

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held by video conference on Thursday, 10 March 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Karen Conaghan, David McBride, Jonathan McColl and Iain McLaren; George Mitchell and John Wagner (GMB); Claire Mackenzie (SSTA); Val Jennings, Simon Macfarlane* and David Smith (UNISON); and Chris Rossi and Margaret Wood (Unite).

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Attending: Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology; Amanda Graham, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Gail Macfarlane, Shared Head of Service – Roads & Neighbourhood; Laurence Slavin – Chief Officer – Resources; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution & Property; Audrey Slater, Head of HR, Health & Social Care Partnership; Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer – Pupil Support; Louise Hastings, People & Change Partner; Lauri Barker, Julie Barker and Tara Spooner, HR Advisers; Raymond Lynch, Senior Solicitor; and Scott Kelly, Lynn Straker and Nicola Moorcroft, Committee Officers.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of James Halfpenny (EIS) and David Scott (GMB).

Mr David Smith 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 Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 2 December 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

PRESENTATION: WORKING FLEXIBLY

The People & Change Partner and the HR Advisers gave a presentation on Working Flexibly. The main points covered in the presentation were:-

- The demographics of West Dunbartonshire Council employees, it being noted that the majority worked part-time, that 74% were female and that two thirds were over 40 years old.
- That younger people in particular, and job-seekers generally, reportedly wished to have the option of working flexibly and that, by offering this, the Council could seek to recruit and retain a younger workforce and to attract a wider and more diverse pool of talent. It was noted that while the Council's turnover remained lower than the UK average, it had increased significantly in 2021, a trend seen widely across all sectors.
- An overview of the different workstyles currently in place in the Council.
- That the Council would benefit from flexible working in terms of increased productivity and loyalty, reduced costs, greater engagement and community benefits where work patterns helped employees who were parents/carers to carry out their responsibilities.
- That flexible working would reduce the gender pay gap by accommodating female employees who wished to earn more by working more hours and that this would also improve their pension entitlements over time.
- That the Council's wellbeing and attendance rates had improved significantly during the pandemic when the Council had offered flexible working more widely.
- The challenges that the organisation had faced in facilitating flexible working and the supports that were in place.
- Testimonials from individual employees who described how flexible working had helped their particular circumstances.
- The plans in place in the near term and further into the future to support flexible working.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to thank officers for their informative presentation and to note its contents;
- (2) to note the supportive comments from trades union representatives in relation to the steps taken by the Council to support flexible working; and
- (3) to note that the Chief Officer – People & Technology would add as an agenda item for future meetings of the Conveners' Group the progress of actions arising from Fit for Future reviews, and that the progress of the reviews would be reported to a future meeting of the Forum.

Note: Mr Macfarlane entered the meeting during consideration of this item.

TRADES UNION ISSUES

Electrical Concerns (item requested by Unite)

Having heard Ms Wood, it was noted that this item had been withdrawn.

Mr Smith, Chair, invited the Trades Unions representatives to raise any other matters but none took the opportunity to do so.

VALEDICTORY

Councillor McColl noted that this would be the final meeting of the Forum before the local government elections and, as Leader of the Council, thanked trades union representatives for working with the Council on a wide range of issues over the last five years and stated that there was cross-party support in the Council to do the right thing by its employees and to deliver the best possible services to the public.

The meeting closed at 3.00pm

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