

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Thursday, 25 March 2010 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Jim Finn, Jim McElhill, John Miller and George Black; Denise McLafferty, Angela Nicoll and Margaret Ferris (UNISON); Duncan Borland (GMB); Stewart Paterson (EIS), Margaret Ferris, Charlie McDonald and Karen Ferguson (UNITE) and John Kennedy (UCATT).

Attending: Terry Lanagan, Executive Director of Educational Services; Anne Ritchie*, Interim Executive Director of Social Work and Health; Elaine Melrose, Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Tricia O'Neill, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development; Alan Douglas, Manager of Legal Services; Tracey Keenan, Senior Human Resources Officer and Nuala Borthwick, Committee Officer.

* Arrived later in the meeting.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Margaret Bootland and David McBride; Tom Morrison, Brian Courtney, Neil Casey (T&GWU) and Alex McEwen and Stephen West, Interim Executive Director of Social Work and Health.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Forum noted that in terms of the constitution there was a requirement to nominate a Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum. It was agreed that Councillor George Black be nominated as Chair and Margaret Ferris be nominated as Vice-Chair. Accordingly, Councillor Black assumed the Chair.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 11 December 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

In relation to a point raised by Mr. Patterson under the heading “Minutes of Departmental Joint Consultative Committees and Departmental Health and Safety Meetings”, the Forum noted that in relation to Scottish Government guidelines on Swine Flu, there was budget provision for paper towels in schools. The Forum also noted that to date, there had been no outbreaks in any educational establishments.

In relation to a point raised by Ms O'Neill under the heading ‘Trade Unions Issues’ and ‘Vehicle Tracking System’, the Forum noted that a Briefing Note had been circulated on the issue and that a response was awaited from the Trades Unions.

Following discussion, it was agreed:-

- (1) that the Briefing Note be circulated to the Joint Trades Unions Conveners; and
- (2) that the issue of Vehicle Tracking be raised through the Housing, Environmental and Economic Development JCC.

The Forum heard from Mr McDonald in relation to the item ‘Use of Casual Workers’ under ‘Trade Unions Issues’. Following discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Housing, Environment and Economic Development, the Forum agreed that the Trades Unions would raise the issue through the appropriate JCC.

The Forum heard from Ms McLafferty in relation to the item ‘Excess Travel’ under ‘Trade Unions Issues’. Following discussion and having heard the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the Forum agreed to note that the issue was currently being taken forward by Officers and would be discussed through the Employee Liaison Group.

The Head of Human and Organisational Development was heard in relation to the launch of the Childcare Voucher Scheme which had been launched in the Council in January 2010 and, to date, had resulted in £13,000 in tax relief savings.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed that the scheme be publicised further in the Council’s Westlife Magazine and on employee payslips to enable any employees still not claiming to take advantage of the benefit.

Note: The Interim Director of Social Work and Health entered the meeting during consideration of this item.

CHILDCARE CHARGES FOR EMPLOYEES

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on Wednesday, 27 January 2010 (Page 2503 refers), Members gave further consideration to the undernoted decision contained in the Minutes of Meeting of the JCF held on 11 December 2009 under the sub-heading "Childcare Charges for Employees" (Pages 2412/2413 refers) concerning the impact of increased charges on the ability of women to work:-

- "(2) to note that the impact of increased charges on employees did not provide a requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment as it did not impact on a minority group."

Having heard the Executive Director of Educational Services and the Manager of Legal Services in further explanation, the Forum agreed that a copy of the Freedom of Information Request and response to it be sent to the Trades Unions Conveners for consideration and further action if required.

A COMPETITIVENESS FRAMEWORK

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on 27 January 2010 (Pages 2498/2499 refers), the relevant excerpt from the minutes of that meeting was submitted together with a report by the Chief Executive presenting a draft competitiveness framework for discussion and approval.

Following discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Manager, Improvement and Performance in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) that the Trades Unions would provide feedback on the report to the Head of Property and Technical Services to enable a report to be re-submitted to Council in due course;
- (2) to note that the Trades Unions had been invited to be represented on the Competitiveness Working Group; and
- (3) to note that a Facilities Agreement would assist the Trades Unions representatives to have time off to attend meetings on behalf of the Trade Unions.

LIFELONG LEARNING – DRAFT PRINCIPLES AGREEMENT

With reference to the Minutes of Meetings of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 24 September 2009 (Page 2197 refers) and 11 December 2009 (Page 2408 refers), the Forum was reminded of the decision that a report on a Draft Principles Agreement be submitted to this meeting of the Forum.

After hearing the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the Forum noted that a report on the issue would be provided to a future meeting of the Forum.

CLYDE VALLEY SHARED SERVICES INITIATIVE – (ARBUTHNOTT REPORT)

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing information on the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership (CVCPP) – Review of Joint Working and Shared Service Opportunities.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Housing, Environment and Economic Development in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed to note the report and carry the issue forward as a standing item of business at future meetings of the Forum.

DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on discipline and grievance appeals held at departmental level (stage 2) and Appeals Committee Hearings (stage 3) during the period 1 October 2009 and 31 December 2009.

Having heard the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development in elaboration the Forum agreed to note the content of the report.

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 (JCCs) and Health & Safety meetings for the period from 11 December 2009 until 25 March 2010 including any outstanding minutes.

Following discussion the Forum agreed:-

- (1) that the Corporate Safety Committee be tasked with examining the way the Council considers health and safety issues and in doing so, considers a framework for departmental Health and Safety Committees;
- (2) to note that a structure was currently being developed for a departmental wide JCC for the Department of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; and
- (3) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING – QUARTER 3 (2009/2010)

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advising on the levels of employee sickness absence for the third quarter (October, November and December) of 2009/10.

After hearing the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in further explanation of the report and following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Trades Unions were in support of self referral to the Occupation Health Service where this would avoid future absence from work; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

AGREED TERMS OF REFERENCE – EMPLOYEE LIAISON GROUP

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising of the agreed joint terms of reference of the Employee Liaison Group.

Having heard the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development in elaboration of the report and following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Employee Liaison Group is an integral part of the internal consultative processes; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

TRADES UNIONS RECOGNITION AND FACILITIES AGREEMENT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided an update on the development of the proposed Trades Unions Recognition and Facilities Agreement which was jointly developed by management and trades union representatives and outlines mutually agreed arrangements.

Having heard the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development the Forum noted that, subject to further discussions at the Employee Liaison Group for consensus between management and the Trades Unions, it was anticipated that the Trades Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement would be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee for approval.

REVISED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCE, DIGNITY AT WORK AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided an update on the development of the revised Discipline, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Performance Management Policies and Procedures.

Following 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 to note:-

- (1) that a number of issues remained unresolved in relation to the revised policies;
- (2) that, subject to further discussions at the Employee Liaison Group, it was anticipated that the revised Discipline and Grievance Policies would be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee for approval; and
- (3) that given the Trades Unions concerns in relation to the draft Performance Management Policy and the absence of a comprehensive Personal Development Process or monitoring framework, the Policy would be re-submitted to a future meeting of the Forum for agreement.

TRADES UNIONS ISSUES

Departmental Restructuring

Ms McLafferty raised the concerns of the Trades Unions in relation to current departmental re-structuring which are ongoing in the Council departments.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (a) to note the discussion that had taken place on both the mechanisms for communication for departmental restructuring and the issue of protecting employees;
- (b) to note that to date, the Joint Trades Unions were comfortable with the communication process on departmental restructuring;
- (c) that departmental restructuring remain as an item of business on future agendas of the Forum and that meantime, the Trades Unions would continue to work with the Corporate Management Team on issues of concern. However should any major issue arise in relation to departmental restructuring, then this would be brought to the attention of the Forum for discussion.

Job Evaluation Process

Ms McLafferty referred to the decision of Council held on 24 March 2010 (Page XXX refers), to suspend the current appeals process built into the Single Status arrangements for Council Employees and to carryout an Independent Review of the process.

The Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the outcome of future discussions between the joint Trades Unions and the Chief Executive would be reported to a future meeting of the Forum; and
- (2) that a joint Trades Union communication had been sent out to all employees of the Council advising of the decision of Council in relation to this matter.

STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS

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

- (i) Pay Claims
- (ii) Clyde Valley Shared Services
- (iii) Lifelong Learning
- (iv) Single Status

Best Value

The Executive Director of Corporate Services provided an update on the Best Value Progress Report which Audit Scotland submitted to the Accounts Commission on 18 February 2010 and the decision of Council held on 24 March 2010 (Page XXX refers), to review the Best Value Improvement Plan to ensure that its priority and focus delivered the increased pace of change to meet the Audit Commission's findings.

The Forum agreed:-

- (a) to note that the Improvement and Efficiency Working Group would address the agreed changes at the next meeting on 13 April 2010; and
- (b) to note the importance of joint working between management and the Trades Unions to help the Council move forward in terms of Best Value.

Budget Planning

The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised the Forum that budget planning for 2010/2011 had been agreed and that the Strategic Finance Working Group would discuss budget planning for 2011/2012 and the longterm plans to help close the financial gap.

Sunscreen Safety

Ms O'Neill advised the Forum that following discussions at the Employee Liaison Group concerning the legal requirement to provide protective clothing to employees exposed to sunlight, it had been agreed that the issue be taken forward by the Section Head, Risk Management. The Forum noted the position.

Transfer of Housing Stock

The Executive Director of Housing, Environment and Economic Development provided an update in relation to the current position concerning the transfer of housing stock in West Dunbartonshire Council.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed to note:-

- (i) the progress of implementation of the stock transfer project to date;
- (ii) that the Joint Trades Unions, although opposed to Housing Stock Transfer; were represented on the Stock Transfer Steering Group which had been established to oversee the project; and
- (iii) that the Stock Transfer Project Team was now fully resourced in terms of staffing.

Training and Development

The Executive Director of Corporate Services provided an update in relation to the management training programme. The Forum noted that the development and delivery of a Leadership Development programme would be provided by Leadcentric.

NOTE OF CONDOLENCE

Having heard Ms McLafferty, the Forum expressed sympathy at the sad passing of Mr Eddie Darroch, a former Trades Union colleague and former member of the Forum.

The meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.