

## JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Thursday, 8 September 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

**Present:** Councillors Jim Bollan, Karen Conaghan, Craig Edward, David McBride, Martin Rooney and Hazel Sorrell; Michael Dolan and James Halfpenny\* (EIS); Derek Hutchison and John Wagner (GMB); Aly McCulloch and Susan Shannon (UNISON); and Chris Rossi and Margaret Wood (Unite).

\*Arrived later in the meeting.

**Attending:** Amanda Graham, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology; Laurence Slavin, Chief Officer – Resources; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution & Property; Alison McBride, Strategic People & Change Manager; Sylvia Chatfield, Head of Mental Health, Learning Disability & Addictions, Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Lesley James, Head of Children's Health, Care & Criminal Justice; Audrey Slater, Head of HR, HSCP; Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer – Services for Children & Young People; Louise Hastings, People & Change Partner; Lorraine Mair, Organisational Development & Change Lead; Alan Douglas, Manager of Legal Services; and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf Councillor Daniel Lennie; David Scott (GMB); and Sean Davenport and David Smith (UNISON).

### APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR, VICE CHAIR AND JOINT SECRETARIES

The Manager of Legal Services invited the Forum to consider, in terms of its constitution, a number of appointments for the next year and it was agreed:-

- (1) that Councillor David McBride be appointed as the Chair of the Forum;
- (2) that David Smith (UNISON) and John Wagner (GMB) be appointed as joint Vice Chairs; and
- (3) that Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology, be appointed as the Joint Secretary for the Council Side and Chris Rossi be appointed as Joint Secretary for the Trades Union Side.

Councillor McBride then assumed the Chair.

## **Councillor David McBride in the Chair**

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 16 June 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### **PRESENTATION: STRESS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK REVIEW**

Louise Hastings, People & Change Partner, gave a presentation on the Stress Management Framework Review. The main points covered in the presentation were:-

- That personal stress remains one of the top three reasons for sickness absence.
- That the review of the framework was important in order to ensure that a pro-active approach to work-related stress is in place and that improved data could help to identify root causes and appropriate early interventions.
- The importance of the employee voice in terms of fair work.
- That a number of focus groups had been completed with employees and trades union representatives across a range of service areas within the Council and that the Employee Wellbeing Group was taking forward actions to improve the experience of employees and managers.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed to note the information contained in the presentation.

### **ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CHANGE & DIGITAL (ODC&D) UPDATE**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – People & Technology providing an update on:-

- (a) progress across the full range of learning and development opportunities for all employees; and
- (b) the introduction of the Digital Skills Support Framework.

After discussion and having heard the Organisational Development & Change Lead, the People & Change Partner and the Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities in explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed to note the progress made and to continue to support learning and development for all employees.

Note: Mr Halfpenny entered the meeting during consideration of this item.

## **ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT – EMPLOYMENT EQUALITIES**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – People & Technology advising of employment equalities matters for the year 2021/22.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic People & Change Manager and the Head of HR, HSCP, in explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

## **TRADES UNION ISSUES**

### Dignity and Respect Policy (item requested by Joint Trades Union)

Having heard Ms Wood, it was noted that the trades union and HR officers continued to be in discussion in relation to this matter and that consequently it would not be raised at the present meeting.

### Length of Time Taken for Investigations (item requested by Joint Trades Union)

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the concerns expressed in relation to the length of time taken for investigations to conclude;
- (2) to note that delays could arise for a number of reasons including employees, managers or trades union representatives being unwell, on leave or otherwise unavailable; and
- (3) to note that there was no trend which could determine a consistent reason for delays but that statistics would continue to be monitored and reported bi-annually to the Forum, and that a report was due to be submitted to the next meeting.

### Early Years (item requested by Joint Trades Union)

The Forum heard from Ms Wood who advised that concerns had been raised by Early Years employees in relation to the Early Years action plan and that a mass meeting had been scheduled in order that the matter could be discussed further.

In response the Chief Education Officer advised that the actions contained in the plan had been identified following a survey of Early Years employees and that she would be happy to receive further feedback from them and to continue to meet with Ms Wood and other trades union representatives to develop solutions to the employees' concerns.

#### Care in the Third Sector (item requested by Joint Trades Union)

The Forum heard from Ms Wood who expressed concern at the involvement of third sector organisations in providing residential care and with care sometimes being provided by agency staff.

In response the Head of Children's Health, Care & Criminal Justice and the Head of Mental Health, Learning Disability & Addictions informed the Forum:-

- (a) that it was a matter for individuals to decide for themselves which organisation would provide their care; and
- (b) that third sector organisations were distinct from private sector ones in being not-for-profit.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a briefing note would be provided to members of the Forum detailing the background to this matter, the choices which are available to individuals in relation to their care, and the services which are provided by the Health & Social Care Partnership.

#### Social Work (item requested by Joint Trades Union)

The Forum heard from Ms Wood who advised that employees in the Children & Families service had expressed concerns in relation to the availability of suitable venues to accommodate supervised family contact.

In response the Head of Children's Health, Care & Criminal Justice advised the Forum:-

- (a) that she had met with trades union colleagues to discuss this matter and that a briefing paper had been provided to them;
- (b) that a result of the pandemic there were fewer suitable venues and that contact opportunities were limited; and
- (c) that three consultation meetings had been arranged with employees to discuss the matter further and that it was hoped that agreement on a way forward would be reached soon.

### Violence Against Staff in Schools (item requested by EIS)

The Forum heard from Mr Dolan who raised concerns in relation to: (i) an increase in violent incidents in schools; (ii) the system in place for reporting such incidents being cumbersome; (iii) the system for teacher/pupil contact through the internet not having a secure firewall; and (iv) offending pupils not being removed from their school.

Mr Dolan requested that consideration be given to: (i) an increase in resources to tackle the issue; (ii) an increase in the number of available Additional Support Needs places in schools; (iii) a bespoke system being introduced for reporting violent incidents in schools; (iv) an improved policy of supporting employees who feel threatened; and (v) a technical review of the online system of contact between teachers and pupils to ensure that inappropriate material cannot be passed via the system.

In response the Chief Education Officer stated:-

- (1) that officers would continue to discuss with the trades union possible changes to the system for reporting violent incidents;
- (2) that she understood that there had only been one incident relating to inappropriate material having been passed from a pupil to a teacher via the internet but that she would provide an update to Mr Dolan on the firewall at their next meeting;
- (3) that officers took seriously the reports of employees feeling frightened or threatened;
- (4) that the Council had an obligation to provide education to pupils in the local authority area and that action was being taken to seek more Additional Support Needs places in view of there being more pupils who experience difficulties with communication; and
- (5) that a draft action plan to address the issues raised by Mr Dolan had been developed and a copy provided to him, and that she would welcome his feedback in advance of the their next meeting.

Following discussion and having heard the Chief Education Officer and the Senior Education Officer – Services for Children & Young People in answer to Members' questions, the Forum noted the position in respect of this matter, and that officers and the trades union would work together to improve the situation.

Having heard the Manager of Legal Services, the Forum noted that it would be helpful if, when intimating agenda items in the future, the trades union could include more detail of the issue they wished to raise at the meeting and the actions they would like to be considered, in order that officers could be in a better position to respond to the issues at the meeting.

## **PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Forum agreed:-

- (1) that its future meetings should be held as face to face meetings; and
- (2) the undernoted dates, times and venues for future meetings:-
  - Thursday, 1 December 2022 at 2.00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall.
  - Thursday, 16 March 2023 at 2.00 p.m. in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton.
  - Thursday, 8 June 2023 at 2.00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall.
  - Thursday, 7 September 2023 at 2.00 p.m. in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton.

The meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.