

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Thursday, 24 November 2005 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Margaret Bootland and Joe Pilkington; Margaret Ferris, Tom Dick, Joanne Geddes, Tom Morrison and Tom Rainey (UNISON); Jackaleen McMonagle (AMICUS); Neil Casey, Brian Courtney and Charlie McDonald (T&GWU); Duncan Borland and Donald Hamilton (GMB); Stewart Paterson (EIS) and Alex McEwan (SSTA).

Attending: Tricia O'Neill, Head of Personnel Services; Alan Douglas, Manager of Best Value and Special Projects; Andrea Gibson, Acting Section Head – Operations; and Shona Barton, Administrative Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Provost Alistair Macdonald, Councillor Gail Casey, Norman Bissell, Mick Conroy and Kath Ryall.

Margaret Ferris in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 7585 The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 1 September 2005, were submitted and approved as a correct record.
- 7586 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison regarding the item headed "Insurance Procedures – Employees' Personal Property", the Forum noted that the employee claim form should be made available on the West Dunbartonshire Intranet site and possibly included as part of the Corporate Employment Guide.
- 7587 Mr. Rainey also raised a point in relation to the item under the heading "Insurance Procedures – Employees' Personal Property", and asked if it would be possible for a timescale for responses from Legal and Administrative Services to be put in place. Having heard Mr. Douglas, it was agreed that discussions would be undertaken between the Trades Unions and Legal and Administrative Services in relation to this matter.
- 7588 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison in relation to the item under the heading "Maximising Attendance Update", the Forum noted:-

- (1) the concerns of the Trades Unions with regard to the schemes in place covering sickness, particularly that the existing policies should be implemented before new policies are introduced;
- (2) the concerns of the Trades Unions over the pilot scheme implemented in Social Work and the possible discrimination issues;
- (3) that the Trades Unions have concerns over the inconsistency from departments in dealing with work related illness; and
- (4) that these concerns would be incorporated by Personnel Services in the current review of the Maximising Attendance Policy.

7589 In relation to a question raised by Mr. Rainey under the item headed “Disciplinary Update”, in particular with reference to the documentation being used by Personnel in disciplinary procedures, Ms. O’Neill advised that she would investigate this matter.

7590 In relation to a question raised by Mr. Rainey under the item headed “Car allowances”, the Forum noted that the working group set up to look at employee terms and conditions would be looking at this issue in due course.

7591 In relation to a question raised by Mr. Rainey under the item headed “Role of Personnel Services”, Ms. O’Neill advised the Forum that the review of Personnel Services was still ongoing and that the Trades Unions would be kept updated on the progress of the review.

7592 The Forum heard from Ms. O’Neill who provided an update on the item headed “Pay Slips – Loan Advertising”. The Forum noted that discussions would be taking place with the Trades Unions in the New Year with regard to this matter.

7593 In relation to a question raised by Mr. McEwan under the item headed “PPP/PFI Schools Regeneration”, the Forum heard from Mr. Douglas who provided an update on the project.

REVISION TO CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

7594 In terms of remit from the Meeting of the Audit and Performance Review Committee held on 14 September 2005 (Page 1914, paragraph 7064 refers), there was submitted the relevant excerpt minute along with a report by the Head of Personnel Services, advising of the revisions made to the existing Confidential Reporting Policy and providing a copy of this policy for information.

7595 After discussion, and having heard Ms. O’Neill and Mr. Rainey, the Forum agreed to note the revisions to the Confidential Reporting Policy.

SUPERANNUATION SCHEME

7596 With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Forum held on 1 September 2005 (Page 1873, paragraph 6877 refers), a report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing an update on the ways in which the Superannuation Scheme would be promoted to employees.

7597 After discussion, and having heard Ms. O'Neill, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) that a meeting would be arranged between Personnel Services and the Trades Unions to discuss ways in which new employees could be informed of the opportunities available to them for joining a Trade Union.

SCHEME OF TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

7598 With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Forum held on 1 September 2005 (Page 1877, paragraph 6905 refers), a report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information on the Council's Scheme of Travel and Subsistence Allowances.

7599 After discussion and having heard Ms. O'Neill, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) that Ms. O'Neill would conduct further investigation into when the current policy was agreed, and would report back to the Forum in due course.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION SCHEME

7600 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services informing of the forthcoming changes to the existing Employee Recognition Scheme.

7601 After discussion, and having heard Ms. O'Neill, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to note the concerns of the Trades Unions over the balance of guests at the proposed awards ceremony; and
- (3) that these concerns would be fed back to the working group which is dealing with the revisions to the scheme.

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE HOME COMPUTER INITIATIVE

- 7602 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing an update on the proposed introduction of the Scottish Executive Home Computer Initiative Scheme.
- 7603 After discussion, and having heard Ms. O'Neill in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

SICKNESS ABSENCE STATISTICS

- 7604 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information on the levels of employee absence during the 6 month period from 1 April to 30 September 2005.
- 7605 After discussion, and having heard Ms. O'Neill and Mr. Casey, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

COSLA STAFFING WATCH SURVEY

- 7606 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information on the size of the Council's workforce as at 10 September 2005.
- 7607 The Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND HEALTH & SAFETY MEETINGS

- 7608 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing copies of the Minutes from Departmental Joint Consultative Committee meetings and Health & Safety meetings.
- 7609 Having heard Mr. Morrison, the Forum agreed:-
- (1) to note the contents of the report;
 - (2) to note that the minutes from the Social Work JCC held on 27 September 2005 would be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

TRADES UNION ISSUES

Scottish Executive Home Computer Initiative

- 7610 The EIS had requested that the following be considered:-
- 7611 The EIS propose that West Dunbartonshire Council investigate the Scottish Executive Home Computer Initiative with a view to introducing the scheme as a benefit to employees. The scheme promotes digital inclusion.
- 7612 A copy of information taken from the Scottish Executive website giving details of the scheme was attached for members' information.
- 7613 Having heard Mr. Patterson it was noted that the EIS was satisfied that this scheme would be implemented by the Council in January as was noted in the report by the Head of Personnel Services considered under item 7 of the agenda.

STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 7614 The Forum agreed to note the current position on the following:-
- (i) Absence;
 - (ii) Health and Safety; and
 - (iii) Training and Development.

Appeals Committee Hearings

- 7615 The Forum heard from Mr. Douglas who provided an update on this matter. The Forum noted that since the JCF on 1 September 2005 no appeals had been heard, withdrawn or submitted. It was also noted that there was 1 disciplinary and 5 grievance appeals outstanding and that of the 5 grievance appeals outstanding, 2 had been postponed at the request of the appellant and 3 had still to be arranged.

Best Value

- 7616 Ms. Gibson provided the Forum with an update on the progress of the Corporate Audit.

Budget Planning

- 7617 The Forum heard from Ms. O'Neill and it was noted that there was a commitment by the Administration to sit down with the Trades Unions to outline the issues facing the Council with regard to budget planning.

Single Status

- 7618 The Forum heard from Ms. O'Neill who provided an update on this matter. It was agreed that the Trades Unions should identify any staff who are not receiving the bulletins which have been issued to staff and should pass this information to Personnel Services.

McCrone

- 7619 In relation to a point raised by Mr. McEwan relating to the demands being made of chartered teachers, it was noted that this issue would be discussed at the next meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.
- 7620 The Forum noted the concerns over the current job freeze within the Council. Having heard Mr. Rainey it was agreed that Ms. O'Neill would advise management of the request from the Trades Unions that a central register be kept of all posts not filled under the current job freeze.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 7621 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday, 9 March 2006 at 2.00 p.m. 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.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

- 7622 The Chair, Margaret Ferris, wished all those in attendance best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 3.53 p.m.