

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held by video conference on Thursday, 3 December 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Karen Conaghan, Jim Finn, David McBride, Jonathan McColl and Iain McLaren; James Halfpenny (EIS); Claire Greer and David Scott (GMB); Claire Mackenzie (SSTA); Sean Davenport, Andy McCallion* and David Smith (UNISON); and Chris Rossi and Margaret Wood (Unite).

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Attending: Angela Wilson, Strategic Director – Transformation and Public Service Reform; Victoria Rogers, Strategic Lead – People & Technology; Malcolm Bennie, Strategic Lead – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead – Regeneration; Stephen West, Strategic Lead – Resources; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer – Pupil Support; Amanda Coulthard, Performance & Strategy Manager; Alison McBride, Strategic People & Change Manager; Louise Hastings and LeeAnne Galasso, People & Change Partners; Fiona Holland, Assistant HR Adviser; Raymond Lynch, Senior Solicitor; and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Val Jennings (UNISON) and John Wagner (GMB).

Councillor Jonathan McColl in the Chair

APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR AND JOINT SECRETARY FOR THE TRADE UNION SIDE

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 17 September 2020 and in terms of its constitution, Councillor McColl, Chair, invited the Trade Union Side to make nominations for appointments to the Forum, which would be effective until September 2021, and it was agreed:-

- (1) that David Smith (UNISON) and John Wagner (GMB) be appointed as joint Vice Chairs of the Forum; and
- (2) that Chris Rossi be appointed as Joint Secretary for the Trade Union Side.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Note: Mr McCallion entered the meeting at this point.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 17 September 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Having heard Councillor McColl, Chair, the Committee agreed to vary the order of business as hereinafter minuted.

LAUNCH OF CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – People & Technology providing an update on progress of the Cycle to Work Scheme.

Having heard the Strategic Lead in further explanation of the report, the Forum agreed to note the contents and the confirmation that 38 applications had been received.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

A report was submitted by the Strategic Leads for Citizen, Culture & Facilities, and People & Technology providing an update on employee engagement actions being progressed through Strategic Lead Delivery Plans.

Following discussion and having heard the Performance & Strategy Manager in further explanation of the report, the Forum agreed to note that each Strategic Area was progressing specific service improvement activities through 2020/21 Delivery Plans (as reported to the service committees), in response to the results of the 2019 Employee Engagement activity.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS MONITORING: BI-ANNUAL UPDATE, APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2020

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – People & Technology advising of progress on employment relations matters for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020 across the Council.

Having heard Ms Hastings, People & Change Partner, in further explanation of the report, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING: BI-ANNUAL UPDATE 2020/21(COUNCIL-WIDE)

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – People & Technology providing a detailed analysis on Council-wide employee wellbeing and attendance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020.

Following discussion and having heard Ms Hastings, People & Change Partner, and the Strategic Lead in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed to note the annual findings for reported absence from 1 April to 30 September 2020, and in particular:-

- (1) the decrease in Council-wide sickness absence of 5,684 full time equivalent (FTE) days lost compared to the same period the previous year;
- (2) that personal stress had increased by 6% and minor illnesses had decreased by 6% compared to the previous year and as expected given the impact of the pandemic;
- (3) that absences attributed to COVID 19 isolation had not been included in sickness absence statistics as these were recorded as special leave in line with employment terms and conditions and the nationally agreed approach communicated by COSLA, and that only absences attributed to confirmed cases of notifiable disease (COVID 19) were recorded as sickness; and
- (4) that a number of services had been restructured in Quarter 1 2019 and so any historical comparisons should be considered as indicative and not an absolute figure.

TRADES UNIONS ISSUES

Trade Union Convener Facility Time (item requested by GMB)

The Forum heard from Ms Greer who expressed concern that the Trade Union Facility Agreement in operation in the Council states that there should only be three trade union conveners and that it does not clarify how facility time should be calculated and so needs to be made clearer, more transparent and have structure.

In response, the Strategic Lead – People & Technology stated:-

- (a) that the number of full-time equivalent conveners was related to the level of union membership when the agreement was reached with all signatory unions;
- (b) that in 2014 it had been agreed with the (former) GMB regional organiser that its convener would have two full days facility time per week;

- (c) that a review of the Facility Agreement was currently taking place via the Conveners' Group and that any changes would require the approval of all conveners; and
- (d) that if all conveners were to agree changes to the Agreement it would then be presented to the Corporate Services Committee for final approval, it being noted that the Committee would next meet in February 2021.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed that the up to date position in respect of possible changes to the Agreement would be reported to the next meeting of the Forum.

Scottish Social Services Council Registration Fee (item requested by GMB)

Having heard Mr Scott it was noted that this item had been withdrawn by GMB.

Overpayment Issues in HSCP (item requested by GMB)

The Forum heard from Mr Scott who stated that there had been a number of instances of employees in HSCP receiving overpayments, that these had not been picked up by auditors, that payroll processes had not been followed correctly and that employees had payments taken from them without their authorisation.

In response, the Strategic Lead – People & Technology stated:-

- (a) that payroll processes had been followed correctly in the specific case being cited and currently communicated with pay team colleagues;
- (b) that an overpayment/underpayment procedure had previously been agreed with trades unions and that this obliged employees to quickly declare an overpayment in order that steps could be taken for monies to be recovered; and
- (c) that the percentage of overpayments/underpayments was small but could occur where deadlines were missed, and that such occurrences were monitored on a monthly basis and did not demonstrate any non-compliance trends in any particular areas. There is always a margin of error to be expected in an organisation of this size.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Strategic Lead would speak with the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud to check if overpayments/underpayments would form part of Internal Audit's audit plan;
- (2) to note that before matters were escalated to this Forum, agreed policies and procedures for escalation must be followed allowing an appropriate senior officer to be given an opportunity to try to resolve matters; and

- (3) to note the Strategic Lead's advice that deductions to recover overpayments were carried out in accordance with employment law.

The meeting closed at 2.45 p.m.

DRAFT