



Professional Interpreters for Justice

Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Wednesday, 27th March 2013

Time: 3.00 pm

Venue: Unite House - Holborn - London

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

Via telephone link: Madeleine Lee, Director, PIA; Kasia Beresford ITI; Guillermo (Willie) Makin, Chairman, SPSI.

Apologies: Keith Moffitt, Chair, CIoL Council; Paul Wilson, CEO, ITI; Aqil Minhas, Treasurer, APCI; Jon Podvoiskis, Director, PIA; T. Wilcox, WITS.

The meeting started at 3pm, in Room 4 at Unite House.

Agenda:

PI4J report

Talks to MoJ

Campaign Strategy

South-West Police Forces and others.

Before the meeting started, a consensus was obtained on the adoption of the term 'Steering Committee' instead of 'Steering Group'.

PI4J Report

The report of the last meeting was approved in its final version.

In future, draft reports will be approved at the next meeting and issued immediately thereafter. This will simplify the editorial process and reduce the need for repeated circulation of the same report, whilst still giving everyone the chance to comment.

Talks with the MoJ

The SC's response to the note circulated by the MoJ has been sent to the latter but no reply has yet been received.

It is expected that the MoJ will not be entirely happy with the contents of the response because the PI4J's recollection of what was said is at variance with some of the statements contained in the MoJ's note. However, since the Committee is anxious to let their members know what was said at the meeting, it was decided that a reminder should be sent and that PA would be asked to assume this task upon her return from holidays on Monday. She will inform the Ministry that the note will be prepared for distribution to the committee's organization memberships in its present form if no response has been received by 8th April.

The general impression of the meeting was that the MoJ was not yet ready to do a deal. They are still trying to impose things on the interpreters but what they are offering at this point is not sufficient to prove attractive.

It was observed that the choice of interpreters given the chance to attend meetings was inappropriate and ought to be questioned. A large section of the interpreter community has been left out of the MoJ's current consultation process.

At their own meeting, the SC members had insisted that the FWA was unsalvageable. The Ministry had indicated its willingness to continue discussions and its intention to hold a further workshop (on quality and assessments) and arrange a meeting with the Minister after that.

Information obtained during the workshops will, apparently, be passed on to the Ministry's policy group.

Some discussion took place about other people and bodies that we should possibly be contacting. At the meeting, the MoJ official had suggested that the person responsible for the CPS was not himself but someone in another department. It was decided that the SC should make an effort to find out more about the identities of the people responsible.

Information from various sources suggests that there is little consistency in the way CPS interpreters are sourced. Some areas such as London in fact still use the NRPSI.

One of the members had heard a comment from a witness care officer, that some interpreters sent by Capita and other agencies had English not much better than the people for whom they were interpreting.

Campaign Strategy

Some new names were suggested as people to cultivate with a view to obtaining a parliamentary debate.

It was thought that the hoped-for debate and the planned parliamentary event etc. should be thought of as part of the same plan. At the earlier meeting, the MoJ had not been very forthcoming about the possibility of a debate. It is understandable they should be reluctant to have one as our case is not a topic which favours them. One of GB's contacts has, however, suggested a potentially more productive alternative route to a debate.

Everyone was in favour of moving forward on this aspect of the campaign.

ML briefly informed us of the outcome of PIA's latest consultation with their lawyers.

It was decided that putting pressure on the MoJ to comply with the recommendations of the Select Committees would help us to achieve our aims and we could in addition keep the Select Committees informed of progress in this respect. The number of direct contacts, the hiding of statistics and the failure to do as the Select Committees recommended should all be brought to the notice of those Committees. A small task force was therefore designated to take care of monitoring and informing upon these things.

South-West Police Forces and others.

The meeting in relation to the South-West Police Forces' ideas for outsourcing was considered to have been satisfactory by those SC members who attended.

The findings are now being deliberated and no further input is required from us at the moment but the SC feels that since this collaboration is proving successful we should be turning our thoughts to other Forces who may be in favour of a similar approach. Some time was therefore devoted to discussing how this could be achieved.

The new Police and Crime Commissioners could be a useful point of contact so the Committee plans to contact them all with some brief information on the campaign and the issues involved, and ask if we can meet them.

AOB

A message had been received from a colleague, containing a number of enquiries about the SC and its activities. Many of the queries had already either

answered themselves or been answered elsewhere but some remained to be dealt with. One such was the question of access to the Steering Committee. The consensus was that the SC was a group of people nominated by their organizations and could not be 'joined' on any other basis. For specific reasons, other people could be co-opted to the committee but only for such time as their services were needed and only with the prior agreement of all the organizations involved.

This led to a discussion on availability of information about the SC's activities. It has always been the intention to report activities regularly on the campaign's page on the Unite website but there had been some problems as the site was under reconstruction. The page is now in order and reports up to end January have already been posted. The remaining reports will soon be available to view and subsequent ones will be posted shortly after the meeting at which they are approved.

The generic e-mail address was discussed.

It will make it possible for an e-mail to be sent to all members of the committee simultaneously. It is not yet decided whose addresses will be on the mailing list.

The meeting was brought to a close at 5.30 pm and the date of the next meeting was set as 19th April, and the time as 2.00 pm.

Report by Eileen Ford (NUPIT)