

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Tuesday, 28 November 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

- Present:** Councillors Tony Devine, Margaret Bootland and Gail Casey; Tom Dick, Margaret Ferris, Tom Morrison, Kath Ryall, Isabel Paterson and Jeanette Sloss (UNISON); Jackaleen McMonagle (AMICUS); Charlie McDonald, Neil Casey and Brian Courtney (T&GWU) and Duncan Borland (GMB)
- Attending:** Tricia O'Neill, Head of Personnel Services; Alan Douglas, Manager of Best Value and Special Projects and Nuala Borthwick, Administrative Assistant.
- Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Provost Alistair Macdonald and Stewart Patterson (EIS), Mick Conroy (GMB) and Alex McEwan (SSTA).

Councillor Tony Devine in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 31 August 2006 were submitted and approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to the item 'Collective Bargaining' under 'Trade Union Issues'. It was noted that Mr Rainey had raised the concerns of the Trades Unions and not Mr Morrison.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Employee Mileage Expenses – VAT Fuel Receipts', the Forum noted:-

- (a) that a letter would be sent to all employees to remind them that Employee Mileage claims must be submitted with a VAT receipt and that the Council will no longer pay out expenses without a VAT receipt; and
- (b) that Ms O'Neill would provide the unions with information on the development of a risk assessment for employees driving their own vehicles from which a new claim form would be developed to include licence endorsements.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Trades Union Recruitment', it was noted that the Trades Unions had submitted their

nominations for Front Page training and that Ms O'Neill would liaise with Ms McLafferty in order to progress the training.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Parking Restrictions', Ms O'Neill advised that there was no further update to report on this matter. Having heard the Convener, Councillor Devine, it was agreed that the issue would be dealt with under the item 'No Smoking Policy'.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Operation of the Re-grading Panel', it was noted that the Trades Unions were totally opposed to the abolition of the re-grading panel prior to the implementation of Single Status and that Ms O'Neill would report the Trades Unions view to the Corporate Management Team (CMT). It was agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum on this issue following consultation with the CMT.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Job Analyst – Payment', Ms O'Neill advised that there was no further update to report on this matter.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Collective Bargaining' and contracts for new starts, it was agreed that Ms O'Neill would look at the specific issues raised by the trades unions and report back to the next meeting.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'Appeals Committee Hearings' and change in membership of the Appeals Committee in relation to part-heard appeals, it was noted that in the case of a particular ongoing disciplinary appeal, the appeal would not proceed if one of the two remaining Councillors was unable to attend an Appeals Committee Hearing.

In relation to a point raised by Ms Ferris concerning the item 'Quorum for Meeting', it was agreed that there should be sufficient numbers of Elected Members present to avoid the meeting being inquorate should one Member require to leave the meeting.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Morrison concerning the item 'National Fraud Initiative – Data Matching Exercise', it was agreed that Ms O'Neill would re-issue the appropriate paperwork to union representatives in each department.

MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND HEALTH & SAFETY MEETINGS

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing Minutes from departmental Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meetings.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed that Ms O'Neill would write to all Directors requesting:-

- (1) that Officers and Union Members be clearly identified in all JCC Minutes;
- (2) that a template be produced and issued for departmental JCC minutes; and
- (3) that all JCC minutes, in particular the Care and Cleaning JCC Minutes, be produced in time for issue with Joint Consultative Forum papers.

Having heard Ms Ferris, it was further agreed that non-teaching staff be referred to as 'Educational Support Staff' in future reports on Minutes of Departmental Joint Consultative Committees.

DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information for the period 1 April 2006 – 30 September 2006 for discipline and grievance appeals held at departmental level.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (1) that the Trades Union side collate statistics for discipline and grievance appeals held at departmental level which are known to be outstanding for discussion at the next meeting of the JCF;
- (2) that Ms O'Neill write to Directors to invite them to attend future meetings of the JCF;
- (3) that a Working Group be set up to review the Appeals Procedure and that a management representative from each department be appointed as a member of the Working Group; and
- (4) that a breakdown of Dignity at Work cases for each department be included with future reports on Discipline and Grievance Information.

NO SMOKING POLICY

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Forum held on 31 August 2006 (Page 2632, Paragraph 9858), a report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information in relation to complaints by the Trades Unions of the actions taken so far by Directors to minimise the effects of passive smoking on employees whilst working directly with client/client groups.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) that the Head of Social Work Operations, Department of Social Work Services be invited to attend the next meeting to address the issue of smoking in Council Care Homes;
- (2) that Mr Morrison would provide Ms O'Neill with details of employees who have raised a formal complaint or any concerns with managers with respect to the issue of passive smoking in any of the Council's care homes;
- (3) to note the revisions to the Council's 'No Smoking Policy' as approved by the Corporate Services Committee on 28 November 2006; and
- (4) to continue to monitor the effects of passive smoking on the workforce.

Having heard the Convener, Councillor Devine, it was agreed that the issue of Parking Restrictions will also be raised with the Head of Social Work Operations, Department of Social Work Services at the next meeting of the JCF.

Note: Kath Ryall left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

VARIATION IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Having heard the Convener, the Forum agreed that the order of business be varied as hereinafter recorded.

LACK OF CLEANERS IN COUNCIL BUILDINGS – MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Forum held on 31 August 2006 (Page 2635, Paragraph 9876 refers), a memo was submitted from the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services providing information on the reduction in cleaning posts.

Following discussion and having heard the Manager of Best Value and Special Projects, it was agreed that the Head of Personnel Services write to Lynda McLaughlin, Manager of Commercial Operations to address the issues raised and requesting a meeting with Trades Unions representatives prior to the next meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum.

Note: Charlie Macdonald left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

ACTIVITY ON WHISTLEBLOWING HOTLINE

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Forum held on 31 August 2006 (Page 2632, Paragraph 9856 refers) a report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services concerning the question of whether any malicious allegations had been made through the Whistleblowing Hotline.

Having heard the Manager of Best Value and Special Projects in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) that activity on the whistleblowing hotline continue to be monitored; and
- (2) that a report on activity on the whistleblowing Hotline detailing numbers of any malicious allegations be provided to the JCF in 6 months time.

WORK AND FAMILIES ACT 2006

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing an update on revisions to the Council's Maternity Allowance Scheme and Special Leave Scheme required to reflect the legislative changes under the Work and Families Act 2006.

Having heard the Head of Personnel Services in further explanation the Forum agreed to note the report.

SICKNESS ABSENCE STATISTICS – QUARTER 2

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing an update on the levels of employee absence during the 3 month period 1 July 2006 to 30 September 2006.

The Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

TRADES UNION ISSUES

The following Items were considered at the request of the Trades Unions:-

Job Freeze

Mr Morrison raised the concerns of the Trades Unions in relation to the lack of consultation with them over the current job freeze.

Following discussion it was agreed that Management would notify the Chief Executive of the Trades Unions' concerns over lack of consultation in relation to the current job freeze.

Clerical Staff - partial re-grading

Mr Morrison raised the concerns of the Trades Unions in relation to the partial re-grading of clerical staff in the Department of Social Work Services.

Following discussion and having heard the Head of Personnel in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed that Management would confirm with the Director of Social Work Services that the partial re-grading of clerical staff is currently a departmental issue.

Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

It was agreed that the Trades Unions issue in relation to Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures had already been covered in the item 'Discipline and Grievance Information'.

STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Forum agreed to note the current position on the following:-

- (i) Best Value
- (ii) Budget Planning
- (iii) Single Status
- (iv) McCrone Recommendations
- (v) Absence
- (vi) Health and Safety
- (vii) Training and Development

Appeals Committee Hearings

The Forum heard from Mr Douglas who provided an update on this matter. It was noted that since the JCF meeting on 31 August 2006, there had been 1 Dismissal Appeal part-heard, 2 Grievance Appeals heard and 3 new Grievance Appeals had been submitted. It was further noted that at present there were 3 Dismissal Appeals (including one part-heard) and 10 Grievance Appeals outstanding.

Other Business

Having heard Ms. O'Neill, the Forum noted that the Council would be developing and implementing a Council Scheme of Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance to run in January 2007 which would take account of new pension legislation. It was further noted that a report on the issue would be presented to the meeting of Council on 20 December 2006.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday, 1 March 2007 at 2.00 p.m. in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton with a pre-meeting involving the trades unions representatives only, taking place at 11.00 a.m. the same day.

The meeting closed at 4.45 p.m.