

Minutes of the Cross Party Group on Asbestos held at 6.30pm in Ty Hywel, The National Assembly for Wales on 20th September 2017.

In attendance: R Attanoos (C+V UHB), N Blundell (UCATT), J Evans (Santia asbestos), G Howells (Prospect), M Imperato (Watkinson and Gunn), P Gower (Simpson Millar), Z Tabi, T Jones, J Carter (BLF), J Browne (Slater Gordon), G Morgan, A Jones, K Barrett, P Harding (Marie Curie), R Iredale, A Jones, J Cason, C Clement-Evans (New Law), M Eaglestone, D Bowden AM.

Apologies: B Jenkins AM, M Payne (GMB), C Griffith (FBU), R Phillips (NASUWT), J Barnes-Mannings (AASC), J Powell (TENOVUS).

1. Opening Remarks

As the Assembly was still in Plenary session Cenric Clement Evans (Secretary) opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the CPG. He explained that the meeting would be in two parts. Part (a) was the AGM of the CPG on Asbestos in which the officers for 2017/18 would be elected. In Part (b) the Group could discuss other business needing their attention. He noted that the Group would also need to submit an 'Annual Report' in line with Assembly procedures and **it was agreed** that the CPG officers ensure a report is submitted to the Assembly.

2. Election of officers for 2017/18

Dawn Bowden AM was nominated, seconded and elected as the chair of the CPG on asbestos for 2017/18.

Cenric Clement-Evans was nominated, seconded and elected as Secretary to the CPG on asbestos for 2017/18. Cenric noted that Martin Eaglestone (Adviser to Dawn Bowden AM) would assist him in the secretariat role.

3. Update on Matters Arising from previous Minutes

Research funding - At the previous meeting concern had been expressed over the continuation of funding for immunotherapy research at Cardiff University. It was noted that the content of a letter from the CPG to Cabinet Secretary Vaughan Gething about this important research had not yet been agreed as the situation was still evolving. However the research funding was now under consideration by BLF and it was reported that the first stage application had been received favourably, with the possibility of new funding from early 2018.

The secretary welcomed this and referred to the need for a small group with expertise in the research matters to meet and agree the letter as necessary. **This was agreed.**

4. Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education

The secretary referred to the letter of 16/6/17 from the Cabinet Secretary and highlighted the last paragraph- "My officials are now in the process of organising a Working Group meeting in Wales to consider these developments in England and their relevance to Wales".

The secretary noted that this was the first significant sign of progress since the original, and then repeated, submissions to the Assembly Petitions Committee. However there was little information on the membership, progress and work of this 'Working Group'.

Centric referred to communication with Trade Unions asking them to consider who they feel should sit on this Working Group.

J Evans referred to section 3 of the letter and the statement about “asbestos plans in schools”. This statement does not clarify whether the plan is substantial enough: does the plan contain objectives, with clear actions to follow through and is it being rolled forwards?. We need to ensure the presence of a ‘plan’ is not just a ‘tick box’ exercise but a living document.

M Imperato highlighted that the letter refers to ‘Policy on Asbestos’ but in reality there is no policy. There is no Welsh Government policy and as a result no contemporary guidance.

Centric Clement-Evans agreed and that was why JUAC had asked for a role in the Working Group as securing a voice on this Working Group would avoid the need to re-invent the wheel.

G Howells highlighted the opportunities that trade unions had to raise this issue via their work on the Workforce Partnership Council/Sub-Groups with the Welsh Government.

It was agreed to ask the WTUC and group members like Mike Payne of the GMB to raise the work of the Working Group on Asbestos (Wales) and the position of trade unions.

Attention was also drawn to the management of schools in the private sector. Though there were fewer of these in Wales the question of accountability and identifying role holders was still important.

Dawn Bowden AM had joined the meeting after Plenary and agreed that she would write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education seeking information on numbers of such schools and how responsibilities are met in such schools.

5. FOI (England) regarding CLASP system built schools

The secretary referred to an FOI about CLASP buildings and whether a similar FOI should be made in Wales. Copy of the FOI were available.

The secretary said the position in Wales was unknown as no one is taking overall responsibility for it.

It was agreed that Dawn Bowden AM be asked to include questions in her letter to the Cabinet Secretary to seek greater clarity.

6. Update from Charities and Support Groups

The position on BLF funding for research had been noted and decisions about their £5 million research fund would be made later in the year.

CITB noted that they may be a commission in 2018 on “Health and Safety in Construction”, of which asbestos could form a part.

7. Future Meetings

Dawn Bowden suggested that a small piece of work be done to clarify the work programme and outcomes for this CPG to help shape the work and discussions in 2018. This was agreed and a short paper be presented in January.

The Group discussed calling future CPG at either breakfast or lunchtime to see if more AMs could be involved. Also to consider if a sponsor can be found to make the arrangements more attractive.

The secretary agreed to investigate trying alternative times for the meetings due on 17th January 2018 and 16th May 2018.