



Professional Interpreters for Justice

Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Tuesday 16th October 2012

Time: 5:30 pm to 6:45 pm

Venue: Unite House - Holborn - London

Present at the meeting: Andrew Murray, Regional Officer of Unite; Amelia Naranjo, Secretary, NUPIT Branch; Eileen Ford, Chair, NUPIT Branch; Geoffrey Buckingham, Chairman, APCI; Klasiena Slaney, Director SOMI UK; Eulalia (Lalia) Pessoa-White, Director, NRPSI.

Via telephone link: Madeleine Lee, Director, PIA; John Podvoiskis, Director, PIA; Tony Wilcox, WITS; Magdy Abbas, Director SOMI UK; Guillermo (Willie) Makin, Chairman, SPSI.

Apologies: Keith Moffitt, Chair, CloL Council (Observer); Paul Wilson, CEO, ITI.

There were three main agenda points: the PAC hearing; the forthcoming parliamentary event and the JSC hearing.

PAC hearing

Most, if not all of the steering group members had either been present at or been able to view the proceedings. It was felt that there were lessons to be learned from it which could be usefully applied in the preparation for the JSC hearing. There was an impression that some people had a hazy notion of what the different interpreter organizations are and what they stand for. ML said in this respect that a colleague had suggested that a visual representation such as for example a Venn diagram could help to clarify it in people's minds. This was universally agreed upon. Several people voiced the opinion that it had not been made sufficiently clear that although only the APCI had been represented in person, they

were there to speak for all the groups participating in the Joint Campaign, that is to say over two thousand interpreters, rather than the numbers represented by any one organization.

Since the PAC hearing was to continue on the 29th, anything said at the JSC hearing could be used again for that.

Inaccuracies in the PAC report, such as M Jones's statement that registration on the NR was free, could be notified to them for amendment.

The fact that the Tribunals service had a good working telephone system had been ignored.

The parliament event

There had been a setback in the preparation of the set of case studies due to a computer failure, but they were certain to be ready for presentation to A Slaughter by the time the meeting between him, LW and AM took place. The Snaresbrook wasted costs hearing could also be included. At the meeting with A. Slaughter, the date for the event could be established, together with more details about the form of presentation and the best way to approach MPs.

It was considered by the committee that the briefing document prepared by AM and KM was very informative. Any suggestions for amendments to it must be sent in before Thursday.

It was generally agreed that November was the best time for the parliament event therefore it would take place before the findings of the two committees were published but that was preferable to waiting until the New Year. Sally Kosky will take over from AM if it coincides with his leave of absence.

The Justice Select Committee hearing

No briefing to witnesses had yet been provided. ML expected it on Wednesday or Friday. It was not yet clear whether the hearing would form the same pattern as the PAC hearing, but GB said that, learning from his experience at that hearing, it would be prudent to be prepared for a number of possible approaches. He had attended the PAC hearing expecting to answer questions but was given the floor without preamble and expected to state his case. Therefore he felt that a prepared preliminary statement with bullet points and clarifications might be a useful thing to have. One useful thing he noted was that when M. Jones did not know an answer he said he could let them have it in writing later.

Two facts were felt to be especially worth underlining: that the ownership of NR had changed since its inception and that the speakers at the hearing were speaking on behalf of the profession and not just for their own organizations. It was felt also that the tenor of their evidence should be that the new arrangements affect justice and they are putting the clock back. The claims that the service was improving needed to be disputed.

Matters arising

ML had finally received from the ATC regarding the complaint she raised several weeks ago. She read the text to the committee, as follows:

“Dear Ms Lee

My apologies for not acknowledging earlier your request that we should refer our member to the association's Ethics Committee. This arrived as we were in the last throes before our annual conference and should have been acknowledged at the time. Again my apologies. I am also aware that you have been calling my office while I have been out. I have left a message with my colleague to convey to you.

The Ethics Committee is not a standing committee and needs to be specially constituted (something that has happened only once before). However before we do that we are obliged to provide ALS with the nature of your group's complaint so they may comment. Your documentation has been passed to them for that purpose. Once we have their considered response our council will determine how to proceed.

I am sorry if this is not quick enough for you and your colleagues, but as you may appreciate, we need to act with extreme care in such matters.”

The meeting concluded at approximately 6.45 p.m. The date of the next meeting is set at 7th November.

Report by Eileen Ford (NUPIT)