

## JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Thursday, 9 March 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

**Present:** Provost Alistair Macdonald and Councillor Margaret Bootland; Tom Dick, Joanne Geddes, Tom Morrison, Isobel Paterson and Peter O'Neill (UNISON); Jackaleen McMonagle (AMICUS); Brian Courtney and Charlie McDonald (T&GWU); Duncan Borland (GMB); John Kennedy (UCATT) and Stewart Paterson (EIS).

**Attending:** Tricia O'Neill, Head of Personnel Services; Alan Douglas, Manager of Best Value and Special Projects; Shona Barton, Administrative Officer and Nuala Borthwick, Administrative Assistant.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Gail Casey, Councillor Margaret McGregor, Councillor Joe Pilkington, Alex McEwan, Norman Bissell, Tom Rainey, Margaret Ferris, Mick Conroy and Neil Casey.

### APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

8502 Mr. Douglas advised the meeting that in terms of the constitution the Forum was required to nominate a Chair and Vice Chair from its membership.

8503 The Forum agreed that Councillor Margaret Bootland be appointed as Chair. Accordingly, Councillor Bootland assumed the Chair.

8504 The Chair advised that the Forum would also be required to consider the appointment of Vice Chair. The Forum agreed that Margaret Ferris be appointed as Vice Chair.

### MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

8505 The Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) held on 24 November 2005, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

8506 In relation to a point raised by Ms. Geddes relating to point (1) under the item headed "Maximising Attendance Update", the Forum noted that a report would be submitted to the next meeting providing information on the numbers of employees who are on long term sickness absence resulting from an industrial injury or illness.

8507 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison relating to point (4) under the item headed "Maximising Attendance Update", the Forum noted:-

- (1) that the review of Personnel policies was still ongoing; and
- (2) that consideration would be given, during the review, to excluding women suffering from domestic abuse from the maximising attendance policy.

8508 Mr. Morrison asked a question relating to the documentation being used in disciplinary procedures. Having heard Ms. O'Neill it was noted that a Personnel bulletin would be sent out to staff in due course detailing the documentation to be used by departments during disciplinary procedures. It was also noted that this new documentation would not be in replacement of any of the documentation currently in use.

8509 In relation to a point raised by Provost Macdonald regarding the implementation of the new Council policy on whistleblowing, the Forum noted:-

- (1) the concerns of the Trades Unions with regard to the possibility of malicious calls being made to the new whistleblowing hotline;
- (2) that Ms. O'Neill would investigate a complaint made by Mr. McDonald regarding the procedures used during an investigation into a Council employee; and
- (3) that a meeting would be arranged with Personnel Services, Internal Audit and the Trades Unions to discuss the procedures used during investigations undertaken by Internal Audit.

8510 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison regarding the car allowance scheme, the Forum noted that the Working Group set up to look at employee terms and conditions was still in the process of looking at this issue.

8511 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison regarding the review of Personnel Services, Ms. O'Neill advised that there was no update to report on this matter.

8512 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison under the item headed "Scheme of Travelling and Subsistence Allowances", the Forum noted that a report would be submitted to the next meeting providing clarification on when the current policy was agreed.

8513 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison under the standing item headed "Budget Planning", the Forum noted:-

- (1) the concerns of the Trades Unions that a two-tier system was operating with regard to the recent trawl for redundancy/early retirement particularly in the Social Work Services department; and

- (2) that Ms. O'Neill would investigate these concerns and that information would be provided to the Trades Unions detailing the timelines between the trawls in Social Work.

8514 In relation to a point raised by Mr. Morrison under the standing item headed "McCrone", with particular reference to the Trades Unions request for a central register to be kept on posts not filled due to the jobs freeze, the Forum noted that a written response would be supplied detailing the reasons for management not agreeing to compile such a register.

### **EMPLOYMENT POLICY – NO SMOKING**

8515 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services advising of the revised No Smoking Policy which had been agreed at the meeting of the Corporate Services Committee on 22 February 2006.

8516 After discussion and having heard Ms. O'Neill in further explanation and in answer to members' questions, the Forum agreed to note:-

- (1) that Personnel Services were investigating ways to assist employees who wished to stop smoking;
- (2) that Council car parks were not classed as enclosed spaces and would therefore not be included under the no smoking policy;
- (3) that how the policy would be implemented in residential homes would be discussed at a local level; and
- (4) that the implementation of the policy in educational establishments would be discussed at the Education JCC's.

### **PAYROLL GIVING**

8517 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information on the Council agreement to promote 3 specific good causes through Payroll Giving.

8518 Having heard Ms. O'Neill in further explanation, the Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

### **DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE INFORMATION**

8519 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services providing information on the figures for discipline and grievance appeals at Departmental level for the period from 1 April 2005 to 30 September 2005.

8520 After discussion and having heard Ms. O'Neill in further explanation and in answer to members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to note the concerns of the Trades Unions that the figures obtained from departments were very low and perhaps did not reflect reality; and
- (3) that Ms. O'Neill would look at supplying information on the number of dignity at work complaints which have been submitted.

#### **SICKNESS ABSENCE STATISTICS – QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER – DECEMBER) 2005/2006**

8521 A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel Services advising on the levels of employee absence during the 3 month period from 1 October to 31 December 2005.

8522 The Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

#### **MINUTES FROM JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY MEETINGS**

8523 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.

8524 The Forum agreed to note the contents of the report.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

8525 After hearing Provost Macdonald, the Forum agreed to a short adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 2.13 p.m. and reconvened at 2.21 p.m with all those on the sederunt being present with the exception of Charlie McDonald and Joanne Geddes.

#### **TRADES UNION ISSUES**

8526 A report was circulated to the meeting detailing the Trades Unions concerns over the potential breach of data protection legislation in respect of council tax arrears involving council employees.

8527 After discussion the Forum agreed that Ms. O'Neill would investigate the procedures in place for data sharing with regard to employee arrears and would report back to the next meeting.

NOTE: Joanne Geddes re-entered the meeting during discussion of the above item.

### **STANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

8528 The Forum agreed to note the current position on the following:-

- (i) Best Value;
- (ii) McCrone Recommendations
- (iii) Absence
- (iv) Health and Safety; and
- (v) Training and Development.

#### **Appeals Committee Hearings**

8529 The Forum heard from Mr. Douglas who provided an update on this matter and circulated a note providing information for members.

8530 It was noted that since the JCF on 24 November 2005 there had been 2 Grievance Appeals heard, 1 Grievance Appeal had been withdrawn, 1 new Disciplinary Appeal had been submitted and 7 new Grievance Appeals had been submitted. It was further noted that at present there were 2 Disciplinary and 9 Grievance Appeals outstanding.

8531 Mr. Douglas advised the Forum that due to the high number of appeals outstanding it was proposed that meetings of the Appeals Committee would be held on a monthly basis until the current backlog was addressed.

#### **Budget Planning**

8532 After hearing Mr. Morrison, the Forum noted:-

- (1) the request from the Trades Unions for the Council to provide a breakdown of where savings were made in the budget for 2006/2007 through job losses; and
- (2) that Mr. Patterson would raise the issue of management savings at the next Teachers JCC.

#### **Single Status**

8533 Ms. O'Neill provided an update on the progress made with single status and the job evaluation process. It was noted that there was a possibility that the Council would be looking at the issue of male employees in relation to the equal pay issue.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8534 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday, 25 May 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.

The meeting closed at 3.50 p.m.