

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE
WAYTEMORE ROOM, THE
CAUSEWAY, BISHOP'S STORTFORD
ON WEDNESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2008
AT 2.30 PM

PRESENT: Employer's Side

Councillor M Wood (Chairman)
Councillors M R Alexander, L O Haysey
(Substitute for A P Jackson), D A A Peek.

Staff Side (UNISON)

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Mike Collier	- Acting Director of Internal Services
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor J O Ranger

11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor A P Jackson. It was noted that Councillor L O Haysey was attending as a substitute in his absence.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

12 CORPORATE TRAINING PLAN 2008/09

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report identifying learning and development priorities for the Council in 2008/09. The Corporate Training Plan would be reviewed following the Performance Development Review (PDR) process in December/January 2009 to ensure the training needs identified met corporate need, was relevant and offered value for money. Of the training offered in 2007/08, all programmes had been well received and no negative feedback had been received.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side reported that the Corporate Training Plan 2008/09 overview as set out in the report now submitted, supported the change process in terms of business operation and requirements, including the expectations of employees and focusing on building skills and changing behaviours.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side reported that the Training and Development Policy set out the Council's commitment to employees on learning and development which would also include mentoring and job shadowing.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side reported that the Professional, Career and Vocational Study Policy had been designed to provide a consistent approach to applications for sponsorship for professional, career and vocational training, allowing staff to learn new skills.

Consultation had been carried out with Unison who welcomed and supported all the policies.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that "bite size training" had been poorly attended. She commented that compulsory attendance should be considered on some courses.

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In response to a query from Councillor M Wood concerning the attendance percentages, the Secretary to the Employer's Side reported that "take up" had been positive and no negative feedback received. She commented that there had not been as many learning and development programmes last year owing to staff shortages within Human Resources.

In terms of partnership opportunities, the Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that the Council was a member of Herts HR Partnership which identified ways of joint partnership working to increase HR capacity and effectiveness across Hertfordshire. The Partnership was currently working on identifying similar training needs and providers to create saving efficiencies.

In response to a query from the Secretary to the Staff Side regarding the allocation of the services budget to service heads, the Secretary to the Employer's Side explained how the Council's total budget on learning and development was broken down. She explained that Heads of Service reviewed their current budget and then their needs for next year and staff under their control. PDRs played an important role in requests for training.

In response to a query concerning external funding, the Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that this was currently being explored.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that Unison welcomed the policies as detailed in the report now submitted.

Members noted the Corporate Training Plan 2008/09.

RECOMMENDED – that the Training and Development Policy and the Professional Career and Vocational Study Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

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ACTION**13 STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Secretary to the Employers Side submitted a report highlighting changes to the Stress Management Policy following its submission to Corporate Management Team.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that a both the Council and Unison had spent a great deal of time on the policy and both sides now were satisfied with the Policy.

The Secretary to the Staff Side reported that she was happy with the final version. She commented that there was a need to prevent stress and to raise staff awareness. The Secretary to the Employer's Side gave assurances that this would be done in partnership with Unison.

The Panel supported the changes to the policy as now submitted.

RECOMMENDATION – that the changes to the Stress Management Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

DIS

14 ALL STAFF EMAIL FACILITY

The Secretary to the Staff Side submitted a report concerning a decision by Corporate Management Team (CMT) to withdraw the “all staff” global email facility.

The Secretary to the Staff Side pointed out that the facility had already been withdrawn before in 2005 and that at Challenge Meetings held in 2006, staff had commented that by withdrawing the facility, they had felt they were not “trusted”. The former Interim Chief Executive, as a result of this, had reinstated the facility. She commented that there was no evidence that “email fatigue” was caused by global emails and that of the 500

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emails the Secretary to the Staff Side had received during the month of June, only 9 were “all staff” emails. These were all legitimate emails sent by HR or managers.

The Acting Director of Internal Services commented on the background resulting in the withdrawal of the “all email” facility. He commented that the issue was not about trusting staff, rather it was the intention to reduce the email burden on staff and their email box and to encourage staff to use the intranet facility.

Councillor D A A Peek commented that he had received comments from staff who were not happy about the withdrawal of this facility, although he accepted that there was a need to encourage staff to use the intranet. He commented that there should be a workable division in the use of the email system and suggested that the use of the “global all staff” emails be reinstated and used both for the business benefit of the Council and the common good of all staff. Further, that the intranet should be used if, for example, a member of staff wanted to sell something.

Members supported this approach and requested that the use of “all staff” emails be reinstated within the parameters outlined and that the matter be kept under review for 12 months.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the use of the “all staff global” emails be reinstated on the basis that this be used for disseminating information for the business benefit of the Council and common good of all staff and in other circumstances, staff should use the intranet facility;

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(B) the Head of Business Support Services be requested to keep the matter under review and to report back in 12 months on usage of the “All Email” facility; and

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(C) no amendments to the email policy be made without full consultation with the Secretary to the Staff Side.

15 PAY DEDUCTIONS FOR STRIKE ACTION

The Secretary to the Staff Side submitted a report concerning the methodology for the calculation of pay deductions for employees involved in any future strike action. The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that this should be calculated on the basis on 1/365th.

It was noted that the Human Resources Committee had taken on board advice from the National and Regional Local Government employers that the calculation should be on the basis on 1/260th.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that the approach by the Council should be consistent and that a decision to deduct 1/260th when many staff were reluctant to strike, but did so to support a national dispute, was a punitive measure used to deter employees from taken action. She commented that this was “advice” from the National and Regional Employers Organisations and was for guidance only.

She commented that the Council would achieve savings, in that on the last occasion when 80 members of staff went on strike for two days, their work was made up when they returned to work.

Councillor J O Ranger commented that employers were reminded that this was the usual practice. He commented that staff do not work 365 days a year and that the 1/260th reflected five days a week for 52 weeks without taking into account annual leave. The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that this was an issue when staff did not take all of their leave entitlement. Councillor J O Ranger commented on the rules which were applied when staff left an Authority in terms of their

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leave entitlement.

The Acting Director of Internal Services commented that the Council had not been consistent over the years and referred to a strike two years ago when the Council deducted on the basis of 1/260th, ie on the basis of a 5 day working week.

In response to a query from Councillor M R Alexander about the impact of paying staff for leave not taken when they left the Authority at 1/260th rather than 1/365th and how other Authorities approached the issue, the Acting Director of Internal Services commented that this could be reported to a future meeting of the Local Joint Panel.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side commented on the need for a consistent approach.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) all pay deducted following strike action be deducted at 1/260th; and DIS

(B) the Head of People and Organisational Services be requested to report back to the next Panel meeting on the approach taken by other Councils on the methodology used to pay staff for leave not taken. DIS

RESOLVED ITEMS16 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2008 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17 SAFETY COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2008

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2008 be received.

ACTION18 MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report on the Management Development Programme which aimed to ensure that middle managers had the knowledge, competence and confidence to manage their service effectively and within the change management process. The 2007/08 Leadership Development Programme had been attended by 19 Heads of Service and five "rising stars".

It was noted that the programme had been designed on feedback received to date. It was anticipated that the first programme would commence in January 2009 then April 2009 and September 2009 with the possibility of a fourth programmed in 2010.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that Heads of Service were currently in the process of identifying managers on a set of agreed criteria. Heads of Service would be expected to take on a mentoring role.

The Secretary to the Staff Side queried whether there should be exceptions to the established criteria in terms of identifying staff to go on the Leadership Programme. She commented that there was no provision for an individual to put themselves forward and was concerned about the need to apply equality of opportunity.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that she hoped that middle managers would attend the programme given that there had been a lack of development for that tier of management. She could not foresee any difficulty in allowing rising stars to nominate themselves subject to criteria and the relevance for both the employee and the Council.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that Unison had been consulted on the Management Development Programme.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

19 DATE OF FUTURE MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Local Joint Panel be held on 3 December 2008.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm.

Chairman
Date