

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Thursday 24 September 2009 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Margaret Bootland, Jim Finn, David McBride, Jim McElhill and George Black; Margaret Ferris, William Keady, Denise McLafferty, Tom Morrison, Angela Nicoll and Kath Ryall (UNISON); Brian Courtney, James O'Connell and Jacqueline McMonagle (UNITE); Duncan Borland (GMB) and John Kennedy (UCATT).

Attending: Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Vincent Gardiner, Manager of Exchequer; Alan Douglas, Manager of Legal Services; Angela Terry, Manager of Organisational Development; Linda McAlister, Senior Human Resources Officer; Nigel Ettles, Ricardo Rea, Equalities Officer – Employment; Henry Sweeney, Human Resources Officer and Nuala Borthwick, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors John Millar and Ronnie McColl and Stewart Paterson (EIS), Alex McEwen, Charlie McDonald and Neil Casey (UNITE).

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 Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 25 June 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that a further meeting between the trades unions and management to discuss the policy on Annual Leave Entitlement had not yet taken place;
- (2) that consultation was ongoing in relation to the Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement and Job Profile to support the evaluation of the role of the Trade Union Convener;

- (3) that, in relation to the item Re-deployment under Trade Union Issues, specific issues could be raised at the JCF, but, where possible, should be raised in advance of the meeting to ensure that Officers would have time to investigate the matter prior to the meeting;
- (4) to note that the Strategic Finance Working Group had recently agreed to meet on a monthly basis;
- (5) to note that trades unions should be involved in the formal budget planning process at the earliest possible opportunity and that the Executive Director of Corporate Services would raise this issue with the Chief Executive at the next meeting of the Corporate Management Team;
- (6) to note that the issue of skin cancer and sunscreen safety would remain on the agenda as a Standing Item of Business until resolved; and
- (7) to note that the issue of the Clyde Valley Shared Services would be placed on future agendas of the JCF as a standing item of business.

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) during the period 1 April 2009 to 30 June 2009. It was noted that information relating to Stage 3 (Appeals Committee) was reported separately by Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the trades unions' view that an individual employee should have the right to take a complaint through the Council's Grievance Procedure before the Dignity at Work Policy;
- (2) that the revised group of policies covering Discipline and Grievance required further discussions between management and trades unions;
- (3) to note that in relation to the trained Mediation Officers, the trades unions view was that if an employee wished to be accompanied to a hearing/meeting with another person then that person could be either a trade union representative or a person of choice.

The Forum then heard from the Manager of Legal Services who provided an update on Appeals Committee Hearings.

The Forum noted that since the JCF on 25 June 2009:-

- (a) 1 Grievance Appeal had been heard;
- (b) 2 Grievance Appeals had been submitted;
- (c) 1 Dismissal Appeal had been submitted;
- (d) 1 Grievance Appeal had been withdrawn; and
- (e) 1 Dismissal Appeal had been part-heard.

The Forum also noted that:-

- (a) 2 dismissal appeals and 10 grievance appeals were outstanding; and
- (b) that Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services were continuing to attempt to have two appeals heard every month (except July); and
- (c) that Equal Pay Grievance Appeals were not included in the figures.

Having heard the Manager of Legal Services, it was agreed that the information relating to Stage 3 (Appeals Committee) would in future be included within the report on Discipline and Grievance rather than as a separate item under Standing Items.

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 26 June 2009 to date including any outstanding minutes.

Following discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Employment Equalities Officer in elaboration, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the JCF providing information on the Roads Operations JCC and departmental Health & Safety meetings;
- (2) to note that a meeting of the Education Support Services JCC had been cancelled twice and had yet to be rescheduled;
- (3) to note the concerns of Members that departments are often unable to make the timescales set for joint consultation and reporting of minutes of meetings to the JCF;
- (4) to note that with reference to the minutes of meeting of the Education Support Staff JCC held on Tuesday, 23 June 2009, a planned meeting between the trades unions and the Head of Service (Resources) to discuss staffing and the proposed restructure of the Science Technicians Centre had not yet taken place;

- (5) that the Executive Director of Corporate Services would report the Forum's concerns on the irregularity of meetings of the Joint Consultative Committees and departmental Health and Safety meetings to the CMT requesting that the Chief Executive should provide an instruction to all departments to adhere to the consultation/communication process in advising on personnel issues; and
- (6) that departments be reminded that the standard template should be followed for the production of minutes of Joint Consultative Committees and departmental Health and Safety meetings.

SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING – QUARTER 1 (2009/2010)

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the levels of employee sickness absence for the first quarter (April, May and June) of 2009/2010.

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

- (1) to note the significant improvement in the levels of employee sickness absence in the department of Social Work Services;
- (2) to note that the separate location of the Occupational Health facility at Levenvalley was an important step in the management of stress in the Council;
- (3) to note that it was anticipated that a centralised approach to developing policies, procedures and process would enable the consistent management of sickness absence issues; and
- (4) to note that Officers would look at improving the way in which sickness absence is reported to the JCF to make it more easily understood.

CAR MILEAGE EXPENSES

A report was submitted by the Head of Finance and ICT advising of the work undertaken in respect of the Council's car mileage expenses scheme and making recommendations for its future operation.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Manager of Exchequer in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Councillors Travel Scheme, which is set by the Scottish Government, was amended to 40.0p per mile with effect from February 2009 and was now in line with that paid to employees;

- (2) that the trade union side did not accept the recommendations contained in the report in respect of the Council's car mileage expenses scheme and its future operation;
- (3) to note that the issue was a priority for members of the trades unions and that there was concern that the current mileage paid to employees did not cover the cost of running a car and the increased cost of fuel;
- (4) to note the trade union side's request that management re-visit the issue of the Council's car mileage expenses scheme with a view to increasing the mileage paid to employees from 40p per mile to cover the cost of an employee using their car for work;
- (5) to note that should the issue remain unresolved, the trades union side would consider instigating advice to their members that cars should not be used for Council business.

CASUAL WORKER POLICY

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development:-

- (a) providing an update on the development of a "Casual" Workers Policy and Guidance for Managers which would replace the Employment of Occasional Workers Policy;
- (b) advising on the changes to the Policy in response to legislative changes and pension provisions; and
- (c) seeking approval of the revised policy.

Having heard Ms McLafferty the Forum agreed to approve the draft Casual Workers Policy subject to a meeting being held between management and the trade union side to enable the trade unions to provide feedback on the Policy prior to the meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee to be held on Wednesday, 30 September 2009.

TEMPORARY CHANGES TO PAY FREQUENCY AND AMOUNTS – CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD 2009/2010

A report was submitted by the Head of Finance and ICT providing information on the proposed intention to alter the pay frequency and amounts for the Christmas and New Year period and asking the Forum to consider the proposed arrangements.

Following discussion the Forum agreed the proposed intentions to alter pay frequency and amounts for this short period as detailed in the report.

OUTCOMES OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAMMES

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing a summary of the outcomes from the management development pilot programmes and setting out forward plans for delivering future programmes.

Having heard the Organisational Development Manager in elaboration, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the outcomes of the management development pilot programmes which aimed at developing the Council's management capability and effecting change and consistency in people management practice;
- (2) to note that the programmes were developed and delivered in partnership with Clydebank College and involved 42 managers from across departments and services;
- (3) to note that in moving forward, the key priority and focus would be on increasing the pace, accessibility and availability of programmes for all managers across the Council;
- (4) to note that it was anticipated that attainment of 'centre status' accreditation would be achieved by the end of September 2009 for the preferred accrediting body; and
- (5) to note that the trades unions welcomed the management participation within such programmes.

UPDATE ON SALARY SACRIFICE BASED CHILD CARE VOUCHER SCHEME

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing an update on the tendering and implementation of a Childcare Voucher Scheme within the Council.

Having heard the Employment Equalities Officer in further explanation, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

ONGOING JOB EVALUATION OF POSTS

A report was submitted by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development providing information on the ongoing job evaluation of posts.

ADJOURNMENT

After hearing the Chair, the Forum agreed to adjourn for a short period of time to afford those members the opportunity to read the report. The meeting reconvened at 3.38 p.m. with all those Members shown on the sederunt in attendance.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that interim arrangements had been put in place to evaluate posts using the Scottish Councils' Job Evaluation Scheme;
- (2) to note the need to ensure that a robust Job Evaluation Policy and Procedure had been developed within the Council for the evaluation of new and existing posts;
- (3) to note that the consultation arrangements with the trades unions would be through the Employee Liaison Group led by the Executive Director of Corporate Services with recommendations made to the CMT at the earliest opportunity;
- (4) to note the development of processes for carrying out ongoing audits of pay and grading as part of the Council's equality duty; and
- (5) progress on the Job Evaluation Policy would be reported to the next meeting of the JCF for information.

TRADES UNION ISSUES

Having heard Ms McLafferty the Forum agreed to note that the Trades Unions would provide items for future agendas of the JCF within the agreed deadlines for submission of papers.

STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Having heard Ms McLafferty the Forum agreed that the following items be placed on future agendas as Standing Items of Business and that 'Appeals' be removed:-

- (a) Transfer of Housing Stock;
- (b) Pay Claims; and
- (c) Shared Services.

Best Value

The Forum heard from the Executive Director of Corporate Services who provided an update on Best Value. The Forum agreed to note:-

- (a) that the Improvement and Efficiency Executive had taken on a more strategic role and that the focus was on the 4 key priorities, namely - Improve Strategic Leadership, Demonstrate Competitiveness of Services, Improve Organisational Culture and Improve Community Engagement;
- (b) that the outline Best Value Improvement Plan including governance arrangements would be submitted to the meeting of Council to be held on 30 September 2009;
- (c) that issues such as workforce management systems and e-procurement would continue to be reported to the CMT;
- (d) that changing the organisational culture remained a major issue for the Council; and
- (e) that the trades unions be consulted on the outcome of the Employee Survey prior to its consideration at the meeting of Council to be held on 28 October 2009.

Budget Planning

The Executive Director of Corporate Services provided an update on budget planning and in doing so, advised that there would be a 4% reduction in funding to local authorities each year and that the Council would require to get appropriate actions in place to deal with the reduction in funding.

Single Status

The Forum heard from the Executive Director of Corporate Services who provided an update on the progress of the Single Status process. After discussion the Forum agreed to note:-

- (1) the concerns of the trades unions in relation to meeting the costs of successful appeals and provision to get employees out of detriment;
- (2) that 1353 appeals had been submitted;
- (3) that general updates on the Single Status were provided to Elected Members in the form of Briefing Notes and were discussed with the trades unions at meetings of the Employee Liaison Group; and
- (4) that training for the appeals process had commenced.

Health and Safety

The Executive Director of Corporate Services provided an update on Health and Safety matters and in doing so, advised that the ongoing issue of pandemic flu remained high on the agenda of the Corporate Safety Committee and that Elected Members were receiving regular briefings on the issue.

Lifelong Learning

Having heard the Manager of Organisational Development, the Forum noted that since the last meeting of the JCF held on 25 June 2009, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Manager of Organisational Development had met with the Mr O'Connell to discuss the provision of a Lifelong Learning Agreement in the Council.

It was noted:-

- (1) that the Organisational Development Team was fully supportive of a Lifelong Learning Agreement being in place;
- (2) that this would be explored fully and included within an organisational Learning and Development Strategy; and
- (3) that a report on a Draft Principles Agreement would be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Having heard the Chair, the Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday, 11 December 2009 at 2.00 p.m. in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton. It was agreed that the Forum would consider alternating the venue for the meeting between Dumbarton and Clydebank and that this would be discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.00 p.m.