

AGENDA ITEM 9

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
 LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE
 COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
 HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE
 2008 AT 2.30 PM

PRESENT: Employer's Side

Councillor M R Alexander
 Councillors A P Jackson, D A A Peek, M Wood
 (Chairman).

Staff Side (UNISON)

Chris Clowes, Chris Cooper (Vice Chairman),
 Jane Sharp, Andy Stevenson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services
Shona Gray	- Human Resources Officer
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Debbie Doogan-Turner	- Unison Regional Officer
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5 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Emma Freeman,

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newly appointed Head of People and Organisational Services, to her first meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Debbie Doogan-Turner, Unison Regional Officer, to the meeting.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

1 ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR E-MAILS

The Secretary to the Employer's Side stated that the policy had been developed in order to protect the authority against virus attacks, to protect and detect crime and to protect the reputation of the Authority and employees. She also commented that the policy was to prevent abuse of e-mail by Officers.

Councillor A P Jackson commented that Members' use of IT should be controlled by the Members IT Protocol document. He stated that the Members IT protocol should be updated in line with the Acceptable Use Policy for E-mails.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Acceptable Use Policy for E-Mails be approved; and DIS

(B) staff training be organised for the implementation of the Policy. DIS

2 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (IIP) ACTION PLAN

The Director of Internal Services apologised for factual inaccuracies in the first report and referred those present to the amended version circulated prior to the meeting. The Secretary to the Employer's side introduced the Panel to the IIP action plan that had resulted from the post recognition IIP review.

The Panel was advised that updates would be submitted to the Local Joint Panel and Human Resources

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Committee on a regular basis. The Panel was also advised of the possibility of a loss of liP accreditation if the action plan was not achieved.

Councillor A P Jackson commented that Members had expressed concerns that the Performance Development Review Scheme was not as embedded as it should be in the Authority. The Secretary to the Employer's side commented on the importance of ensuring the scheme was fit for purpose and of benefit to all.

The Secretary to the Employer's side reported that guidance in the action plan allowed for the PDRS scheme to become more embedded within the organisation. She commented that the PDRS scheme was a valuable two way process for line managers and Officers in setting objectives, discussing performance and contribution and identifying learning and development needs.

In response to a query from Councillor M R Alexander in respect of action plan monitoring, the Secretary to the Employer's side reported that update reports would be submitted to CMT, Local Joint Panel and Human Resources Committee on a regular basis.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that Unison was fully supportive of the liP Action plan.

RECOMMENDED – that the liP action plan be approved.

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3 FINALISING THE STRESS POLICY

The Director of Internal Services requested that the Local Joint Panel not consider the Stress policy at this meeting, to enable Corporate Management Team to consider the policy. The Secretary to the Staff Side expressed concerns and disappointment in respect of this request and raised the issue of mutual trust.

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The Director commented that the request by CMT to consider the report did not imply a lack of mutual trust between the Employer and Unison.

Councillor A P Jackson commented that the policy could be referred directly to the Human Resources Committee. He stated this would allow CMT time to consider the policy.

The Secretary to the Staff Side supported Councillor Jackson's suggestion so long as the policy was not amended before submission to the Human Resources Committee. It was noted that if there were amendments to the policy, the amended version should be referred back to the Local Joint Panel.

RECOMMENDED – that provided there were no amendments by the CMT, the policy be approved. Otherwise the policy be submitted to the next Panel meeting

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RESOLVED ITEMS4 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chairman and Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2008/09.

RESOLVED - that (A) Councillor Mike Wood be appointed Chairman for the Civic Year 2008/09; and

(B) Chris Cooper be appointed Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2008/09.

ACTION6 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2008 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

7 SAFETY COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2008

Minute 64 (A) – Buntingford Depot

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented on whether any decisions had been made in respect of Buntingford-based Officers relocating to Wallfields. The Director of Internal Services advised that no decisions had been taken in respect of Officers based at Buntingford. He stated that any decision could include flexible working arrangements for Buntingford-based Officers.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2008 be received.

8 WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Secretary to the Staff Side submitted a report in respect of consultation on the review of working arrangements. She expressed concerns that the contents of the report submitted to Executive on 29 May 2008 had not been subject to consultation with staff and Unison.

The recommendations approved by the Executive were detailed and a number of Officer concerns were highlighted in respect of the appointment of a Programme Director, car parking, home working arrangements and hot desking. The Panel was advised that there was substantial concern in respect of space allocation and whether the workforce could be accommodated at one site.

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The Secretary to the Staff Side concluded by stating that Officers had expressed concerns that part time staff with families would be disadvantaged by the outcomes of the review. She commented that concerns had been raised in respect of plans to extend Wallfields not being considered following the review.

The Director of Internal Services referred to the 3 options included in the report submitted by Paragon Interiors Group. He commented that Members had given Officers clear guidance to investigate options 2 and 3 and to discard the option of a single desk per person arrangement.

The Director reported that consultation and engagement would take place after the 1 July meeting of the Executive. He commented that, as had been the case to date, when decisions had been made, these would be communicated to Officers.

Councillor A P Jackson commented on the importance of staff welfare and encouraged senior Officers to be sympathetic to the workforce and communicate readily to staff. He suggested two alternative recommendations:

‘Staff and Unison to be kept informed, consulted and updated on the implementation and progress against the review of working arrangements project plan through the development of a Communications Strategy.’

‘Unison be consulted throughout the working arrangements project on matters that directly affect the interests of the Council’s staff as set out under Clause 7.4 of the Recognition and Procedural agreement’.

The Director stated that the working arrangements review was an ongoing process and all available means had been and would be used to liaise with the workforce. He cited team brief, staff briefings, team update and e-mail as

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mediums of communication used to date.

Debbie Doogan-Turner emphasised the importance of the Authority communicating developments with Officers as a matter of courtesy. She commented that that this would ensure Officers did not have to rely on “the grapevine” for information that affected them in the workplace.

The Director commented that all that had happened was a review of working arrangements. He stated that no firm decisions had been made and any plans that had been drawn up were in principle only.

The Panel supported Councillor Jackson’s proposals.

RESOLVED – that (A) Staff and Unison be kept informed, consulted and updated on the implementation and progress against the review of working arrangements project plan through the development of a Communications Strategy; and

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(B) Unison be consulted throughout the working arrangements project on matters that directly affect the interests of the Council’s staff as set out under Clause 7.4 of the Recognition and Procedural agreement.

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9 RETENDERING OF LEISURE SERVICES

The Secretary to the Staff Side referred to a circular of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) 03/2003 that required local authorities to involve unions in the selection process when a decision was made to outsource services. She requested that UNISON be permitted to interview bidders in order to assess the suitability of a contractor in respect of workforce matters and to feed back comments to Council Members for their consideration when selecting a bidder.

The Director of Customer and Community Services acknowledged the points referred to in the report and the

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importance of the role played by Unison. He stated that any decisions would involve consultation with Unison to ensure any issues were shared and addressed. He concluded by stating that any decisions taken had to be in the best interests of the Authority.

George A Robertson updated the panel on the situation with the retendering process and stated that Unison had been involved in the selection process of the tender in accordance with the Code. He commented on whether Unison attendance at interviews for the leisure contract was an appropriate arrangement. He referred to the risk of a challenge by any unsuccessful bidder if the process was considered improper in any way.

Councillor A P Jackson gave a reassurance on the role of Unison in assisting the Authority in decision making via the consultation process. He stated that the Authority and Members were ultimately accountable to the electorate.

Debbie Doogan-Turner commented that the Authority was risking being in breach of its obligations to consult with Unison under TUPE legislation and to allow Unison full involvement in the procurement process. She stated that the issue would be referred to the District Auditor to ensure effective working relations.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that Unison had not requested to be involved in the decision making process. She stated that the union would welcome the opportunity to speak to the bidders in order to assess workforce related matters with a view to assisting Council Members when making their decision. This had not caused any problems previously and Council Members had not raised any objections before now. There was a general detailed discussion surrounding TUPE legislation and the ODPM circular relating to Unison consultation and involvement in procurement processes.

RESOLVED - that the position be noted

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10 DATE OF FUTURE MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Local Joint Panel be held on 17 September 2008.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.

Chairman
Date