

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

At a Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held in the 'The Bridge' Meeting Room, Council Offices, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Thursday, 6 December 2018 at 2.05 p.m.

Present: Councillors Karen Conaghan, Ian Dickson, David McBride and Jonathan McColl; James Halfpenny (EIS); David Scott and John Wagner (GMB); Claire Mackenzie (SSTA); Sean Davenport, Val Jennings, Andy McCallion, Susan Shannon and David Smith (UNISON); and James Docherty and Charlie McDonald (Unite).

Attending: Angela Wilson, Strategic Director - Transformation & Public Service Reform; Victoria Rogers, Strategic Lead - People and Technology; Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead - Regulatory; Alison McBride, Organisational Development & Change Manager; Stephen Brooks, Working4U Manager; Paul Darroch, Education Officer; Louise Hastings, HR Business Partner; Raymond Lynch, Senior Solicitor; and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Jim Finn; Richard Cairns, Strategic Director - Regeneration, Environment & Growth; Malcolm Bennie, Strategic Lead - Communications, Culture & Communities; Ronnie Dinnie - Strategic Lead - Environment & Neighbourhood; Julie Lusk - Head of Mental Health, Addictions and Learning Disability; and Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer - Pupil Support.

Councillor Jonathan McColl in the Chair

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Before commencing with the business of the meeting, Councillor McColl, Chair, informed those present that this would be the last meeting of the Forum which Mr McDonald would be attending in view of his fixed term appointment at Unite headquarters. On behalf of the Forum, Councillor McColl thanked Mr McDonald for his service and input to the Forum.

APPOINTMENT OF JOINT SECRETARY FOR THE TRADE UNION SIDE

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 13 September 2018 and in terms of its constitution, Councillor McColl, Chair, invited the Trade Union Side to nominate a Joint Secretary.

After discussion it was agreed that Andy McCallion (UNISON) be appointed and it was noted that his appointment would be effective until June 2019.

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 13 September 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

With reference to the item under the heading 'Trades Unions Issues – Reasons for Vacancies Not Being Filled', Councillor McColl, Chair, made reference to a UNISON overwork campaign and stated that he would allow this matter to be raised later in the meeting when 'Trades Unions Issues' were being considered.

PRESENTATION ON MODERN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

Stephen Brooks, Working4U Manager, gave a presentation on the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme.

The main points covered in the presentation were:-

- An overview of the work undertaken by the Working4U section which has a service agreement with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to deliver the Modern Apprenticeships Programme.
- The engagement that Working4U carries out with local public and private sector employers.
- The support which Working4U provides to apprentices in relation to additional learning needs such as literacy and numeracy, and welfare benefits advice.
- The verification process for ensuring that apprentices develop the necessary skills.
- That 44 new apprentices had been taken on this year and that there were currently 90.
- The destinations of apprentices on conclusion of their apprenticeships and that 60% continued to be employed by the Council.

Following discussion and having heard Mr Brooks in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Working4U team was limited in the verification work it was qualified to carry out and that it was therefore reliant on external support to verify the skills of particular kinds of apprentices, notably those employed in construction and plumbing; and

- (2) that it would be helpful if Mr Brooks was able to provide information on: (i) the numbers starting and completing apprenticeships each year; (ii) the numbers of former apprentices currently in employment; and (iii) the numbers in other destinations, it being noted that the section was only obliged to keep records for six months after the completion of an apprenticeship.

Councillor McColl, Chair, thanked Mr Brooks for his informative presentation.

PRESENTATION ON MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

A presentation was given by Alison McBride, Organisational Development & Change Manager, on the work being undertaken by the Council in partnership with the Headtorch organisation in relation to mental health in the workplace.

The main points covered in the presentation were:-

- That Headtorch had developed a mental health training programme in collaboration with the Psychology Department at the University of Glasgow which aimed to improve interactions with people who had mental health issues, increase empathy and reduce stigma.
- That every line manager employed by the Council would be put through the programme which comprised of online learning and group discussions.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the work being carried out by UNISON in relation to mental health first aid awareness; and
- (2) that it would be helpful if updates could periodically be provided to future meetings of the Forum on the roll-out of the Headtorch training.

Councillor McColl, Chair, thanked Mrs McBride for her informative presentation.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS MONITORING: APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2018

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead - People and Technology advising of progress on employment relations matters and analysis for the period 1 April to 30 September 2018.

After discussion and having heard the HR Business Partner in further explanation of the report and the Strategic Lead - People and Technology in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the concern expressed by Mr McDonald at the increase in the number of disciplinary cases in the period;

- (2) to note the terms of the discussion which had taken place in relation to the time taken for investigations to be concluded, it being acknowledged that sufficient time was required to be given to the investigation of complex cases;
- (3) to note that in the past there had been issues with the time taken for appeal procedures to be concluded;
- (4) to note that the Strategic Lead - People and Technology had invited the Trades Unions to provide her with details of any instances where they felt that a disciplinary case had been concluded before other avenues had been exhausted; and
- (5) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

Note: Councillor Conaghan and Mr Halfpenny left the meeting during consideration of this item.

WORKING WELL TOGETHER – ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT: APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2018 RESULTS

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead - People and Technology providing a detailed analysis on the attendance performance from April to September 2018. It was noted that a revised version of the report had been issued in advance of the meeting.

After discussion and having heard the HR Business Partner and the Strategic Lead - People and Technology in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note that information concerning health promotions and campaigns was made available to staff via the intranet and that regular bulletins were provided to all managers;
- (2) to note that consideration was being given to the possibility of future such bulletins being sent directly to all staff who used email with managers being requested to print bulletins for employees without email access;
- (3) to note the request from the Strategic Lead - People and Technology that Trades Unions conveners assist with the distribution of bulletins by forwarding them to their branch members; and
- (4) otherwise to note the contents of the report which showed a decrease of 5.9%, from an average of 5.07 FTE days lost per employee for the period April to September 2017 to an average of 4.78 FTE days lost per employee for the period April to September 2018, which equated to a decrease of 1,171.04 FTE days lost as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

TRADES UNIONS ISSUES

The Forum noted that the Trades Unions had not provided, in advance of the meeting, any issues that they wished to raise.

As mentioned earlier in these Minutes, Councillor McColl, Chair, offered representatives from UNISON the opportunity to address the Forum in relation to their overwork campaign.

The Forum heard from Ms Jennings and Mr Smith who advised that as part of the campaign UNISON members would be surveyed on their experiences of being overworked and would be reminded of the supports that the union could provide to them.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed:-

- (1) to note the position in respect of the campaign;
- (2) to note, with reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Forum held on 13 September 2018, that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum which would analyse any correlation between sickness absence due to work-related stress and vacancies not having been filled; and
- (3) to note, in relation to a point raised by Mr Smith: (i) that particular concerns relating to overwork should be raised with managers in the first instance; (ii) that an opportunity also existed for such matters to be discussed at joint consultative committees; and (iii) that Mr Smith had been invited to advise the Strategic Lead - People and Technology whether the matters he had referred to had been raised in these ways.

The meeting closed at 3.50 p.m.