

**Local Partnership Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday 8 May 2007, 9:00am**  
**Lord Clerk Registers' Room, General Register House**

**Attendees:** George Mackenzie (Chair); Dave Brownlee (NAS); Jim Grady (NAS); Jimmy Gilmour (PCS); Alex Cochrane (PCS); Maureen Morris (PCS); John Mitchell (Health and Safety); James McCormack (Prospect); Jenny Cutts (secretary).

**Apologies:** Scott Murray (Assistant Secretary PCS)

**Minutes of last meeting**

1. The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed.

**Matters arising**

2. James McCormack raised the point that the previous meeting on 15 May 2006 was almost one year ago and Local Partnership Board (LPB) meetings should be held more frequently as it is the main forum for discussing union and other staff matters. George Mackenzie agreed and explained that senior management look forward positively to meetings of the Local Partnership Board. There were special reasons for the long gap this time and a meeting had been offered before Christmas, but the timing was not suitable. Dave Brownlee stated that quarterly LPB meetings have been included within the 2007/08 NAS meetings schedule. There were no other matters arising.

**Staffing**

**3.1 Staffing levels**

It was explained that NAS will shortly be operating with a full complement of staff: five recently recruited archivists are now in post and recruitment for six archive attendants is almost complete. Alex Cochrane raised concerns that two of these six were already working for NAS as Pertemps and whether they would also be replaced. Jimmy Gilmour added that a number of staff are coming up for retirement. George Mackenzie said that workforce levels would be kept under review and retiring staff would be replaced as necessary. It was felt that there was disproportionate deployment of archive attendants between RSB and CSB. Dave Brownlee stated that this is a matter for the Heads of RSB and CSB to determine as regards operational requirements and noted that business needs are changing. George Mackenzie added that NAS would move to having fewer temporary staff as operational needs became clearer following the move of the legal search room and availability of more records online.

**3.2 Sickness absence**

George Mackenzie reported that sickness absence levels for 2006-2007 compared favourably with those for 2005-2006, though there will be pressure on management to bring about further improvement.

**3.3 HR service**

James McCormack asked whether NAS has a service level agreement with HR regarding recruitment services and noted that the archivist recruitment exercise had taken approximately 6 months. It was confirmed that at present there is no SLA with

HR, though NAS are not unique in this respect. The NAS resourcing policy, which is on the Oracle, follows the SE model, and further changes in the SE will be reflected in the NAS one. George Mackenzie agreed that 6 months was unacceptable and that vacant posts should be filled as soon as possible. He expressed the view that such long delays were unlikely to occur again as this was a consequence of changes which HR were undergoing at the time. James McCormack reported that Jackie Jones and Paul Pagliari had attended the Prospect conference and that they had indicated that HR difficulties would continue for a further 18 months. Senior management also explained that NAS have a HR business partner, Mary Robson, who attends Management Board meetings, where feedback and concerns regarding HR service are discussed. We no longer have a dedicated HR team for NAS, however, and individual cases are allocated to professional advisers by surname, rather than all NAS staff being dealt with by one HR manager.

#### 3.4 Entry requirements

John Mitchell explained that it was difficult to recruit cleaners because SE entry requirements demand basic entry qualifications. Senior management agreed that this was not necessary and is hindering such recruitment. In the case of cleaners, NAS is one of the few if not only SE Agency to employ cleaners directly as civil servants, as most other organisations contract cleaning services externally. The entrance qualification requirement has also caused problems with the recruitment of archive attendants and Dave Brownlee agreed to approach HR to ask if a degree of flexibility can be applied to the recruitment of AA and cleaning staff.

#### 3.5 Development Centre

Maureen Morris asked about the services shared by NAS and GROS and whether this means NAS recruitment is directed via Arlene Chalmers. It was confirmed that NAS share the Development Centre for training and development services, but that NAS recruitment is handled directly through HR, although Arlene's advice may be sought.

#### 3.6 Competency interviewing

Alex Cochrane had inquired why recent interviews had been conducted by two A4s and whether B grade staff should have been involved. It was explained that the requirement for interview panels is that one member has completed competency interview training and there are no grade stipulations. The composition of interview panels was discussed and it was noted that it is often a good idea to have members from different business areas sitting on the interview panel, but that care should be taken not to overwhelm the interviewee by having too many people on the panel.

#### 3.7 Archive Attendants

Alex Cochrane and Jimmy Gilmour raised concerns regarding the difference in duties between A3 archive attendants and A4 archive attendant team leaders. Senior management reiterated that the differences concerning range of duties and team management are clearly set out in the respective job descriptions. George Mackenzie added that the restructuring of archive attendants had been a success and the teams are working well.

#### 3.8 Medical appointments flexi credits

James McCormack explained that the rules on claiming flexi credit for attending medical appointments during office hours were a source of some ill feeling. It was

agreed that staff may not always be able to attend appointments in their own time, but related flexi credits are restricted in the NAS to a maximum of a standard day, normally 7:24. Maureen Morris explained that the rules within GROS were slightly different and allowed staff to claim the time spent at a medical appointment, in addition to actual hours at work. A standard credit of one hour per appointment could not reflect the actual time away from the office and the point was made that a maximum flexi credit up to a standard day, provides consistency within the NAS. George Mackenzie noted that some of the problems relate to whether claimants and line managers are clear about the NAS guidelines. It was agreed that senior management re-issue flexi guidance so that all staff are fully aware of procedures.

#### **4. Projects**

##### **4.1 ScotlandsPeople**

It was noted that the builders are currently working on the central section of GRH and that this inevitably causes disruption and George Mackenzie expressed thanks for all help in this regard. It was explained that the latest programme schedule provided by RoK Ltd targets completion of the Centre in March 2008. Senior management explained that good progress is being made on the Scottish Family History Centre IT infrastructure. It was also explained that the statue of George III would eventually be located within the same alcove but in a more prominent position, towards the central space. This will be in keeping with our aim to make General Register House a visitor attraction in itself. James McCormack asked if all the SFHS posts had been filled and graded. It was reported that all family history officer (A3) posts had been filled, but that one or two posts were being re-advertised due to staff moving on in the meantime. The Head of SFHS (C1), Operations Centre manager (B2), Staff manager (B1) and Receptionist posts (A2) were also filled. The Business Development Manager (B3) post remained unfilled. It was noted that SFHS progress reports are posted on the Oracle. An event to publicise ScotlandsPeople to some key players in the tourist industry had been held in GRH on 3 May and further publicity events are planned.

##### **4.2 RAC (Registers Archive Conversion) project**

It was noted that the legal search room had now moved to the Robertson Wing. The RAC search tool is working successfully for the most part. A team is in place at ROS to correct errors as they are discovered and confidence building via a joint fault reporting system continues. The paper indexes had only been consulted four times during the first week demonstrating the success of the electronic search tool. It was agreed that HSR staff would also require proficiency with the RAC system and George Mackenzie explained that ROS are committed to providing instructions, incorporating screenshots, which should be useful. Maureen Morris reported that ongoing data cleansing is normal and that errors continue to be reported and corrected in DIGROS some fifteen years after the indexes to their registers were converted to electronic format.

##### **4.3 NAS long term accommodation needs**

Senior management reiterated plans to submit a revised business case to Ministers in November 2007 and reported that in accordance with Patricia Ferguson's request, this would include consideration of a new building at Granton. It was noted that the outcome of the Scottish Parliamentary election may affect ministers' priorities.

#### **5. Health and Safety issues**

5.1 George Mackenzie explained that the ROSPA audit had highlighted the need for work to be done on documenting health and safety procedures within NAS and that this work had now started. It was noted that the quarterly Health and Safety Committee meetings had been re-established and were included within the NAS meetings cycle. John Mitchell reported that in consequence of the building work within GRH it would be necessary to educate staff with regards to escape routes and that information would be supplied via the Oracle. Alex Cochrane reported that he and one other volunteer for Health and Safety Liaison Officer were waiting to go on the appropriate training course. Jimmy Gilmour raised various H&S concerns regarding operation of DIU equipment and it was agreed that simple solutions would be acted upon. Jim Grady assured the group that FAB would support necessary procurement to effect H&S improvements. It was further noted that the ROSPA audit did not include individual workplace assessments, but that these should be undertaken quarterly at each of our buildings.

5.2 Alex Cochrane referred to an incident whereby an unpaid volunteer had been operating equipment outwith normal working hours. This had been discussed at the Health and Safety Committee meeting on 17 April 2007 but was raised again with regard to overtime working. Jim Grady explained the importance of and commitment to proper overtime planning, which should ensure that staff are given reasonable and proper notice if overtime working is curtailed or cancelled. A new overtime scheduling form has been created, to ensure that Branch Heads consider and endorse the need for overtime working.

## **6. Any other competent business**

### **6.1 ICT support**

The extension of ICT support hours was discussed. Senior management explained that an options paper had been presented by Keith Dargie and following consideration, it was decided that with our current levels of staffing it would only be possible to cover the standard working day (8.30-17.00). The conditions of employment of current ICT staff could not be changed to provide extended hours cover and at present management's view was that we could not justify recruiting additional staff for this purpose. ICT staff are using remote access to monitor systems before leaving for work on a voluntary basis. It was noted that this issue remains under review and incidents are being monitored. It was confirmed that helpdesk staff redirect problems to the most appropriate colleague. Union representatives expressed concern that one member of ICT staff may be the only person who can resolve certain problems. It was recognised that this was the case with some legacy applications, but the situation will improve as these applications are redeveloped and documentation created to assist other staff to support them.

### **6.2 Box making facility**

Alex Cochrane asked if the grade of the staff member operating the box making service had been decided. Dave Brownlee explained that, were this to be a full time post it would be graded at A3, but that it was necessary to grow the business first to justify a full-time operation. George Mackenzie stated that any existing member of staff being recruited to the box-making post would be replaced.

### **6.3 Cardboard crusher**

It was reported that the Health and Safety Committee were considering introduction of a cardboard crushing machine. It was noted that locating this in the TTH loading bay would involve consideration of emergency exits.

#### 6.4 Identification passes

It was agreed that Dave Brownlee will reissue the staff notice regarding showing passes to GRH side door security staff as there has been some hostility towards requests to do so.

#### 6.5 Use of GRH former smoking tearoom

Questions were asked about future use of the former smoking tea room at GRH. It was noted that one long-term idea is to turn this into an additional meeting room with facilities for video-conferencing. The issue of using what formerly were recreational areas for business purposes was discussed. George Mackenzie explained that if a genuine business case for using this room as a fitness centre or other recreational facility were presented then this would also be considered. Maureen Morris explained how the fitness centre at Ladywell House came about and outlined the considerable amount of work involved in arranging this, including feasibility study and identification of committed members. George Mackenzie invited feedback from union consultation regarding use of this room.

#### 6.6 NAS Social Committee

The GROS social committee was mentioned and union representatives agreed that an NAS social committee would be beneficial. George Mackenzie invited the unions to progress this idea and confirmed that such a committee, if established, would have use of NAS email, intranet, meeting space and office time.

6.7 Alex Cochrane expressed thanks for the use of the LCR for a meeting of the Civil Service Benevolent Fund AGM on 24 April 2007.

### **7. Date of next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held in August and that Jenny Cutts would canvass for dates nearer the time.

Jenny Cutts  
14 May 2007