

MUTUALS TASKFORCE MEETING Thursday 5th May, 2011 22 Whitehall 15.30 – 17.30

MINUTES

Attendees

Vice Chair: Peter Marsh
Nita Clarke
Peter Holbrook
Ed Mayo
Patrick Burns
Donna Fallows
Patrick Lewis
Patrick Lewis
Jo Pritchard

Jonathan Bland (visiting presenter)

Officials

Head of Mutuals Programme Officials from OCS

Apologies

Julian Le Grand Rachel Wolf

Welcome and introductions

• Welcome to Head of Mutuals Programme

Minutes

A one-sider defining public service mutuals requested

DH Right to Request spin outs will be asked directly if they fulfil the public service mutual definition. SEC offered to assist with this if needed.

Cross cutting issues; timings and priority

Issues and priority agreed, but additional issues were raised.

- Blocking by senior managers; the Right to Provide should begin to tackle this.
- Need for expert help to handle deficit in business skills.

- Need to consider the dissemination of information produced, Taskforce members to assist with this.
- Commissioning issues beyond procurement also need to be included.
- Growth and sustainability issues important; need to explore further.

Paper to be updated to reflect comments

Evidence¹

Need to be aware of language when information is being presented to avoid alienating key audience

Need to highlight the 'mutuals difference'.

May need to commission additional research to supplement work and gather evidence from existing mutuals, e.g. Right to Request spin outs and Mutuals Pathfinders.

Papers to be circulated to Taskforce, additional evidence and suggestions for improvement to be submitted by Taskforce members.

Cross cutting barriers- Assets

There wasn't time for this presentation so it will be covered at a future meeting.

Experience from the front line – Donna Fallows

Donna presented her experiences since her social work practice became an employee—owned mutual.

Donna identified the push factors for her and her team:

- Too much bureaucracy
- No room to be creative
- Having to beg for money to do the job

Pull factors were:

- Autonomy
- Ownership
- Ability to work creatively

Working in this way has delivered:

Increased motivation

¹ The Mutuals Taskforce Evidence Paper – *Our Mutual Friends* is available at: http://mutuals.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/

- Return to the passion for the work
- Staff feeling valued and equal
- Exceeding local authority performance indicators

Important factors for success include:

- Good relationship with commissioning local authority
- Support from Tribal to develop business skills
- Able to keep access to pension

Difficulties include:

- Accusations of trying to profit from privatising service; despite being a social enterprise
- Time needed to develop staff trust; over engagement in the initial stages
- Concern over future when current contract ends

Jonathan Bland; an international perspective on mutuals

Jonathan presented his paper 'International lessons for developing public service mutuals'

Discussion focused on issues of:

- Capitalisation
- Assets
- Legal definitions
- Fiscal environment, tax breaks etc.
- Access to support
- Time scales for building viable sector
- EU regulations

One pager to be produced on potential actions for Government; drawn from the evidence of the paper to be submitted to Taskforce

AOB

Taskforce to have an 'away afternoon' June 23rd to explore mutuals position across the Government's agenda, sketch out future timings and bring together progress so far.

Move to meeting once a month from July and clarify the Taskforce's ways of working.

Future agenda items suggested:

- Relationship with the Trade Unions, particularly the TUC
- Andrew Hodge to speak (solicitor with experience supporting public service mutuals)
- Input from Post Office Ltd