

## **JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Thursday, 25 September 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

**Present:** Councillors George Black, Jim Finn, David McBride, Jim McElhill and John Millar; Margaret Ferris, Denise McLafferty, Tom Morrison, Angela Nicoll, Isobel Paterson and Tom Dick (UNISON); Jackaleen McMonagle, Brian Courtney, Charlie McDonald and Neil Casey (UNITE); Duncan Borland and Mick Conroy (GMB); John Kennedy (UCATT) and Stewart Paterson (EIS).

**Attending:** Bill Clark, Acting Chief Executive/Executive Director of Social Work and Health, Terry Lanagan, Executive Director of Educational Services; Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Tricia O'Neill, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development; Nigel Ettles, Principal Solicitor and Nuala Borthwick, Committee Officer.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Margaret Bootland and Ronnie McColl.

**Margaret Ferris, Vice-Chair in the Chair**

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 26 June 2008 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided an update in relation to the Trade Union issue 'Recruitment Practices' and advised that a Working Group was looking at changes in the Recruitment Policy and Procedure particularly in respect of the Recruitment Portal and the concerns of the trades unions would be incorporated into the advice and guidance that would be issued to managers in this regard.

In relation to a point raised by Mr Paterson under the heading 'Minutes of Previous Meeting' in relation to Travelling Expenses, the Forum noted that a short life Working Group had been established to investigate the rates paid to staff and Elected Members who use their own transport for Council business and that the Working Group would report to a future meeting of the JCF.

**PROGRESS REPORT –  
ALTERNATIVE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
BUILDING CLEANING SERVICES IN ST. ANDREW’S HIGH SCHOOL**

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the JCF held on 26 June 2008, a report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development providing an update on progress made following the introduction of a night shift pilot for building cleaning services in St. Andrew’s High School, Clydebank.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Educational Services in answer to Members’ questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the proposals as detailed in the report to continue with night shift cleaning until a review of arrangements takes place in spring/summer 2009 as part of the amalgamation of St. Andrew’s High School with St. Columba’s High School; and
- (2) that officers would investigate the possibility of extending the night shift pilot for building cleaning services in St. Andrew’s High School to another school in the Dumbarton area of the authority and report back to the Forum.

**SICKNESS ABSENCE STATISTICS – QUARTER 1  
(APRIL – JUNE 2008/2009)**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advising on the levels of employee absence for Quarter 1 covering the 3 month period from 1 April 2008 to 30 June 2008 and providing information on actions taken by departments to maximise attendance.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Educational Services in further explanation and in answer to Members’ questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that it was anticipated that the new Occupational Health Service would support improvements in attendance management and that the Trades Unions be involved in the development of new approaches to absence management at the earliest possible stage;
- (2) that a department comparison be incorporated in the Absence Statistics in future reports;
- (3) to note that the Council was developing a strategic approach to attendance management and that a number of measures had been put in place to facilitate improved attendance levels in 2008/2009;

- (4) to note that the Stress Steering Group had been established to ensure that stress was identified and managed effectively across the Council and was working on 11 different work streams to develop a comprehensive management framework for work related stress; and
- (5) that details on the systems in place to tackle long term absenteeism and return to work be provided in the report to the next meeting of the Forum.

### **MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND DEPARTMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MEETINGS**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing the Minutes from Departmental Joint Consultative Committees (JCC's) and Health and Safety meetings for the period from 26 June 2008 to 25 September 2008 and including any outstanding Minutes from previous reports.

After discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to note that there had been no Roads Operations Departmental JCC's and no Roads Operations Departmental Health and Safety meetings held for the period from 26 June 2008 to 25 September 2008; and
- (3) that the Acting Chief Executive would undertake to discuss the issues raised in relation to the gaps in provision of these meetings with the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development.

### **DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE INFORMATION**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing figures for discipline and grievance appeals held at departmental level (Stage 2) for the period 1 June 2008 to 31 August 2008. The Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

In relation to a point raised by Councillor Black, the Forum noted that there were concerns that the 15 day period for processing Stage 2 appeals was still not being met and that a firm dialogue with managers was required to remind them of the timescales for grievances to be processed to Stage 2. It was noted that management were keen to progress this issue.

### **ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the development of an Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Trades Unions had concerns with the Policy and they would arrange to provide a written response to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development;
- (2) that information about the Policy would be communicated to all employees after the adoption of the Policy;
- (3) that the contact details for Gamblers Anonymous be included in the list of Supporting Agencies and Contact Numbers contained in the draft Policy; and
- (4) that on receipt of feedback from the Trades Unions on the content of the draft Policy, then it be progressed to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 29 October 2008.

### **FAMILY LEAVE POLICY AND SUPPORTING SCHEMES**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the development of a Family Leave Policy and revisions to the family leave provisions to ensure compliance with conditions of service and statutory requirements.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the development of a Family Leave Policy and revisions to the Scheme of Maternity Allowances, Right to Request Flexible Working and Adoption Leave Scheme to ensure compliance with legislation; and
- (2) that the Trades Unions would provide a response to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development for incorporation into the draft Policy to enable it to be submitted to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 29 October 2008 for approval.

### **REVIEW OF DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the development of a revised Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure and the training interventions put in place to support the implementation of the policy and procedure.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Executive Director of Corporate Services in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the draft Policy, supporting procedure and training interventions which have been introduced to underpin the policy;
- (2) to note the Trades Unions concerns in relation to the use of mediators and the potential for impact on the role of the trades unions in the Dignity at Work process; and
- (3) that the Trades Unions would provide a response to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development for incorporation into the Policy in order to enable the Policy to be put forward for approval to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 29 October 2008.

### **TEMPORARY CHANGES TO PAY FREQUENCY AND AMOUNTS – CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD 2008/2009**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the proposed intention to alter the pay frequency and amounts for the Christmas and New Year period and requesting that the Forum consider the proposed arrangements.

The Forum agreed to note the proposed intentions to alter the pay frequency and amounts for the Christmas and New Year Period 2008/2009.

### **CHANGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS)**

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the actions which would be taken to ensure that employees (who are members of the LGPS) were aware of the new look pension scheme which will be introduced on 1 April 2009.

Having heard the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

### **TRADE UNION ISSUES**

#### Disability Leave

The Forum heard from Mr Morrison who advised that there were concerns over the lack of consistency in relation to disability leave for employees who become ill. Mr Morrison suggested that a Disability Leave Policy would be helpful to Trades Unions and staff.

Having heard the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the Forum noted that the Council's Equality Policies were currently being re-drafted and it was anticipated that the work being carried out in this area would provide clarity in relation to disability leave. Information would shortly be provided to the Trades Unions and the matter would be reported to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee.

### Stage 3 Appeals Procedures

The Forum heard from Mr Morrison who advised that there were concerns with the provision of the Grievance Overview for a Stage 3 Appeal being prepared by management.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Principal Solicitor in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that it was always open for Trades Unions to lodge their own Overview to be made available at the same time as management's Grievance Overview;
- (2) that the Executive Director of Corporate Services would review the management procedure for processing Stage 3 Appeals and would provide recommendations in relation to the appeals process to a future meeting of the JCF; and
- (3) to note the Trades Unions concerns in relation to management's choice to use legal representation at Stage 3 of the Grievance Procedure.

## **STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

### Appeals Committee Hearings

The Forum heard from the Principal Solicitor who provided an update on Appeals Committee Hearings.

The Forum noted that since the JCF on 26 June 2008:-

- (a) 3 grievance appeals had been heard;
- (b) 1 grievance appeal had been submitted;
- (c) 1 dismissal appeal had been submitted;
- (d) 1 grievance appeal had been withdrawn; and
- (e) 4 dismissal appeals and 12 grievance appeals were outstanding.
- (f) no meetings of the Appeals Committee had been held in July 2008 due to the committee recess;
- (g) 2 meetings of the Appeals Committee had been postponed, one at the request of Management and one at the request of Elected Members.

The Forum noted that at present it was the intention of management to have at least two appeals heard every month and dates had been scheduled to deal with the backlog.

### Best Value

Having heard the Acting Chief Executive/Executive Director of Social Work and Health, the Forum agreed that a presentation be provided at a future meeting of the JCF on the Covalent Performance Management System to provide the Forum with an update in terms of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan.

### Budget Planning

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services, the Forum noted that guidance would be provided on establishing the budgets process.

### Single Status

The Forum heard from Miss McLafferty who requested that the trades unions side should be provided with a copy of the independent investigation into Single Status at the same time as it be provided to Elected Members.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services, the Forum agreed that the investigation report would be circulated to the Trades Unions when available.

### Health and Safety

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services, it was noted that the quarterly meeting of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee was held on 18 September 2008.

### Training and Development

The Executive Director of Corporate Services was heard in explanation of the Council's detailed Training and Development Plan. The Forum noted the position.

In relation to a point raised by Mr McDonald, it was noted that the Trades Unions policy document on Lifelong Learning would be sent to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development for comment.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday, 4 December 2008 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 4.15 p.m.