

Meeting of the Joint Consultative Board

Mr. Rutten and I attended the informal session of the JCB which took place on the 30th June, 2015. Following are the items of interest to retired staff discussed at the meeting.

Under Any Other Business, I requested that the complaints and appeals process be added (note: the addition of this item had been requested following our Executive meeting, but the agenda could not be amended in the absence of the chairman). The Board agreed the addition.

Concerning the item on the Retirees Medical Claim Fund (this relates to footnote 2 to Article 51.2 of the Civilian Personnel Regulations), the chairman's report (JCB-WP(2015)003), which includes our comments on the proposed change to the footnote, is still under consideration by the Financial Controller. The staff Confederation pointed out that the serving staff would need 6 months' notice of the change and hence implementation as of the 1st January, 2016, was no longer possible.

Mirjam Smets-Achten joined the Board for the item on Medical Insurance Issues and briefed on the various points discussed during the meeting of the JCB Working Group on Medical Insurance Matters which took place on the 25th June. In sum, she said that long term care at home could be provided under certain conditions: direct billing for dental treatment in cases of extreme hardship was accepted and a definition was agreed; the Benefit Guide was being updated; the NATO Group Insurance Contract had been revised, with the 119 endorsements to the previous contract subsumed into the new contract, with no change to the benefits provided; and that various possibilities for cost containment were under discussion. Overall, Mirjam was very positive about the progress made in the working group and intimated that the working group would be consulted before any recommendations were made to the JCB. The staff confederation commented on the need to be kept up to date on the various issues and I said we had the same requirement. The working group is expected to meet after the summer break.

Once again there was considerable discussion on the Single Salary Spine agenda item, the working paper having undergone further revision since the previous meeting (JCB-WP(2014)0006-REV7 refers), which in theory has no impact on pensions, but which I still think it prudent to follow. The major unresolved issues are the method of transition to the new structure; the potential impact on serving staff; the progression rate within the new system; and ultimately the changes necessary to the CPR. The secretariat introduced a new paper at the meeting (JCB-WP(2015)0006), which it was hoped could provide a simplified proposal. It was agreed that further work was necessary and the JCB Working Group will be reconvened. Hessel noted that in principle, the new system had no impact on retired staff, nevertheless he requested that we join the working group and the chairman agreed.

Referring to the complaints and appeals procedure, I said that this had been raised at the last meeting and I wondered what progress had been made. It was stated that the secretariat had been working with the Tribunal staff and the Legal Advisor to improve the rules governing the process, taking account of comments received from the administrations and staffs. It is then foreseen that a working paper will go to the Advisory Panel and subsequently to the JCB. Hessel queried whether our comments (CNRCSA(2014)D12) had been taken into account and the chairman said they would be.

One final point which arose during the course of the meeting. It was announced that the CPR would now be available on-line, a useful step forward in making information available to retired staff.

Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for the 22nd October, 2015.

David Facey.