

DATE OF NEXT MEETING
Date: 11 March 2008
Time: 2.45 pm
Venue: Room O Portcullis House

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY BUILDING SERVICES ENGINEERING GROUP HELD AT 4PM ON 15 JANUARY 2008 IN ROOM O, PORTCULLIS HOUSE, LONDON SW1

PRESENT

Claire Curtis-Thomas CEng MP (Chair)

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP	-	Minister of State (Competitiveness)
Denis Walker	-	DBERR
Tony Mulcahy	-	DBERR
Robert Higgs	-	Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association
Brigitte Faubert	-	Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association
John Thompson	-	Association of Plumbing & Heating Contractors
John Byrne	-	CORGI
Prof Rudi Klein	-	Specialist Contractors Group
John Nelson	-	Specialist Contractors Group
Keith Marshall	-	SummitSkills
Blane Judd	-	Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering
Prof Tony Thomas	-	London South Bank University
Andrew Eastwell	-	Building Services Research & Information Association
Samantha McDonagh	-	Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers
Chris Brown	-	Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers
John Hardaker	-	Hot Water Association
Gareth Keller	-	Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association

APOLOGIES

Peter Bottomley MP

Dr Peter Rumley	-	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Stephen Matthews	-	Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers
Chris Sneath	-	Plumbing & Heating Industry Alliance
Cedric Sloane	-	Federation of Environmental Trade Associations
Clive Dickin	-	Association of Plumbing & Heating Contractors
Jack Wishart	-	BPEC
Roger Webb	-	Heating and Hot Water Council

01/08 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Claire Curtis-Thomas welcomed those present, particularly Stephen Timms, and introduced Gareth Keller from the Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association

who would be taking the minutes of the meeting. She suggested that Stephen Timms be invited to speak first. At this point the Division Bell rang and Stephen Timms and Claire Curtis-Thomas had to leave the meeting. The Chair asked the Secretary to continue the meeting in her absence.

02/08 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 October 2007 had been previously circulated. They were agreed without comment.

03/08 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Annual Luncheon

The Secretary said that the Churchill Room had been booked for 30 June 2008. He invited suggestions for a speaker. Keith Marshall said that he had someone in mind and would contact the Secretary.

3.2 The Skills Agenda

The Secretary invited Prof Tony Thomas to introduce his paper on Rogue Trainers. This had been circulated with the Agenda as Appendix A. Tony said that following the meeting Tim Down, Director of Skills at DIUS, had asked for more information on the subject. The Paper attempted to set out the issues and asked how David Lammy's Department might help, other issues regarding Trading Standards had been followed up by Chris Sneath. Keith Marshall expressed concern that the emphasis of the Paper was in the wrong place. The problem with Technical Certificates was being brought under control, but it was more difficult to control advertisements for courses placed in the newspapers. The problem could only be addressed by greater publicity. This view was echoed by Blane Judd and Robert Higgs. (The Chair and Stephen Timms resumed their place at this point).

Claire Curtis-Thomas expressed some reservations about the Paper as she felt that some of the observations were not supported by the evidence. Tony Thomas said that the issue highlighted the importance of competence in the industry and the need for a form of "licence to practice". Claire said that she would like to discuss the paper and the issues raised outside the meeting. She had been unsuccessful in the ballot for an adjournment debate.

04/08 SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

Claire Curtis-Thomas welcomed the Minister for Competitiveness, Rt Hon Stephen Timms, to the meeting and asked those present to introduce themselves to him. She briefly outlined the purpose of the Building Services Engineering Group and said that there were five key topics that the Group wished to raise:

- Construction Act Review
- Integration
- Pre-qualification

- Sustainability
- Regulation

She would be asking Rudi Klein to introduce these topics, but before doing so invited the Minister to say a few words about the brief of the new Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) with regard to Construction. Stephen Timms thanked Claire for the invitation to attend the Group and introduced Denis Walker and Tony Mulcahy from his Department. He said that DBERR had been given a clear remit from the Prime Minister to introduce regulatory reform. The Department had a clear focus and this was illustrated by the move of the Better Regulations Division from the Cabinet Office to DBERR. The Department also administered a new Business Council for Britain. Stephen listed the five key issues for the department as innovation, tax, skills migration, the planning system and transport infrastructure. He had become the Minister for Construction in June 2007. Construction was important because it represented 8% of the economy and had a big impact on the quality of public services through schools, hospitals and housing. Over a third of the output of the sector was for the public sector. The Egan Report “Rethinking Construction” was still seen as the road map for the industry, but new developments would be taking place. In particular, the construction industry made a huge contribution to the sustainability agenda. There had been a useful consultation exercise in November 2007 and a summary of the results would be published in February. A strategy for sustainable construction would be ready by June 2008. With regard to the Construction Act, the process of review commenced in 2004 and consultation closed in September 2007. The Government was committed to introduce changes to the Act when parliamentary time allowed.

Claire Curtis-Thomas thanked the Minister for his overview and asked Rudi Klein, Chief Executive of the Specialist Engineering Contractors Group, to respond. Rudi said that good progress was being made on the Construction Act. He had recently met with officials from DBERR. It was worth the effort to get it right. On sustainability he felt that the main theme was procurement. The draft supplement to the Green Book was overdue for Treasury approval and this updated best practice on public sector construction procurement. It needed to be agreed and issued soon. Rudi went on to say that competence was a key issue. He felt that the public sector needed to take a lead and only select competent firms. If this was linked to a requirement that firms selected for public sector work had to adhere to health and safety rules, a very clear message would be sent out to the industry.

Stephen Timms asked how firms could get public sector work if they were not competent? Rudi said that some trade associations had introduced independent inspection and assessment schemes for their members. He wondered whether the TrustMark Scheme could be used as a model for the industry. Claire Curtis-Thomas queried whether it would be possible to extend TrustMark to the construction sector and asked the Minister whether the Government wished to work with Competence Schemes. Stephen Timms suggested that it might be useful for the Group to have a discussion with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

John Nelson felt that the good work that had been done on health and safety should be extended to other areas. Claire Curtis-Thomas observed that there might be some lessons to be learned from the Terminal 5 project. Stephen Timms commented that the

Public Sector Construction Clients Forum might also be consulted. He felt that the supply side was key to the sustainability. He took note of Rudi's point concerning the Green Book and said that the Treasury were looking at it. He was due to meet with Angela Eagle on the subject soon.

Turning to integration, Rudi said that good progress had been made with project bank accounts and two pilot projects were underway. However, more needed to be done to make things happen. The key people to influence were designers. Stephen Timms said that he was aware more work needed to be done and the Strategic Forum was taking this forward. He also mentioned that DBERR was working on examples of best practice. Claire Curtis-Thomas felt that progress was slow. She wanted to see greater use of project insurance.

Claire Curtis-Thomas thanked the Minister for his attendance and said that she would write to him about the issues raised.

05/08 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business raised.

06/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This has been arranged for 11 March 2008.