

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held by video conference on Thursday, 2 December 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren* and John Millar; George Mitchell, David Scott and John Wagner (GMB); Sean Davenport* and Simon Macfarlane (UNISON); and Chris Rossi and Margaret Wood (Unite).

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Attending: Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing & Employability; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Stephen West – Chief Officer – Resources; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution & Property; Alison McBride, Strategic People & Change Manager; Audrey Slater, Head of HR, Health & Social Care Partnership; Louise Hastings, People & Change Partner; Rachel MacKillop and Rachel Robb, HR Advisers; Raymond Lynch, Senior Solicitor; and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf Councillor Karen Conaghan; Michael Dolan and James Halfpenny (EIS); Val Jennings (UNISON); Sylvia Chatfield, Head of Mental Health, Addictions and Learning Disabilities, Health & Social Care Partnership; and Gail Macfarlane, Shared Head – Roads & Neighbourhood.

Mr John Wagner 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 Minute of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 16 September 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS MONITORING: BI-ANNUAL UPDATE, 1 APRIL 2021 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – People & Technology advising of progress on employment relations matters for the period 1 April to 30 September 2021 across the Council.

After discussion and having heard the People & Change Partner in explanation of the report and in answer to a Member's question, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

Note: Councillor McLaren and Mr Davenport joined the meeting during consideration of this item.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING: BI-ANNUAL UPDATE, APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2021 (COUNCIL-WIDE)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – People & Technology providing a detailed analysis on Council-wide employee wellbeing and attendance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2021.

After discussion and having heard the People & Change Partner in explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed to note the annual findings for reported absence for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, and in particular:-

- (1) the increase in Council wide sickness absence of 13,778 full time equivalent (FTE) days lost compared to the same period the previous year;
- (2) an increase of 14% in sickness absences attributed to acute medical conditions which was the most significant increase across the reasons for sickness absence; and
- (3) an increase of approximately 95 FTE employees Council wide during the reporting period compared to the same reporting period in 2020/21, and that an increase in FTE can be a contributory factor in rising sickness absence levels.

TRADES UNION ISSUES

Failure to Apply Disciplinary Policy Consistently (item requested by Unite)

Having heard Ms Wood, it was noted that this matter was being discussed with officers and consequently would not be raised at the present meeting.

Mr Wagner, Chair, then invited the Trades Union representatives to raise any matters which had not been intimated in advance of the meeting.

Mr Scott raised the matter of the COSLA Pay Award and queried when employees would receive backdated pay.

In response, the Chief Officer – People & Technology reminded Mr Scott, having previously confirmed the timescales to the Joint Trades Union and separately in response to GMB Scotland, that it would not have been possible to proceed with implementing the pay award until all union ballots had completed and the UNISON ballot had not concluded until earlier in the current week. Additionally, formal confirmation of new pay rates for spinal column points had only been received from COSLA on the day prior to the present meeting.

The Forum noted that it would not be possible for backdated payments to be made to employees prior to Christmas in view of the short timescales, the significant amount of work required due to the pay award falling over two financial years, and because the December pay run for monthly paid employees had already been brought forward to be made prior to Christmas, with 4 weekly employees paid even earlier on 9th December. It was noted that backdated payments would be made to fortnightly and monthly-paid employees at the end of January 2022 and in early February 2022 to those paid four-weekly.

Mr Scott then raised the matter of Job Evaluations and stated that there was a perception that higher-graded posts (those above Grade 7) were being evaluated more quickly than lower-graded posts.

In response, the Chief Officer – People & Technology requested that Mr Scott provide her with more information in relation to this matter, specifically examples and to raise his concerns via the appropriate channels and outwith the meeting.

Finally, Mr Scott raised a concern in relation to an equalities issue relating to a Council policy and intimated that he would raise this matter outwith the meeting.

In response, the Chief Officer – People & Technology advised that the Joint Consultative Forum would not be the appropriate body at which to raise a case relating to an individual and reminded Mr Scott that the detail of this had already been discussed with him.

The Forum agreed that it was important for Trades Union items to be intimated in advance of meetings of the Forum, through a request for inclusion on the agenda, in order that officers could give consideration to these matters and provide appropriate responses at Forum meetings.

The meeting closed at 2.35 p.m.