

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Rosebery Place, Clydebank on Thursday, 21 August 2003 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Provost Alistair Macdonald and Councillors Margaret Bootland and Tony Devine; Jackaleen McMonagle (Amicus – MSF); Michael Conroy and Arthur Rennie (GMB); James Morison (SSTA); Charlie McDonald, Neil Casey and Brian Courtney (T&GWU); Harry Frew and James Smith (UCATT); and Tom Morrison, Tom Rainey, Tom Dick, Margaret Ferris and William Keady (UNISON).

Attending: Gerry McNerney, Head of Personnel; Alan Douglas, Manager - Best Value & Special Projects; Andrea Gibson, Section Head (Employee Development); and Craig Stewart, Administrative Assistant.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Norman Bissell (EIS); Donald Hamilton (GMB); Kathleen Ryall (UNISON) and James Fraser (UCATT).

Mr Tom Morrison in the Chair

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

382 Before commencing with the business of the meeting, it was agreed that Councillor Bootland would be appointed Vice-Chair.

383 The Chair, Mr. Morrison, advised that he would require to leave the meeting early and that Councillor Bootland would take over for the remainder of business on the agenda.

384 It was noted that as a year had elapsed since Mr. Morrison had been appointed Chair, in terms of the constitution of the Forum, Councillor Bootland would take up the position of Chair of the JCF immediately after this meeting, with Mr. Morrison being appointed Vice-Chair.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

385 The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 20 February 2003 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

- 386 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Rainey concerning the item “CoSLA Circulars – Human Resource Advice 1/02, 1/03, 2/03 Industrial Relations Circular 1/03”, it was noted that trades unions were not bound by CoSLA Circulars and that information contained therein was a statement of the management position.
- 387 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Rainey concerning the number of outstanding appeals, Mr. Douglas advised the Forum:-
- (a) that out of 5 disciplinary appeals, two appeals had been heard and dates for meetings of the Appeals Committee had been arranged for another two;
 - (b) that since the meeting of the Forum held on 21 August 2003, 1 new disciplinary appeal and 1 new grievance appeal had been received.
- 388 The Forum noted the position in relation thereto.
- 389 Mr. McDonald raised the issue of Lone working. Following discussion and having heard Mr. McNerney in elaboration, it was noted that Mr. McNerney would liaise with Mr. McMillan, Director of Commercial & Technical Services, in relation to discussion on the provision of appropriate training courses to address concerns surrounding safe systems of work and risk assessments.
- 390 Having heard Mr. McNerney, it was noted that information on the nature of work that was outsourced was in the process of being compiled.
- 391 After hearing Mr. Rainey, it was noted that it would be desirable to have a draft of the minute within a month or so of the meeting, together with action points. The position was noted.
- 392 Having heard Mr. Rainey raise the issue of Service Level Agreements, the Forum heard from Mr. McNerney in reply. The position was noted in relation thereto.
- 393 Mr. Rainey raised the issue of skillseekers and asked if there had been any further progress since the last meeting of the Forum in which concerns had been expressed in relation thereto. Having heard Mr. McNerney, it was noted that any suggestions on a revised wording of the policy concerning skillseekers was most welcome and would be considered in any review.
- 394 In relation to a point raised by Provost Macdonald concerning the WDC CCTV Code of Practice, it was noted that any concerns on the operation of the Code of Practice policies should be communicated to him in writing in order that he could communicate any concerns to the CCTV Sub-Committee.
- 395 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Rainey concerning the item “Security of Council Buildings/Offices”, Mr. Douglas advised the Forum:-

that reception works at the Municipal Buildings, Dumbarton and Town Hall, Clydebank had meant improvements in security;

- (a) of the position in relation to the shared reception area at the Council Offices, Rosebery Place, Clydebank whereby the majority of usage of the building meant that control thereof was under the auspices of the Department of Social Work and Housing Services; and
- (b) that a capital bid had been submitted for the reconfiguration of the reception area at the Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton but no budget provision had yet been identified.

396 Following discussion, it was agreed:-

- (1) that Mr. McInerney would liaise with the Head of Legal and Administrative Services concerning security arrangements and that a designated senior contact would be identified at each of the main Council buildings; and
- (2) that the outcome of the capital bid referred to at (c) above would be reported to a future meeting of the Forum in due course.

NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS 1997 – 1998

397 With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the JCF held on 20 February 2003, a report was submitted by the Head of Personnel providing an update on issues surrounding National Insurance Contributions during financial year 1997 – 1998.

398 Having heard Mr. McInerney, the Forum agreed that the terms of the report be noted.

SCHEME OF DELEGATED FUNCTIONS - INSURANCE

399 A report was submitted by the Head of Legal and Administrative Services providing information on the 'Scheme of Delegation' operated by the former Strathclyde Regional Council and the implications of operating such a Scheme for West Dunbartonshire Council.

400 After discussion and having heard Mr. Douglas in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed that the matter be continued meantime pending further clarification of the potential effect of existing SJNC agreements on payments for loss of tools.

SICKNESS ABSENCE STATISTICS – QUARTERS 3 & 4 – 2002/2003

- 401 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel advising on the levels of employee absence during the 6 month period 1 October 2002 – 31 March 2003.
- 402 Having heard Mr. McInerney and following discussion, the Forum agreed that the contents of the report be noted.

LEARNING REPRESENTATIVE AGREEMENT

- 403 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel providing a jointly agreed Council framework that recognised the role of Learning Representatives in encouraging lifelong learning for employees in West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 404 Having heard Mr. McInerney and Ms. Gibson in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed that the Agreement for Learning Representatives be adopted and that a formal review of the agreement would take place in June 2004 to allow time to assess the impact of this new area of legislation.

HEALTHY RETURN

- 405 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel advising on the Healthy Return Initiative.
- 406 It was noted that Healthy Return was a new initiative operated by the Health Board in tandem with the Benefits Service aimed at helping people to recover their health and return to work. In this regard, it was targeted at people who have been off work sick for between 6 weeks and 6 months.
- 407 After discussion, the Forum agreed that the healthy return initiative be promoted to the Council's workforce.

MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL JCC's

- 408 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel providing copies of the minutes from departmental Joint Consultative Committee meetings and Corporate Safety Committee meeting.
- 409 After discussion, the Forum agreed to note the terms of the report.

STANDING ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

410 After discussion and having heard Mr. McNerney, the Forum agreed to note the current position of the standing items of business, namely Appeals Committee Hearings, Best Value, Budget Planning, Absence and Health and Safety.

411 In particular, the following items were discussed:-

Single Status

412 Discussion took place on the issue of single status and Mr. McNerney provided an update on the current position of job evaluation and the progress that had been made in this respect. The Forum noted the position.

McCrone Recommendations

413 With regard to the above, it was noted, having heard Mr. McNerney, that he would be arranging a meeting between Messrs. Morrison and Rainey and Education management in order to consider the issue of expenditure for support staff.

Training and Development

414 After hearing Mr. McNerney, it was noted that a copy of the policy had been put out to consultation. Following discussion, the Forum agreed to note the current position in relation thereto. It was noted that a copy of the policy would be issued to Councillor Bootland.

ITEMS RAISED BY TRADES UNION SIDE

415 The Forum agreed to deal with a list of 6 items that had been raised by the trades union side.

PPP/PFI

416 Having heard Councillor Bootland, it was noted that the Leader of the Council, Councillor White, would be arranging to meet with representatives of the trades unions in respect of this matter.

Housing Stock Transfer

417 It was noted that while there was no update on this matter at the present time, it would be premature to speculate on this issue as no decision had been taken in relation thereto.

Considerations of an ICT Protocol

- 418 It was noted that Mr. McNerney had been in discussion with the Council's Data Protection Officer, Mr. Alexander, in relation to establishing guidelines for employees and that consultation would take place with the trades unions as soon as possible.

Flexi-Time – Loss of Hours

- 419 Mr. McNerney advised that the question of employees losing flexitime as the end of the flexible hours accounting period was essentially a personal matter for individual employees as there was no pressure to work beyond the required time. Were employees encountering any such pressure, procedures existed whereby employees could raise their concerns with management.

Disciplinary Procedures – Warnings/Time Limits

- 420 The Forum heard Mr. McNerney in explanation of the above and it was noted that the trades unions would be consulted on the proposal of having a review period by the relevant Director in relation to final written warnings without limit of time.

NOTE: At this point in the meeting, Mr. Morrison left the meeting and Councillor Bootland assumed the Chair.

Work/Life Balance Policies – Flexible Working

- 421 Having heard Mr. Rainey concerning the above, Mr. McNerney advised the Forum that the policies had been considered by the CMT and consultation would take place with the trades unions in due course.

ADDITIONAL ITEM OF BUSINESS

Christmas and New Year Pays

- 422 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel advising on the proposals for multiple pays during the forthcoming Christmas and New Year period.
- 423 The Forum agreed to consider the proposals contained in the report and respond direct to Mr. McNerney with any comments/observations.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 424 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday, 20 November 2003 at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton with a pre-meeting involving the trades unions representatives only taking place at 11.00 a.m. on the same day.

The meeting closed at 4.32 p.m.