick Gossling referred to para 9, and said the cultural barriers between FE & FC still have room for improvement at a lower level. Rod Leslie said it is slowly happening. Mick Hoban gave the example of staff changes in both directions in the Yorkshire area and said these changes have been hugely beneficial. Dick Gossling asked for clarification under the heading 'Challenges', point 1. Paul Hill-Tout said the FC cannot become a Trustee for joint ventures. Peter Ranken is currently redeploying most of his time working with lawyers for this to happen through the new Regulatory Reform order. Speaking as a Prospect member, Rod Leslie said that the workloads from Peter Ranken and from Geoff Hatfield leaving is having a serious effect on the workloads of himself and of Paul and it is with some urgency the senior positions need to be advertised. Paul Hill-Tout said the proposed strategy must establish the FC as one body with various delivery mechanisms. The FE will exist as an agency but the FC will be the overarching delivery body. Martin Johnson asked if, in the future there would be a HQ for England based at one location. Paul Hill-Tout said that at the present time there are no plans for this. Rod Leslie said it will be important, when the time comes, to have minimum disruption to staff.

Paul Hill-Tout continued that on finance issues, the post will have wider links to Treasury and the EU and the FC needs proper governance of financial aspects. All 3 senior posts will be advertised externally. The CEO post is presently a SCS1a post and it is right it remains so. The grading of posts for Head of Programmes and Finance will both need to be evaluated. Dick Gossling asked who would deputise for Paul Hill-Tout in his absence. Paul Hill-Tout responded there would be no deputy but the senior management team would have collective responsibility for decisions in his absence and he has full confidence in his colleagues to tackle any issues.

Dick Gossling asked how national programmes will link in future to the Regional Frameworks and is there a clear structure. Paul Hill-Tout replied that there would be a national programme framework within which refinements could be made to address regional priorities but FC needed to follow not attempt to lead the evolution of government policy on regional devolution.

Paul Hill-Tout asked for any other observations on the paper. None were made and it was agreed to endorse the senior posts. Paul Hill-Tout said that the work on the job specifications will begin straight away and copies will be made available to the TUS. Copies will be sent to Julie Saunders.

Tim Gill thanked Paul Hill-Tout for his invitation to the Senate on 19 April and to the TU representatives for what has been achieved today.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged.