

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
PEGS LANE, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2008 AT
2.30 PM

PRESENT: Employer's Side

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

Staff Side (UNISON)

Chris Cooper (Vice Chairman), Fiona Brown
(Substitute for Chris Clowes), 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
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor J O Ranger

20 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor M R Alexander. It was noted that Councillor L O Haysey was attending as a substitute in his absence. The Chairman welcomed Councillor J O Ranger to the meeting.

ACTION

The Panel observed a minute's silence following the recent death of Mike Welburn.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS**21 DEVELOPING THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES AGENDA**

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report informing Members of the Council's statutory obligations to equalities, the measures the Council currently took and how gaps in service provision could be identified and addressed. It was noted that whilst the main elements of the report and policies fell within the remit of the Executive and Council, there were workforce matters contained within the documents now submitted for consideration by the Panel and Human Resources Committee.

The Director of Customer and Community Services commented that equalities had changed substantially over the years and that the focus was now on equality of service delivery. To keep abreast of legislation, there was a need to have a systematic approach. Current policies such as the Race Equality Duty, the Disability Equality Duty and the Gender Equality Duty needed to be replaced with a Comprehensive Corporate Equality Policy, Scheme and supporting Action Plan. These documents were attached to the report now submitted.

The Director of Customer and Community Services commented that this new approach to equalities would be an ongoing exercise whereby the Council would need to undertake relevance tests to see how relevant policies were and make changes as necessary. He commented that pages 6.11, 6.19 and 6.29 of the report now submitted were of particular relevance in terms of workforce matters.

ACTION

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger the Director confirmed that the Council was at Level 2 in terms of its self assessment. Level 3 would have to be externally validated and it was anticipated that this was about 18 months away in terms of a timeframe. He explained the difficulties faced by the section in terms of staffing.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that the Comprehensive Corporate Equality Policy report should be amended to include Portuguese nationals. This was supported.

In response to a query by Councillor J O Ranger regarding workforce monitoring, the Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that statistics were reported quarterly to Corporate Management Team (CMT) and to Human Resources Committee. The recent staff survey will enable a spot check of equality data held.

The Secretary to the Staff Side was advised that the Equality Impact Assessment was not yet available on the intranet.

Councillor J O Ranger was pleased to see that equal pay audit would be carried out.

The Secretary to the Staff Side asked whether a Monitoring Action Plan could be submitted to the LJP on a regular basis. The Director of Customer and Community Services commented that progress against the Equalities Action Plan would be reported to Members on an annual basis.

Councillor L O Haysey welcomed the approach and commented that the policy would enable services, across the board to make significant achievements.

Members noted the report and asked that their

ACTION

comments, as detailed above, be forwarded to Human Resources Committee and incorporated within the new policies and framework.

RECOMMENDED – that Members’ comments as detailed above, be submitted to Human Resources Committee and incorporated within the new policies and framework.

DIS

22 METHODOLOGY FOR THE PAYMENT OF UNTAKEN ANNUAL LEAVE

The Secretary to the Employer’s Side submitted a report on the approach taken by other Councils on the methodology used to pay staff for untaken annual leave.

The Appendix to the report now submitted, showed that of eleven local Authorities, five used the 1/260th calculation in relation to accrued annual leave, reclaimed leave, unpaid leave and strike action. All Authorities used the same methodology for the payment of annual leave and the deduction of salary for unpaid leave or strike deductions.

The Secretary to the Employer’s Side commented that Regional Employers advised that payments and deductions from salary should be based on the same calculation. The LGE (Local Government Employers) recommended that deductions from salary for industrial action, be based on 1/260. As East Herts Council had adopted this advice, it was considered prudent and consistent to use this methodology for all other calculations.

The Secretary to the Staff Side welcomed the application of a consistent approach.

RECOMMENDED – that the annual salary calculation for the payment of untaken leave and the deduction of reclaimed and unpaid

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leave be adopted on the basis of 1/260th.

RESOLVED ITEMS23 MINUTES

The Secretary to the Staff side asked why the “All Staff Email Facility” had been referred back to Corporate Management Team (CMT) when the recommendation by the Panel, that the use of the facility be reinstated on the basis that this be used for disseminating information for the business benefit of the Council, had been supported by Human Resources Committee.

Councillor A P Jackson commented that this was an operational matter which was for Corporate Management Team to decide. He queried whether there was a need to review the Panel’s Terms of Reference.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that operational matters affecting staff had been raised before at previous Panel meetings, including the closure of the office on Christmas Eve. The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that CMT had, by their action, withdrawn the “All Email Facility”.

The Acting Director of Internal Services commented that Corporate Management Team (CMT) felt that the facility should be made available to all staff, but that this should be “line managed” and monitored with a further report in due course. The Acting Director commented that the facility was still available, but CMT considered that it was sensible that requests should be approved by the Head of Service to provide an element of staff protection.

Councillor D A A Peek commented that he was disappointed to see that this was being reviewed again by the Panel given the fact that it had already supported the reinstatement of the email facility and had recommended this to Human Resources Committee. He stated that comments from the Panel, including those of elected

ACTION

Members had been given but these had been ignored.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that there had been no abuses of the facility by staff and the requirement to have emails sanctioned via the Head of Service made staff feel mistrusted.

The Chairman requested that Officers report back on the "All Staff Email Facility " and to consider, in consultation with UNISON, whether there was a need to review the Panel's existing Terms of Reference. Members supported this approach.

RESOLVED – that (A) Officers report back on the "All Staff Email Facility"; DIS

(B) in consultation with UNISON, a need to review the Local Joint Panel's existing Terms of Reference be considered; and DIS

(C) the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2008 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

24

SAFETY COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2008

The Secretary to the Staff Side sought clarification concerning proposals to relocate Buntingford staff to Hertford. The Programme Director for Change commented that overall plans depended on the needs and requirements of the service.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented that, in relation to work station risk assessments, these should be undertaken by professionals and not by the individual home workers themselves. The Secretary to the Employer's Side commented that a decision had not been taken on this matter. This would be considered further as part of the Changing the Way We Work (C3W)

ACTION

process.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2008 be received.

25 CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK (C3W) CHANGE MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report detailing the initial C3W employee consultation arrangements (the change management toolkit).

The Programme Director of Change commented that the review of working arrangements was expected to improve service arrangements and reduce costs. The toolkit set out the process for initial employee consultation. The Secretary to the Employer's Side confirmed that Appendix A of the report now submitted, detailed the brief for Heads of Service and Managers on the purpose and process for carrying out employee consultation. Appendix B of the report now submitted, set out the consultation form. Consultation meetings would take place in December and January and conclude by 31 January 2009.

The Programme Director of Change confirmed that the process was at a stage whereby staff could now be consulted and after that, decisions could be made about which services should be prepared to move and in which order. He confirmed that a communications strategy had been agreed by the Programme Board and that a User Group had been established with a representative from every section. IT Standards were being developed.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side explained that the "traffic light" system would be used to highlight which sections and staff, were ready to move. This would play an important role in reviewing and updating the Council's policies. Consultation would continue with Unison on a service by service basis.

ACTION

The Secretary to the Staff Side supported the consultation document. The Programme Director provided further clarification on the IT Strategy and remote home working. He explained that a substantial amount of money had been set aside for remote working and EDM systems. He explained the difficulties with current software and the ongoing work to make various software components compatible. The Programme Director undertook to provide the Panel with progress reports.

The Secretary to the Staff Side commented on the difficulties currently experienced in accessing systems when working from home. Councillor A P Jackson commented that once the consultation had been carried out, the Council would have a better idea of the cost implications of what needed to be done. The Director of Customer and Community Services (as a Member of the Programme Board) undertook to take these concerns forward to the Programme Board.

Members noted the report and endorsed the consultation arrangements.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted and the consultation arrangements endorsed.

26 CODE OF CONDUCT: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report seeking Members' views on the consultation paper "Orders and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England". Comments were required by the deadline of 24 December 2008 for implementation by May 2009.

Given the fact that Human Resources Committee would not meet until 7 January 2009, the consultation paper had been circulated in advance, to those Members, by the Secretary to the Employer's Side.

ACTION

It was noted that the Standards Committee, at its meeting held on 18 November 2008, had considered the matter and had suggested a number of amendments.

The Secretary to the Employer’s Side commented that the questions and draft responses were set out in the Appendix to the report now submitted. She commented that the Council already had its own comprehensive Code of Conduct in place which was more detailed than the Consultation Code now being circulated.

Members noted that the Code did not identify any issues which the Council was not already addressing.

RESOLVED – that the Consultation Code on the Conduct of Members and Officers comments be noted.

DNS

27 DATE OF FUTURE MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Local Joint Panel be held on 18 March 2009.

The meeting closed at 3.35 pm.

Chairman
Date