

Association of Higher Civil & Public Servants

Public Service Relocation Programme

An opportunity missed and a challenge to meet

Report by the Executive Committee

Special Delegate Conference

1st March 2004

This document sets out the Association's serious reservations and concerns regarding current proposals to relocate between 10,300 and 12,000 public servants, currently based in Dublin, to offices at fifty three locations throughout the rest of the country.

It reflects the considered position of the Executive Committee in light of the views expressed by our members during an intensive programme of consultation meetings with representatives of 33 Branches in the departments and agencies affected by the proposals. It is presented for consideration at the Special Delegate Conference on Monday 1st March 2004.

We acknowledge with thanks the contribution of Brian Barry, Burnham House management consultants, who facilitated the consultation meetings and assisted in compiling this document.

The text of an Executive Committee motion for the Special Delegate Conference is set out at the end of this document.

The Executive Committee wishes to draw particular attention to the final paragraphs of the document. These summarise Association concerns as follows:

Neither the Association nor its members take any pleasure in preparing a document such as this. But the situation in which we find ourselves is emphatically not of our own choice, the issues raised are of considerable national importance, and our members consider themselves both professionally and personally obliged to make their voices heard.

What is required now is a return to rationality, common sense, sensitivity, compassion and patience – all characteristics manifestly, and most regrettably, absent from the details set out in December's announcement.

Making haste slowly might now be an appropriate guiding principle. Initiation, even at this late stage, of the procedures outlined on the previous page (page 25) might be an appropriate new starting point.

Seán McDonald
Chairperson

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1. Senior civil and public servants

The Association of Higher Civil & Public Servants (AHCPS) represents some 3,200 members at senior management level (Principal, Assistant Principal, and their equivalents) in the civil service and in a variety of state bodies and agencies.

Within the civil service, our members constitute the senior management group. Only the top management positions of Secretary General and Assistant Secretary carry higher levels of management authority and accountability.

1.1 Historic management role

Historically, Principals and Assistant Principals have carried out an exceptionally wide range of public administration roles. These include:

- general planning, administration and management of Government activities with expenditure running to billions of pounds;
- participation in the development of economic, social and general strategy and policies across a wide spectrum of national issues, including appropriate attendance at committees of the Houses of the Oireachtas;
- provision of top level advice on emerging proposals to Government, Ministers, Secretaries General, and Assistant Secretaries, as appropriate;
- provision – including through attendance – of expert advice to Ministers and members of Oireachtas Committees in relation to estimates, Parliamentary Questions (hundreds per week), Private Notice Questions, and Adjournment and other debates, the passage of legislation, and the operation of the European Union Scrutiny Act;
- overview (including through unremunerated directorships) of policy formulation, strategy development, financial planning, and legislative and regulatory development with respect to local authorities, health boards, State and semi-State organisations, and private sector and national organisations;
- chairmanship and membership of interdepartmental and other committees established to address and report on particular issues and problems arising in the public service arena;
- communication and negotiation with national, regional and local organisations, and with representative bodies, NGOs, and interest groups, both generally and within the developing Social Partnership framework;
- representation of the State, including at Chairman level, at the EU, on Anglo-Irish and Cross-Border bodies, at international conferences, and at meetings of the committees of international organisations where the agreements negotiated, or decisions reached, may be of vital importance to Irish economic and social well being.

1.2 *Civil service modernisation*

Recent years have seen the emergence of an active and radical programme of public service modernisation, with the roll-out of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), Delivering Better Government (DBG), Quality Customer Service (QCS) and related agendas.

This process has further deepened and expanded the role of our members, whose accountabilities now also encompass, in addition to their other longer-standing roles:

- more extensive and formal involvement, not merely in the implementation, but also in the formulation and development, of policies, business plans and expenditure budgets, both for their departments generally and for those particular functions and business units and for which they are, by assignment, individually responsible and accountable;
- adoption, elaboration and implementation of business and organisation structures, management methods and systems, devolved decision-taking processes, and reporting frameworks closely aligned with those found at equivalent level in the business sector;
- particularly extensive involvement in the development and implementation of Government and Civil Service initiatives in the fields of information and communications technology and e-Government;
- radically enhanced responsibility and accountability, within the framework of the *Public Service Management Act*, for the operation of specified statutory schemes or programmes; for defined outputs and results; for the quality of services delivered; and for financial management and expenditure control, including in the critically important areas of Internal Audit and Value for Money (VFM) Auditing;
- similarly enhanced responsibility and accountability, within the terms of the integrated human resource management initiative, for management of human resources, including manpower planning, appointments, discipline, performance appraisal and staff development and training;
- more explicit *internal* accountability, including within the framework of the *Public Service Management Act*, for personal job performance, for the performance of their functions/business units, and for the job performance of subordinates;
- and a newly established regime of *external* accountability – to the Oireachtas, to clients/customers, to the social partners, to the news media, and to the general public – for business and job performance of a nature, and on a scale, unparalleled at equivalent level in any other sector of the economy.

It should be stressed that the Association and its members have been far from passive players in the modernisation process. As far back as 1992, the Association took a major initiative in that regard, publishing its proposals for *Corporate Strategic Reform of the Civil Service*. The proposals were intended to meet the needs of a modern, highly diversified and rapidly changing economy, and those of an increasingly complex society, by delivering a high-quality spectrum of responsive, flexible, innovative and customer-

focused public services. Their impact on the subsequent roll-out of SMI, DBG and QCS agendas has been fundamental and positive.

Moreover, our proactive role has been explicitly and generously acknowledged by successive Taoisigh. For example, the then Taoiseach, Mr John Bruton TD, writing to the Association in 1995, referred as follows to the role of the Association, and our Principals and Assistant Principals, in the modernisation process:

“I welcome the positive contribution already made by the Association, and Principals and Assistant Principals, to strategic management reform. Many of the issues raised by the Association are now at the heart of the political and administrative agenda. I would emphasise that the Association represents key managerial grades at Principal and Assistant Principal level in the Civil Service whose integrity I and the Government respect and who have a particularly important role to play in public sector renewal.”

Our credentials in the process of public service modernisation are, in short, self-evident, exemplary and duly acknowledged at the highest levels of government.

2. Public service relocation

The process of what is usually termed decentralisation, but more accurately as relocation of government offices from Dublin to the provinces has a relatively long history.

In the case of the Civil Service, the various relocation programmes that have been undertaken over several decades have involved, in the main service delivery rather than policy formulation units which were self-contained; and whose work, by its nature, could relatively easily be carried out away from their respective departmental headquarters in Dublin.

2.1 Current situation

Nonetheless, the numbers of civil servants involved grew significantly, if somewhat erratically, over the years, with the result that by 2003, according to a presentation made by the Department of Finance to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance and the Public Service on 31st October last, some 14,000 (approximately 40%) of the State's 35,000 civil servants were employed outside the capital.

The civil service does not, of course, constitute the sole – or even the predominant – element of the public service as a whole. The total number of public servants in 2003 was stated to be 276,000, of whom 35,000 (13%) are civil servants, and the remaining 241,000 (87%) are employed in the health boards, education sector, local authorities, the defence forces, the Garda Siochana, and various non-commercial state bodies and agencies.

It is unclear precisely how many of these 241,000 non-civil service personnel are based outside Dublin. However, the Department of Finance did indicate that 38,000 (40%) of the total of Health Board personnel were employed in the ERHA area, and 4,000 (36%) of members of the Garda Siochana were based in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. These ratios, were they applicable to the other components of the non-civil service elements of the public service, would suggest that the overall number of public servants employed within the Dublin area is of the order of 110,000, equivalent to 40% of the total.

This, in our view, hardly constitutes a major imbalance between Dublin and the regions, bearing in mind that, according to the 2002 Census, the population of Dublin and the immediately adjacent counties was 39% of the national total.

2.2 Recent policy developments

Although the radical new programme of relocation and dispersal announced by the Minister for Finance in his Budget Statement of 3rd December last constitutes the main focus of this document, it is appropriate that we set it in the context of events which have unfolded over the past four years or so.

In his Budget Statement for 2000, the Minister promised a further major programme for the relocation of government departments and agencies. This would, it was envisaged, involve the relocation of more than 10,000 public service jobs from the capital to the provinces. Little further detail was provided.

In June 2000, the Association wrote to Mr Tom Considine, then Secretary General, Public Service Management & Development, Department of Finance. In that letter, we expressed our views and concerns on the matter, stressing the need for meaningful advance discussions with ourselves and other Civil Service unions; the imperative that relocation should be voluntary; the need to ensure that the choice of locations should be on a rational public-interest basis; and specifically suggesting the publication of a Green Paper discussion document to enable the wide range of issues to be debated before any final decisions were taken by Government.

We stated that the Association had no objection whatsoever in principle to relocation. Indeed, the Association has always fully recognised the potential advantages, both to local communities and to public service staff, of a carefully planned and well executed relocation programme, and has had no wish to impede such a process. But we clearly stated our belief that the combination of national interest, the requirements of administrative efficiency, and a recognition of the legitimate interests of both public servants and local communities, all highlighted the need to proceed on a reflective and consultative basis.

Over the next three-and-a-half years, little more specific detail emerged about the Budget 2000 proposals on relocation, and there was no process of formal consultation on matters of substance. The Joint Working Group on Decentralisation held four meetings. Little progress was achieved, and in particular the Official Side declined repeated requests that they should conduct a structured survey of civil servants' views and concerns on the proposals. Regrettably, the process ran into the sand, with no further meetings held after November 2000.

The matter was also mentioned regularly at the Civil Service General Council over that period, again with little or no additional information forthcoming. The last such meeting was two weeks before the Minister's presentation of Budget 2004, and again the Official Side had no further news or details to present.

2.3 December 2003 proposals

It was thus with a sense of considerable shock that our members heard the Minister announce, in his Budget 2004 Statement on 3rd December last, that the Government was to proceed with a radical new programme of relocation and dispersal on a scale never before contemplated, much less actually achieved.

The programme would involve the transfer – on a voluntary basis, and with no redundancies – of 10,300 public service jobs (6,500 in the civil service, 3,800 in various state agencies) to no fewer than 53 separate non-Dublin locations across 25 counties. The Minister further stated his belief that the final total could be closer to 12,000 jobs. New locations for 835 IT and 500 health sector jobs were not specified.

On the civil service side, the programme would require the removal to locations outside Dublin of the Office of Public Works and eight entire departments, including Ministers, Secretariat and Senior Management.

The factors taken into account in *selecting particular Departments and agencies* for relocation were, the Minister stated:

- the imperative that customer service standards are not adversely affected;

- the core business and nature of the relevant Departments and agencies;
- the location of their customer base;
- and the need to ensure that the units involved are large enough to provide career opportunities for staff either within their own Department or in another Department within a reasonable distance.

In selecting *locations for relocated offices*, the factors taken into account were, he stated:

- the need to achieve a fit with the National Spatial Strategy, in terms of the Gateways and Hubs and their respective catchments;
- the location of existing decentralised offices;
- the desirability of clustering a Department's decentralised units within a region;
- the importance of respecting the scale and character of locations in terms of their capacity to absorb the number of new jobs involved;
- and the existence of good transport links – by road, rail and/or air – and the general infrastructural capacity in the areas concerned.

We note, incidentally, that in describing the benefits that would accrue from the new programme, one of the Minister observations was:

“I believe that over time decentralisation will lead to a radical change of culture in terms of policy formation in this country. No longer will policy be made entirely in Dublin on the basis of a Dublin mindset.”

We have some difficulty in interpreting this particular observation. We trust the Minister was not suggesting that, up to the present, the public service in general, and its senior management in particular, have at any time acted other than in the best interests of the country as a whole. Indeed, to suggest otherwise would be a calumny of unimaginable proportions.

3. Consultation and established procedures

The Association and its members deplore the fact that the new relocation programme was formulated, and its details – numbers, departments, agencies, business units, and new locations – elaborated:

- without meaningful consultation with the AHCPS and the other Civil Service unions whose members will be directly affected;
- and bypassing long-established management procedures for policy formation and programme planning within the Civil Service.

3.1 Consultation

In this country, it has long been the industrial relations norm – promoted and fostered by government, and copper-fastened by *Sustaining Progress* and earlier partnership agreements – that employers should, when taking initiatives which directly impact on their employees, consult with those employees and their representatives at all stages of the process. Within the civil service, the partnership process has been enshrined as one of the key drivers of modernisation, performance enhancement and customer-focused service delivery.

We are therefore at a loss to understand why these norms have been set aside in this new round of relocation and dispersal.

The programme announced on 3rd December last is not simply about “public service jobs”. It is about civil and other public servants, their work environment, their career development and – as highlighted later in this document – their spouses, partners, children and dependents.

It might reasonably be expected that, in these circumstances, consultation would be extensive, detailed and meaningful, and that the views of public servants likely to be affected – directly or indirectly – by the programme would have been canvassed. In fact, as already pointed out, no meaningful consultation has taken place over the **four-year period** from when the policy was first proposed until its details were, without prior notice, announced on 3rd December last.

This was a clear breach of the principles of partnership – national and public service – and our members are quite entitled to ask why it occurred.

3.2 Established management procedures

The role of senior managers – our members - in all areas of public policy formulation, development and implementation has always been critical. In recent years, their role has been expanded, deepened, actively promoted and publicly acknowledged at the highest levels. Sections 1.1 and 1.2 above have already highlighted the details.

With respect to the new relocation programme announced on 3rd December last, this role would have required that senior managers be involved – as they would for any other major policy initiative – in advising on, and helping to define:

- overall goals and objectives which, in the light of national policy in all relevant areas, might best be adopted for the next phase of relocation;
- criteria for selecting departments, agencies and their various component units appropriate for relocation, having regard to the potential impact on service delivery to client and customer groupings;
- criteria for selecting the specific locations to which these entities might best be decentralised, taking due account of the government's National Spatial Strategy, and the potential impact on the resources and infrastructure of host locations;
- criteria for prioritising which particular public servants would be encouraged and/or permitted to relocate, having regard for the potential impact of personnel transfers – direct and indirect – on public service management structures, processes, efficiency and effectiveness;
- robust methodologies for measuring the costs and benefits of relocation, and for evaluating the programme, and its components, with reference to established public service value-for-money criteria;
- in the light of all the foregoing, desirable, achievable and sustainable targets for the number of jobs to be relocated, and an appropriate timescale for implementation;
- procedures to be adopted, overall and within individual departments, agencies and business units, to progress the finally agreed programme;
- and, finally, procedures for monitoring the roll-out of the programme, and a rigorous framework for evaluating its success or otherwise in achieving its stated goals and objectives.

There has been more than adequate time over the past four years for this role to be fulfilled, and for the process just outlined to be, if not finalised in its entirety, at least brought to an advanced stage of completion. But none of this has happened

It is senior managers who will bear the heaviest workload in delivering the programme, and who – as demonstrated later in this document – may well also be the most adversely affected in career and personal terms. Despite this, their defined role in respect of major programmes of this kind has quite simply been circumvented.

Once again, we feel quite entitled to ask – in the interests of our members, the public service, and those whom we serve – why this situation has been allowed to arise.

4. Current programme: General observations

Before proceeding further, we consider it important to highlight the sheer scale of the programme now underway, its likely outcome in terms of the balance in public sector employment as between Dublin and the rest of the country, its people dimension, its impact on host locations, and its relationship with current regional development policy.

4.1 Scale and geographic balance

The scale of the relocation programme now set in train is enormous by any standards, with between 10,000 and 12,000 public service jobs scheduled for relocation from Dublin to 53 separate locations throughout the country over what seems envisaged a short, albeit undefined period. This makes it by the most ambitious exercise of its type in the history of the State.

With respect to the issue of perceived current imbalances, we have earlier referred (Section 2.1 above) to the fact that, as matters now stand, there already exists a close correlation between the proportion of public service jobs in the Dublin area (40% of the total) and the proportion of the total population living in Dublin and immediately adjacent counties (39% of the national total).

With respect to the re-balancing now planned, let us assume, first, that the initial 10,300 target is achieved; second, that the additional 1,700 jobs to bring the total to 12,000 have the same proportions of civil and other public servants as the initial 10,300; and, third, that the main impact of the pre-existing decision to reduce public service numbers by 5,000 over a period of time will be in Dublin (with, again, the same proportions of civil and other public servants). On these assumptions, the following would represent the future location of civil and other public servants:

<i>Dublin</i>	93,000	<i>34%</i>
<i>Elsewhere</i>	178,000	<i>66%</i>

This demonstrates that the geographic impact of current plans is not to create an appropriate balance between where citizens live and their public servants work – this balance already exists – but rather to sharply shift the balance at public service level from Dublin to the rest of the country.

Such a shift is not, of course, in itself necessarily a negative outcome. But the data just set out may well be at variance with public, political and media perceptions both of the current situation and of the bottom-line effect of the new relocation proposals.

4.2 The people dimension

In his Budget Statement of 3rd December last, the Minister stated that the programme he was announcing would involve the relocation of 10,300 civil and public jobs. But the phrase “relocation of 10,300 civil and public service jobs” manifestly fails to encompass the full impact of the programme.

The jobs to which the Minister referred are held by *civil and public servants*. Moreover, these civil and public servants have spouses, partners, children and other family dependents. All these *people* have their own existing commitments, lifestyles, and social relationships, and are involved in their own individual patterns of educational, cultural, leisure and other activities.

It is thus essential to recognise that the relocation programme will have an impact, not only on 10,300 Dublin-based civil and public servants, but on many more people besides – potentially as many as 40,000-50,000, and this without taking any account of the large number of personnel reassignments arising from the entire process. Peremptory announcement of the programme details, without prior consultation, and without addressing – much less resolving – the people issues involved is without precedent, is utterly insensitive, and has already created uncertainties which are generating widespread anxiety and stress.

The Association and its members deplore the fact that this dimension of the programme has not been explicitly acknowledged from the outset, and that no effort appears to have been made over the past four years to explore and evaluate the issues involved, and to factor these into the scope and detail of the programme. The people concerned clearly deserve better.

4.3 *Impact on host locations*

It is understandable that the Government's decision on relocation has evoked an enthusiastic response from the 53 host locations. Each anticipates significant population growth, an enhanced social environment, the potential for growth and expansion of local businesses, and the prospect – however nebulous – that the private sector may follow the public service lead.

But there are potential downsides also. The building of new offices, and the arrival of large numbers of new people to these locations will inevitably have an impact –negative, as well as positive – with respect to house prices; road, rail and telephone communications; electricity and water supply; sewage and other waste disposal systems; traffic volumes; and education and social facilities.

It might reasonably have been anticipated that, reflecting established good practice for major new public and private sector projects, relevant decisions would have been informed by systematic appraisal and evaluation of the environmental, economic and social impact on each host location.

We see no evidence that such good practice has been followed for the current programme. On the contrary, it appears a decision has been made to respond to any problems impacting on the host locations only when they have already arisen, rather than to anticipate and attempt to resolve these problems at the initial stages of the planning process. If so, it represents a potentially serious flaw in that process.

4.4 *National Spatial Strategy*

In announcing the relocation and dispersal programme, the Minister stated that the selection of locations took full account of, amongst other factors, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

It is noteworthy that the NSS, which identifies particular cities and towns as policy-preferred focal points for regional development, specifies a total of 21 non-Dublin locations (including three towns comprising one “linked gateway”, and four others comprising two “linked hubs”). By contrast, the public service relocation programme specifies 53 non-Dublin locations, of which 12 correspond with individual locations specified in the NSS, and 41 do not. Moreover, of the nine departmental headquarters, including OPW, listed for relocation, only three are relocating to gateways (one instance) or hubs (two instances).

We accept that the NSS does not prescribe that future regional development should be rigidly confined to the 21 non-Dublin locations for which it indicates a policy preference. But the fact remains that the locations for the public service relocation programme are considerably more dispersed than the NSS has specified, and that six of the nine departmental headquarters are to be relocated to towns not even listed in the NSS.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that co-ordination of the two policy areas has been less than robust, and that an opportunity to use another element of public policy to “kick-start” the NSS programme has been lost.

5. Effects of geographic dispersal

The relocation, and in particular the geographic dispersal, of offices across the country will have one major and self-evident effect, namely, that these offices and their staffs will be located away from the seat of government in Dublin, from departments and agencies which remain in Dublin, and in many cases from their departmental headquarters and sister offices based at other provincial locations.

An important consequence is that maintaining the levels of inter-personal, intra-departmental and inter-departmental interaction necessary for co-ordinated planning and management across the public service will require extensive travel between the various dispersed locations. This will, in turn, result in significant travel and subsistence costs, and in the loss of productive “desk time”. By way of illustration (road travel time, one-way, using AA Ireland data):

- Of the nine departmental headquarter offices relocated, three will be between 1 and 2 hours from Dublin, two between 2 and 3 hours, and one more than 4 hours.
- Of the other relocated offices and agencies, thirteen will be between 1 and 2 hours from Dublin, eleven between 2 and 3 hours, twelve between 3 and 4 hours, and four over 4 hours. The average for all these locations will be 2 hours 28 minutes from Dublin.
- While the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism will be headquartered in Killarney, the Arts Council will be in Kilkenny, 2 hours 51 minutes distant, and Fáilte Ireland in Mallow, 62 minutes distant.
- While the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources will be headquartered in Cavan, BIM will be located in Clonakilty, 5 hours 14 minutes distant.
- Whereas the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will continue to be headquartered in Dublin, Enterprise Ireland will be located in Shannon (3 hours distant), FÁS in Birr (2 hours), and the Health and Safety Authority in Thomastown (1 hour 48 minutes).
- Whereas the Office of Public Works will be headquartered in Trim, with 275 of its staff, of the remaining staff, 100 will be located in Kanturk (3 hours 53 minutes distant), and 150 in Claremorris (2 hours 37 minutes).
- While, the Department of Foreign Affairs will continue to be headquartered in Dublin, its overseas aid division, Development Co-Operation Ireland, will be located in Limerick (2 hours 42 minutes distant).
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will continue to be headquartered in Dublin. But 200 Departmental staff will be based in Tipperary (2 hours 31 minutes distant); Garda headquarters, including its civilian staff, will be located in Thurles (2 hours distant); and the Land Registry will be headquartered in Roscommon (2 hours 12 minutes).

- The Department of Transport will maintain its headquarters in Dublin. But its Road Haulage division will be located in Loughrea (2 hours 32 minutes distant); Bus Éireann in Mitchelstown (2 hours 50 minutes); the Irish Aviation Authority in Shannon (3 hours); the National Roads Authority in Ballinasloe (2 hours 7 minutes); the National Safety Council in Loughrea (2 hours 32 minutes); and the Railway Safety Commission in Ballinasloe (2 hours 7 minutes).
- If officials at the Office of Public Works (Trim) wish to meet their counterparts in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Wexford) the return travel time for whichever team travels will be 5 hours 10 minutes.
- If officials from the Department of Social and Family Affairs wish to meet their counterparts in the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the return travel for one or the other team will be just below 6 hours.

In all this light, we now address some of the problems which our members consider these aspects of the programme pose for their departments' ability, and their own ability as senior managers, to:

- maintain levels of service to Oireachtas and Government,
- maintain levels of service to the EU and other international bodies,
- collaborate with colleagues in other offices,
- collaborate with colleagues in their own departments, and
- deliver optimum services to client and customer groupings.

5.1 Oireachtas and Government

We have already explained (Section 1 above) that two of the key roles of our members in senior civil service management are:

- provision of top level advice on emerging proposals to Government, Ministers, Secretaries General, and Assistant Secretaries, as appropriate;
- provision – including through attendance – of expert advice to Ministers and members of Oireachtas Committees in relation to estimates, Parliamentary Questions (hundreds per week), Private Notice Questions, and Adjournment and other debates, during the passage of legislation through the Oireachtas, and in relation to the operation of the European Union Scrutiny Act.

These services must, if disruption and delay of Oireachtas and Government business is to be avoided, be available as and when required, including – frequently - at extremely short notice, and must be provided by relevant, knowledgeable and reliable senior managers.

Our members have grave misgivings as to whether these criteria can be properly satisfied if significant numbers of the senior management personnel are based in locations far

away from Leinster House, Government Buildings and the offices of Ministers and their secretariats.

Moreover, the Dutch experience of the roll-out, and subsequent roll-back, of its own programme for relocating/dispersing Ministries away from Parliament in the Hague, and the problems currently being experienced in Germany arising from the relocation of the Bundestag from Bonn to Berlin, strongly suggest that these misgivings are well founded.

These are not the only issues that arise for Oireachtas and Government. Other questions which might appropriately be pondered include:

- Are they confident that the cohesion, continued effectiveness and central role of an independent, non-political service, dedicated to serving the wider public good, can be as readily assured when public servants engaged in policy formation and programme planning and development work, and live with their families, in a small provincial town rather than in the relative anonymity of a large capital city?
- Will a Minister, whose home and constituency are in the north-west, be content to have his Department and Ministerial in the south-west? Will this issue constrain the choice for future Taoisigh when considering appointments?
- Will a Minister operating with a small secretariat in a Dublin-based office be able effectively to discharge his constitutional responsibilities for administering his Department in a provincial location? And will the difficulties arising not inevitably lead to the appointment of politically oriented consultants and advisors, and the undermining of the long established role of civil servants in policy formulation?
- Will an incoming future Government be able readily to reassign ministerial and departmental portfolios if it is constrained by the relocation issues (offices, civil servants, families) which will thereby be presented?

5.2 *EU and other international bodies*

Another crucial, and continuously growing, role of senior civil and public service managers is representation of the State, including at Chairman level, at the multiplicity of institutions in the European Union, on Anglo-Irish and Cross-Border bodies, at international conferences, and at meetings of the committees of international organisations where the agreements negotiated, or decisions reached, may be of vital importance to Irish economic and social well being. The Department of Agriculture and Food, alone, participates in 90 inter-governmental committees.

Extensive travel is an unavoidable element of this work. A recent survey revealed that the number of attendances by Irish civil servants at meetings in Brussels alone is approximately 10,000 per annum. Currently, it is common for a Dublin-based official to take an early morning flight to, say, Brussels to attend a meeting there, and return the same evening. However, if this official is based in a location which is three or four hours from Dublin, attendance at the meeting will entail two working days, and possibly an

overnight stay in Dublin or Brussels – or even both. The converse applies if an EU official is attending a meeting held at the Irish official’s location.

For any particular meeting, this may not pose an insurmountable problem. But given the high and growing volume of such meetings, the additional travel time will be disruptive, may result in otherwise desirable and productive meetings not being held, and will considerably increase travel, accommodation and subsistence costs, and necessarily reduce the productive hours of the officials concerned.

5.3 *Other departments and agencies*

One of the cornerstones of high-quality public administration is the systematic co-ordination of policy development, delivery and implementation (“joined-up government”). This, in a complex and increasingly regulated society, recognises the entirely reasonable expectation of all citizens, businesses and interest groups that government will be responsive to their needs and expectations; will be efficient, effective and economical in its delivery of services; and will minimise inconsistencies and conflicts in policy and service delivery.

It is generally recognised that the best way to meet these expectations is through systematic and continuous liaison, and close co-operation, between all those charged with formulating policy, and planning and managing the delivery of public services. The Irish public service has always striven to observe these imperatives, and has continuously pursued improved ways of so doing.

At a formal level, the framework adopted comprises several hundred inter-departmental committees, boards and similar entities on which civil servants, representing their respective Ministers, meet to discuss matters of shared interest or responsibility, to identify areas where co-ordination of effort will secure enhanced service delivery and avoid inconsistency.

At a less formal – though equally important – level, the delivery of “joined-up government” relies on extensive inter-departmental networking. This encompasses individual senior civil and public servants who work in different departments or agencies, but whose areas of concern overlap or are closely related, and who recognise both the positive potential for synergy, and the corresponding negative risk of inconsistency and conflict. The informal networks through which they work might reasonably be considered the oil that keeps the wheels of the more formal mechanisms turning.

Whether formal or informal, however, the essential condition for success is that such contact should be both continuous and readily achieved. This condition has been recognised in public administration over many centuries and in many jurisdictions, and indeed represents one of the defining characteristics of what constitutes a “capital city”. In this country it has, since the foundation of the State, been secured by the fact that all departments have been headquartered virtually within walking distance of one another, in Dublin, the nation’s capital, and the seat of its parliament.

Departure from this pattern is a step not to be undertaken lightly. It may well be the case – though experience elsewhere suggests otherwise – that dispersal of departments to locations outside Dublin, and away from one from another, can be made work without compromising the practicalities of joined-up government. But in the absence of specific, detailed and credible proposals as to how this is to be achieved, the Association and its members consider they have every reason to be concerned.

5.4 *Home departments and agencies*

Much the same considerations apply to relationships – formal and informal – between managers working in the same department. Although the risk that the left hand is unaware of what the right hand is doing (or planning) within a single department is perhaps less than in the case of disjunction between different departments the potential nonetheless exists.

In the case of the Irish public service, this risk is minimised, at a formal level, through committee structures at whose apex stands the Management Advisory Committee. At an informal level, it is minimised through extensive vertical and horizontal networking which affords perhaps even greater potential for sharing information and experience. (We note that the presence or absence of precisely this type of informal networking is widely regarded as a key predictor of the success or failure of business undertakings in the private sector.)

We acknowledge that, in this regard, the risks inherent in the dispersal of elements of the same department to different geographical locations have been effectively managed and controlled in the context of earlier relocation initiatives (albeit not without some problems). But it must be stressed that these initiatives were on a relatively small scale in comparison with the current proposals, and that the policy formulation content of the relocated offices was, in virtually all cases, negligible or very limited.

Our members fear that the dispersal pattern prescribed in the present programme, which contemplates separate locations, within the same department, for units with a significant policy-formulation content, will present much more severe challenges. We find it regrettable that these challenges do not appear to have been addressed prior to specification of the office/location mix announced on 3rd December.

5.5 *Client and customer groupings*

In launching the programme, the Minister stated that amongst the criteria taken into account in selecting departments/agencies for relocation and the locations to which they should be assigned were “ the imperative that customer service standards are not adversely affected” and “the location of their customer base”.

Our members have some difficulty in reconciling these two criteria with many of the office/location combinations specified in the programme. Some examples are:

- The *Department of Communications Marine and Natural Resources* is to be relocated to Cavan. This will mean that all client groups interested in marine fisheries policy will have to travel to Cavan from Dublin and remoter locations throughout Ireland to discuss crucial policy development with officials.
- The *Department of Arts Sport & Tourism* is to be relocated to Killarney. Leaving aside the fact that client groups from all parts of Ireland will now have to travel to Killarney, will there be acceptance on their part that national tourism policy should be formulated in, and administered from, Killarney?
- The *Irish Prison Service* is to be relocated to Longford. There is a recognised need for more rather than less contact between the Service’s

headquarters and the individual prisons At the end of the present re-organisation of the prisons, there will be twelve prisons – nine in the Dublin/Portlaoise area, one each in Cork and Limerick, and one in Castlerea. Longford is further than Dublin from all these prison locations except Castlerea.

- ***Development Co-Operation Ireland*** (DCI) is the overseas development division of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and its activities or closely integrated with other divisions within the Department at every level. By 2007, its annual budget will be €1 billion. Its principal client grouping comprises foreign embassies in Dublin, and Irish NGOs and other charitable organisations with overseas operations. Virtually all of these are Dublin-based, and Dóchas, the umbrella organisation for these NGOs recently moved its Dublin headquarters nearer to DCI's own location in Dublin to facilitate closer liaison between the two organisations. Its other major client grouping comprises overseas-based NGOs and – more particularly – NGOs and government representatives from the countries towards which Irish overseas aid is directed. Visits to Dublin by people and organisations in the latter client group frequently involve contact with other divisions in the Department, with the Taoiseach's office, with Oireachtas members, and with the Irish NGOs, as well as with DCI. Despite all this, DCI is to be relocated to Limerick.
- The ***Health and Safety Authority*** (HSA) is to be relocated to Thomastown. Much of its legal activity, especially where injunctions and judicial orders must be sought, is pursued through the Dublin courts; and fifty percent of its caseload is Dublin-focused.
- The ***Road Haulage Division of the Department of Transport*** was moved to Park West, adjacent to the M50, only a year ago, specifically to facilitate its haulier client base. It is now to be relocated in Loughrea, where access is greatly more difficult, and where serious traffic and parking problems may arise.
- The ***Sports Council*** has extensive day-to-day direct contact with representatives of national sports organisations, almost all of which are Dublin-based. It is to be relocated to Killarney.
- The ***Department of Education and Science*** is in continuous direct contact with teachers' unions, management bodies, and a wide range of organisations and interest groups, the majority of which are Dublin-based. The Department is now to be relocated in its entirety from Dublin to Mullingar and three other midlands locations.

We do not consider it unreasonable to enquire whether in these and in many other cases all the relevant customer service dimensions were taken into account or, if they were, what other factors were considered sufficiently important to outweigh them.

5.6 *The special treatment of IT*

One of the most revealing features of the 3rd December announcement was the decision not to assign the 835 IT jobs included in the programme to any particular location(s) at

that stage. The issues involved would be further explored and evaluated before any decisions were taken.

IT systems are, it was explained, now absolutely critical in terms of service delivery, most obviously in the case of the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. What was not made explicit, although it is abundantly clear from the past experience of departments and agencies, is that these systems are crucially dependent on the particular skills and experience of the specialist staff involved, and these specialists are one of the categories of staff least willing to relocate out of Dublin.

One is quite entitled to ask why, if the maintenance of service delivery levels, and the willingness of key staff to relocate, were sufficient cause for the adoption of a more circumspect approach to these IT areas, the same caution and detailed evaluation was not applied across the full spectrum of the departments, agencies and offices. Could it be that, while any failure within the IT services concerned would have an immediately identifiable impact on service delivery, the effects of similar problems in other areas of public administration would, because they would be more diffuse, rest below the threshold of general public and political perception?

5.7 Video conferencing?

We are unconvinced that the problems created by geographic dispersal can be resolved by the deployment of information and communications technology, and in particular video conferencing facilities. Leaving aside the enormous cost of creating the required network across a large number of office locations spread over every county in the State, the experience of the business sector is that video conferencing is complementary to, but far from a substitute for, face-to-face interaction. Moreover, the use of video conferencing is, in any event, not a realistic option in many of the service delivery areas where dispersal is likely to create problems.

6. Human resources issues

It was entirely appropriate that, in announcing the relocation programme, the Minister confirmed that, consonant with long-standing practice, relocation of civil and public service personnel will be on a voluntary basis, and that no redundancies will be involved. We fear, however, that it is this very combination of voluntarism and continued job security which may permit the emergence of a range of serious problems in the human resources arena.

6.1 Corporate memory loss

The first of these reflects the likelihood – in the light of the limited number of informal surveys carried out since the December 3rd announcement – that the voluntary relocation quota will be substantially under-subscribed within departments, agencies and offices specified for relocation. This seems especially likely at senior management level (Principals and Assistant Principals), and amongst various specialist and professional groupings, where the percentage of people willing to move is often in single figures.

Related to this is also clear evidence suggesting that a considerable number of those employees willing to relocate outside Dublin have particular locations in mind which do not correspond with the departments, agencies and offices in which they are currently employed.

Finally, previous relocation experience strongly suggests the likelihood of a strong “churning” effect, whereby every individual relocation-based transfer may entail two and frequently three further staff reassignments as the resulting staffing imbalances and mismatches are corrected.

Taken together, these factors make it probable that during the relocation process, and in some important cases for years afterwards, many departments, agencies and offices – both those which have been relocated *and* those which have not – will be staffed by personnel who, in the main, have little of the expertise and practical experience embodied in the current holders of those jobs, and indeed whose main credentials for relocation is their willingness to move out of Dublin or between offices *in* Dublin.

This applies right across the full spectrum of departments, agencies and offices, whose staff at all levels have been actively encouraged – within the framework of the public service modernisation process – to develop specialist skills and expertise appropriate to their particular areas of work and their career development.

It applies with particular force at senior manager level, where officers at Principal and Assistant Principal level have invaluable experience, insight and corporate expertise developed over a working lifetime in respect of each individual area of national and international policy areas, from communications to energy, from agriculture to environment, and from social welfare to health.

The prospect that this corporate knowledge and memory might be lost, because the senior managers involved are not in a position to relocate themselves and their families and dependents, poses problems of truly enormous proportions.

Similar considerations apply in a number of even more specialised areas, including:

- ***Office of Public Works***, which employs a large number of highly experienced professional engineers, architects and other specialists. It can take as much as four years to train specialist staff (both professional and non-professional). Current indications, we understand, are that few of these are prepared to relocate to the new locations of Trim, Kanturk and Claremorris.
- ***Ordnance Survey Ireland***, which is totally dependent on its core staff of trained cartographers, whose expertise and experience have been acquired over many years of formal and on-the-job training, and who cannot be readily replaced by non-OSI personnel in equivalent general service grades elsewhere. Thus far, we understand, fewer than 5% have indicated their willingness to relocate to Dungarvan.
- ***Development Co-Operation Ireland***, which employs significant numbers of highly skilled and experienced development specialists, all of whom are on eight-year contracts one of whose terms specifies that they be resident in the Dublin area. We understand that none has, thus far, indicated a willingness to move to Limerick.

At organisational level, loss of the reservoir of practical experience and specialist skills required for continued business effectiveness is usually – and revealingly – termed “corporate memory loss”.

The strong likelihood of its arising in the context of the current relocation proposals will pose enormous demands on the organisations concerned, and will require extensive and perhaps prolonged programmes of training and skills development.

It will also – and this is a crucial point – add considerably to the service delivery problems that we have already identified as arising from geographical dispersal.

6.2 *Career development and advancement*

We have already highlighted the likelihood that during and for some time after the relocation process, one of the most important credentials of personnel wishing to relocate will be, not possession of the specific expertise and work experience required for the jobs for which they are applying, but rather their willingness to move away from Dublin.

A similar situation will, it appears, apply in the area of career development. It is not merely that career expectations will now be attenuated by the general consideration that relocation may arise. But it is now, following the December 3rd announcement, a proposed new requirement for many promotions that candidates confirm their willingness to relocate to a new location should such need arise. There is, moreover, no guarantee that continued career development, and subsequent promotions, will not require still further relocations.

This new approach is a fundamental alteration of the terms and conditions of employment of all public servants, and a direct assault on their legitimate career expectations. It has been adopted without prior notice, and without consultation with public servants or their representatives. It cannot be reconciled either with long-standing policy and practice or with the recently enhanced emphasis – as a key element of public service modernisation – on skills acquisition, personal development, career progression, and promotion by

reference to merit and job performance. Its negative effect on morale and personal motivation can hardly be understated.

The “willing to move” provision also calls into question the precise meaning of “voluntary”. It is, we suspect, publicly perceived that, because it was announced that relocation from Dublin would be voluntary, civil and public servants were receiving fair and generous treatment, and should have little to complain about. It is almost certainly less appreciated that the choice of remaining in Dublin would severely curtail, and perhaps bring to an end, any further prospect of career advancement for the people concerned. For many of our members, the phrase “coercive voluntarism” appears a more accurate description of what is actually happening.

All of this applies with particular force to our own members at senior management level. These public servants, as reflected in successive competitive based promotions, have already demonstrated that they possess credentials of the highest quality and greatest relevance to their departments/agencies and to the public service generally.

But they are also, because of their age profile and family circumstances, the very group most likely to be affected by the family issues already highlighted and further discussed below, and thus most likely to face the choice – never previously anticipated or presented – between family obligations and completion of their career development.

And not the least consideration of all, continuance of this policy of coercive voluntarism will mean that Dublin – the nation’s capital city, and the seat of its parliament – will become the end of the career development line for scores of highly skilled, greatly experienced and totally dedicated senior public servants.

Moreover, all the above is further complicated by further aspects of the relocation proposals. The Civil Service Commission, which is envisaged officially as having a key role in decentralisation arrangements, is to be relocated to Youghal, and the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD) to Tullamore. The clear implication is that the Framework for Civil Service Training and Development 2003 – 2007, only recently drawn up in consultation with the unions, will now have to be totally re-written.

6.3 *Family issues*

We have already mentioned, albeit in somewhat general terms, the fact that relocation of public service jobs implies relocation, not only of thousands of individual public servants, but inevitably also, in most instances, their families and dependents. The detailed realities now warrant further elaboration:

- Civil and public and public servants have, in most instances, spouses or partners. Many of these spouses and partners have their own separate careers, whether by personal choice, economic necessity or both.
- Some spouses and partners also work in the public service, others not. Whichever the case, some may find it possible to relocate their own careers to the same location as their spouse; others may be able to tolerate living at separate working-week locations; and others again may have little choice but to abandon their own careers or recreate them from start.

- Many of these couples also have children living at home – attending school, college or university, or struggling to establish their own careers and futures, and whose roots are the present family home, its neighbourhood and its general environs. Having to tear up these roots poses potentially enormous social and psychological problems.
- These couples may also have other dependents, whether elderly parents or other relatives, or people reliant on their financial and other support. In such cases, relocation may be neither feasible nor desirable.
- And all these people – young children through to senior citizens – have their own friends; their own interests, lifestyles, and social relationships; and their own individual choices of educational, sporting, cultural, leisure and other activities. Once these patterns are destroyed, they may prove extremely difficult to replace.

Yet despite the readily identifiable existence, patently obvious nature and enormous scale of the issues presented by these realities, not only have these issues not been addressed, but more fundamentally they have not, for the most part, even been acknowledged. Indeed, the only indirect reference to their existence is that “the payment of removal or relocation expenses *will not arise*” (our incredulous emphasis) – no information, no advisory or counselling services, no advice on housing, no support networks, no-one charged with overall planning, co-ordination and support. Our members find this state of affairs incomprehensible, demoralising and utterly deplorable.

7. Cost issues

In the normal course of events, the planning, budgeting and value-for money (VFM) evaluation of a programme of this size, scope and impact are activities in which our members in senior management would have been extensively involved. As matters now stand, the only cost figure mentioned is the Capital Budget provision of €20 mn for initial expenditure.

It is nevertheless still possible to identify, if not actually to quantify, some of the key cost parameters within which, sooner or later, normal budgeting, management, reporting and VFM appraisal must be carried out. These include:

- Acquisition of new non-Dublin office accommodation (including sites, services, construction, fixtures, furnishing and equipment), and retention of existing Dublin accommodation to provide for parallel running during the transition process and for Dublin personnel surpluses.
- The cost – including removal and disposal of fixtures, furnishings and equipment, refurbishment of premises, and other penalties – of terminating the various commercial leases likely to be involved.
- Acquisition and installation of new IT and communications equipment, including payment to Eircom and/or other service providers for extensive new broadband and similar networks, and for upgrading of existing cabling capacity and quality at 53 new non-Dublin locations.
- Management of the recruitment, selection, promotion and relocation of 10,000-12,000 public servants, together with the large number (perhaps twice as many again) affected by “churning”.
- Active programme of staff, family and logistical support for the anticipated large numbers of relocators, and desirably a related financial assistance package
- Training and development programmes for large numbers of personnel moving to new jobs for which they do not have all the necessary skills and experience, together with the operation of parallel-running by existing jobholders (whether at the old or new locations or both) to maintain service delivery.
- Necessary duplication of staffing and skill resources, and accommodation and other facilities, in departments and offices newly assigned to a number of geographically dispersed locations.
- Greatly increased travel, personal and subsistence costs, and similarly increased loss of productive time in transit.
- Additional resources – particularly in accounting and financial control, human resources management, and training and development

– to ensure continued smooth operation and effective performance in the new decentralised environment.

It seems likely that the capital expenditure and other one-off costs associated with programme start-up and initial implementation will be a high multiple of the initial provision of €20 mn, and that the other costs involved will require significant, and potentially substantial, continuing annual budget provision.

Our members are, from the wider public viewpoint, as well as from their own perspective, acutely concerned at this departure from the accepted norms of programme planning and budgeting.

8. An opportunity missed and a challenge to meet

The four-year period since original announcement of the policy to transfer large numbers of civil and public servants to locations outside Dublin constituted a window of opportunity to:

- Establish clear criteria for choosing elements of the civil and public service which could be relocated to appropriate locations with minimum threat to committed levels of service. Thereafter, proceed with systematic evaluation of potential target offices against these criteria.
- In similar vein, establish clear criteria for choosing host locations to which elements of the civil and public service could be relocated with minimum threat to committed levels of service, which could accommodate and benefit from relocated offices, and whose choice could actively contribute to regional development policy goals. Thereafter, proceed with systematic evaluation of potential target locations against these criteria.
- Negotiate with the public service unions a new human resources policy on relocation which would encourage rather than coerce; take into account the legitimate interests of public servants and their families in Dublin, and those already relocated or wishing to relocate; and have particular regard to the need to avoid creating a public service wasteland in Dublin in terms of aspirations for career development and advancement.
- Through systematic surveying of the attitudes, preferences and concerns – personal and family, as well as professional – of civil and public servants currently located in Dublin, establish clear criteria for establishing the characteristics of those who might be willing to relocate, a framework of incentives for them so to do, and a suite of support programmes – to the standard of HR management best practice – for the employees concerned and their families.
- Proceed to initial, and then – following further consultation and review with all stakeholders – final selection of the office/location matrix to be pursued.
- Under the direction and management of a central ad hoc agency charged with singular responsibility and accountability for relocation, establish, seek appropriate approval for, and then implement an effective and sustainable programme for implementation, with appropriate phasing and timetabling.
- Establish, also, an agreed and effective methodology for monitoring progress and, where required, fine tuning of the entire process.

In short the opportunity existed to enhance both the quality of public service and the quality of life of those who deliver it, and to make a real and effective contribution to the development and future prosperity of communities throughout the country.

Failure to grasp this opportunity is not a matter for which the Association and its members can in any way be held accountable.

Having made it clear from the outset that we accepted Government policy prerogatives in this area, that we appreciated the potential presented by relocation for all involved, and that we would support further relocation programmes which met reasonable criteria, we have since made repeated efforts to secure further discussion and consultation. These efforts were, in every respect, and in every instance, quite simply rebuffed over the past four years. It only now, belatedly, after key decisions have already been taken, that a restricted process of consultation has been initiated.

Moreover, the senior managers whom we represent, and whose long-established role encompasses participation in and advice on all aspects of the planning, implementation and management of major policy programmes were never requested to become involved – whether at department or global level – in relocation planning and management.

Accordingly, while shocked at the previously un-flagged December announcement of the main details of the programme, we are unsurprised that those details betrayed such obvious shortcomings in preparation and planning, and that they manifested the regrettable – and sometimes deplorable – flaws that we have outlined in this document.

Neither the Association nor its members take any pleasure in preparing a document such as this. But the situation in which we find ourselves is emphatically not of our own choice, the issues raised are of considerable national importance, and our members consider themselves both professionally and personally obliged to make their voices heard.

What is required now is a return to rationality, common sense, sensitivity, compassion and patience – all characteristics manifestly, and most regrettably, absent from the details set out in December's announcement.

Making haste slowly might now be an appropriate guiding principle. Initiation, even at this late stage, of the procedures outlined on the previous page might be an appropriate new starting point.

9. Executive Committee Motion for Special Delegate Conference

This Special Delegate Conference

- (1) **Endorses** Association policy on decentralisation as set out in the General Secretary's letter of 30 June 2000 to Mr Tom Considine, then Secretary General, Public Service Management and Development, Department of Finance. This policy envisages a voluntary decentralisation programme developed in consultation with public services unions; with locations chosen on a rational public interest basis; which enhances rather than takes from administrative efficiency; with removal and relocation expenses paid and which respects the rights and legitimate career and development requirements of public service staff and organisations.
- (2) **Notes** that the Government's intention to decentralise 10,300 public service jobs to 53 locations in 25 counties constitutes the most fundamental change in civil and public administration since the foundation of the State and which, without any allowance for reassignment of staff wishing to remain in the capital city, potentially affects up to 60,000 people, i.e. staff and their immediate families.
- (3) **Deplores** the failure of Government:
 - (i) [to engage since the year 2000 in meaningful consultations with public service unions, in fundamental breach of social partnership principles and of the Sustaining Progress Agreement;](#)
 - (ii) to carry out a survey to establish staff interest in decentralisation in advance of determining locations;
 - (iii) to develop or publish a strategic policy and business plan incorporating financial analysis, future costings and impact analysis on the effective delivery of public services, on regional development or on local communities having regard to the National Spatial Strategy;
 - (iv) to develop a rational and integrated Human Resources policy on decentralisation over the past three years as part of a wider strategic and business planning approach to decentralisation;
 - (v) to adopt a realistic time frame for implementation rather than the "body count" approach clearly designed to impact on local and general election deadlines;

- (4) **Endorses** the view of the Executive Committee (following intensive consultation with Branches) that some choices of locations and aspects of the decentralisation programme will
- (i) seriously inhibit the capacity of Ministers and Departments to effectively discharge central corporate governance and policy development functions, will invariably lead to the unnecessary engagement of political orientated consultants, spin doctors and "advisers" to bridge the gap between Dublin based Ministers and their country based Departments and will seriously undermine the capacity in future to reassign Ministerial and Departmental functions;
 - (ii) create serious difficulties in many cases in the effective discharge of departmental or agency functions having regard to the necessary interaction at a distance with principal client groups and public;
 - (iii) constitute the fragmentation and dispersal of civil and public administration which will give rise to serious inefficiencies unless substantial staff and financial resources are provided on an ongoing basis; and
 - (iv) give rise to massive ongoing transmigration of staff, substantial surpluses, widespread loss of corporate knowledge and memory, major Human Resources and Industrial Relations problems and the potential for ongoing organisational instability and administrative chaos.

5. Calls on the Executive Committee:

- (i) to publicise Association concerns and ensure that these are brought to the attention of the Taoiseach, Minister for Finance, political leaders, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance and Service, the Decentralisation Implementation Group, the Department of Finance, ICTU, public service unions and the public;
- (ii) to seek the drawing up and publication by Government of detailed costs and impact analysis on all the principal stakeholders and to conduct a survey of staff interest before proceeding with the decentralisation programme;
- (iii) to request Government to reconsider aspects of the decentralisation programme which undermine administrative efficiency from the perspective of corporate governance or interaction with principal client groups or the public;
- (iv) to seek an extended 10 to 15 year time frame which will diminish the likelihood of substantial surpluses, loss of corporate knowledge and memory and general administrative difficulties;
- (v) to seek substantial additional staff and financial resources with a view to ensuring that the implementation of decentralisation will not result in substantial administrative inefficiencies;

- (vi) to emphasise to Government the widespread concern among civil service managers represented by the Association at the proposal to decentralise critical IT functions and the desirability that the status quo be maintained unless absolute certainty can be guaranteed on the continued delivery of effective IT services;
- (vii) to negotiate, in consultation with other unions and with the Department of Finance a new Human Resources policy on decentralisation which will not be coercive, will take into account the interests of members in Dublin, members already decentralised and members wishing to decentralise, and will have regard in particular to the desirability of not creating a public service wasteland in Dublin in respect of legitimate career and development requirements.
- (viii) to report progress to the Association's Annual Delegate Conference on 15 May, 2004

Executive Committee