

CONSUMER FOCUS: MINUTES OF HR COMMITTEE MEETING No.18

Draft minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 May 2010 at 2.30 - 5.00 pm at Artillery House, Artillery Row, Westminster, London SW1P 1RT

Present

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| Enid Rowlands | (ER) | Chair of Consumer Focus HR Committee |
| Douglas Sinclair | (DS) | Chair, Consumer Focus Scotland |
| Vivienne Sugar | (VS) | Chair, Consumer Focus Wales |
| Rick Hill | (RH) | Chair, Consumer Focus Post, NI |
| Stephen Locke | (SAL) | Board member, Consumer Focus |
| Anna Walker | (AW) | Board member, Consumer Focus |
| Larry Whitty | (LW) | Chair of Consumer Focus Main Board |

In attendance

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|-----------------|--------|---|
| Mike O'Connor | (MO'C) | Chief Executive |
| Philip Cullum | (PC) | Deputy Chief Executive (item 9) |
| Graham Clark | (GC) | Director of Finance and Operations |
| Clare Roach | (CR) | Head of HR |
| Susannah Hughes | (SH) | Head of Secretariat |
| Addea Amoa | (AA) | Internal Communications Manager (item 10) |

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees and opened the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Anna Walker declared an interest re minute 6.5 legal case, although she had had no details or further knowledge of the case since the last meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(19 January 2010)

3.1 No amendments were proposed and the Committee **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2010.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 **Staff/union representation:** the agreement had now been signed and the main partner union was Unite as it had the highest CF staff membership. The Committee welcomed this sign off and the good working relationship established with the union group. The agreement would be circulated to the Committee.

Action: Head of HR

The Committee **NOTED** the matters arising update.

5 HR Update(Paper 5.1)

5.1 **Pay remit and staff appraisal:** The pay remit was successfully implemented and included in the February 2010 pay run. The appraisal scheme previously agreed by the Committee was being implemented: the Committee would receive an update in July and a full

evaluation report in September. The intention was still to link appraisal to pay (PRP) from 2011 and HR would consult with staff and unions, but implementation would clearly be impacted by the public sector pay freeze and any subsequent restraints. The Committee agreed that a working group should set the higher level framework and timeline: a paper would be presented to the next meeting on higher level objectives, ToRs membership and timescales for the working group.

Action: Head of HR

- 5.2 **HR Resourcing:** Ali Doherty and Rob Lake had joined CF as HR managers in May. Recruitment for a third HR Manager, replacing Clare Smith who had left in April, was underway. CR hoped to be able to report that a full, permanent HR team was in place by the next meeting of the Committee.
- 5.3 **Legal case:** The claimant had agreed to mediation, which was set to take place on 16 June 2010.
- 5.4 **Equality Scheme (HR elements):** The Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment system (EDIA) was now being applied across all HR policies. The Equality Act had received Royal Assent on 8 April 2010 and the elements which would impact CF were being identified. Equality and Diversity training was continuing. (see also item 9 below)
- 5.5 **HR Forward Workplan:** In response to previous feedback from the Committee, the document had been revised to show completed and ongoing work, and CR outlined the plan for the period May to July.

The Committee **NOTED** the HR Update.

- 5.6 **Learning and Development Update:** The Committee reviewed the update, which covered the period April 2009-May 2010 and welcomed the increasing activity in learning and development. The Committee agreed that leadership and management development should be viewed as essential for all line managers that all staff should be educated on devolution and programme participation should be accurately recorded and monitored for equality and diversity monitoring purposes. Learning and development would be regularly reviewed by the SMT with an annual report to the Committee. In order to have a complete overview, the Committee asked for a paper in July to include training and development, shadowing, mentoring and CPD; it was suggested that SMT may wish to compare expenditure on training and development with that of similar organisations. Members congratulated the SMT on progress in this area.

Action: Head of HR

The Committee **NOTED** the Learning and Development Update.

6 HR Data and Management Information(Paper 6.1)

- 6.1 The Committee noted that although there were still some anomalies, the quality of information was significantly improved and that further work was being done to ensure accuracy of reporting and encourage take-up of exit interviews. SMT would monitor and evaluate the detail, with HRC reviewing trends. The Committee understood and supported the Chief Executive's decision to freeze recruitment at this time, other than with his express permission in recognition of critical business need.

The Committee **NOTED** the HR Data and Management Information update.

7 HR Policies and Procedures update(Paper 7.1)

- 7.1 The Chief Executive reported that the development of Consumer Focus policies and procedures was proving to be a long and protracted process which was frustrating for staff and left the organisation vulnerable. To drive the process forward in a more timely manner, a new way of consulting with staff and unions had been tried and although the process had mixed reviews, the effect was a real breakthrough in reducing consultation time, resulting in policies being agreed much more speedily, to the benefit of all. The Committee welcomed this development and noted that all policies should be finalised by July 2010 with, as needed, predecessor policies in place until then.
- 7.2 The Committee **NOTED** the HR Policies and Procedures update.

8 HR POLICIES REVIEW(PAPER 8.1)

- 8.1 The review had been suggested to ensure that, in view of the Consumer Focus journey to date, policies were current, consistent and fit for purpose. In addition, with the adoption of the best of the predecessor policies there was a question of affordability and, looking forward there was a further need to ensure robustness in advance of any potential mergers, joint working or redundancies. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee had suggested that, as a capacity issue, internal audit may not be best placed to do this work, hence the proposals in the paper including the possibility of using an employment law or other specialist, or ACAS.
- 8.2 The Committee supported the proposal that a review would be useful and discussed the options set out in the paper. In conclusion, the Committee agreed that the Chief Executive together with the SMT should draft Terms of Reference and timescale. The HR Committee would be circulated for information and comment. The resulting report would be considered by the HR Committee and any relevant matters referred to the Audit and Risk Committee for inclusion onto the Risk Register if need be.

Action: Chief Executive and SMT

- 8.3 The Committee **AGREED** the HR Policies review, to be taken forward by the Chief Executive and SMT.

9 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY UPDATE

- 9.1 The Deputy Chief Executive gave an oral update. A steering group had been formed to take forward the work. The Committee would focus on HR aspects including the Equality and Diversity monitoring framework. The overall policy was a Board-wide responsibility. Equality and diversity training for the Board was being scheduled and the trainer had suggested that this take place in September to take account of Board responsibilities under the Equalities Act. The Committee agreed that Board members also be invited to join any staff training sessions before then, with an additional session for Board only in September. The CF Northern Ireland Post Chair indicated the additional requirements and that the Equality Commission in NI provided training.

Action: Deputy Chief Executive

The Committee **NOTED** the Equalities and Diversity Policy update.

10 STAFF SURVEYS (Paper 10.1)

- 10.1 The Committee considered the results of the Corporate Services Survey and the Employee Engagement Survey. The Committee welcomed the improved results in Corporate Services, and Finance and IT in particular, and GC thanked the Committee for their support during the course of this journey. The Employee Engagement Survey presented challenges for the organisation to address and the Committee had studied it in detail.
- 10.2 The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive had identified the issues very clearly and management responsibilities needed targeted actions. The organisation needed a sense of working in the same direction and the Board needed to provide greater leadership and focus. In the interests of openness and transparency, full results would be published on the intranet and discussed and followed up locally. The Board and management had responsibilities which required follow up and action.

Action: Board and SMT

The Committee **NOTED** the results and finding of the staff surveys.

11 CONSUMER FOCUS RE-STRUCTURE(Paper 11.1)

- 11.1 The Committee had received the paper from the Chief Executive, which provided a good analysis, and was pleased to note that the re-structure had gone ahead smoothly as planned.
- 11.2 The Committee **NOTED** the Consumer Focus re-structure update.

12 BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL

- 12.1 The Committee received an oral update from the Consumer Focus Board Chair who advised that he had almost concluded the current round of appraisal meetings with Board members. The Board Chair would produce a summary for the Board of emerging issues changes to the process could be incorporated at a later date. The Board would have further discussions at the Board dinner that evening and the Joint Boards meeting would provide more clarity on strategy.
- 12.2 The Committee **NOTED** the Board development and appraisal update.

13 HR Committee Terms of Reference (Paper 13.1)

- 13.1 This item was deferred to the July meeting.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 14.1 There was no other business.

15 NEXT MEETING

- 15.1 Tuesday 6 July: 11.30 – 2.00pm, Artillery House

Signatories

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Chair, HR Committee

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Date

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Chief Executive, Consumer Focus

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Date