

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2011,
AT 2.30 PM

PRESENT: **Employer's Side**

Councillors L Haysey and A Jackson

Staff Side (UNISON)

Mrs B Dodkins, J Francis, Mrs J Sharp and
Mr A Stevenson

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors J Ranger

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Jaleh Nahvi	- Human Resources Officer

25 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chairman for the Civic Year. It was moved by Jane Sharp and seconded by Councillor A Jackson that Councillor M Wood be appointed Chairman of the Local Joint Panel for the Civic Year.

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice

Chairman for the Civic Year. It was moved by Andy Stevenson and seconded by Councillor A Jackson that Chris Clowes (UNISON) be appointed Vice Chairman for the Civic Year.

In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice Chairman, nominations were sought for a representative from either side to chair this meeting. It was moved by Jane Sharp and seconded by Councillor A Jackson that Andy Stevenson chair this meeting.

RESOLVED – that (A) Councillor M Wood be appointed Chairman for the Civic Year;

(B) Chris Clowes be appointed Vice Chairman for the Civic Year; and

(C) Andy Stevenson be appointed to chair this meeting of the Local Joint Panel.

26 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors M Alexander, M Wood and Chris Clowes. It was noted that Jenny Francis was substituting for Chris Clowes.

27 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

28 SAFETY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meetings held on 13 January and 24 March 2011 be received.

29 JOB EVALUATION

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report outlining the revised Job Evaluation Policy following a review of both the Job Evaluation Protocol and the Job Evaluation Appeal Process. She outlined the key changes which were set out in the report now submitted. She asked the Panel to ignore paragraph 2.2.4 following conversations with UNISON.

The Secretary to the Staff Side referred to the wording in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 and felt that the six month deadline could be detrimental to staff and that it might be unlawful in that it could affect employees' rights. The Secretary to the Employer's Side stressed the need to ensure that the employee had been undertaking the job for six months. An Officer explained the rationale for the inclusion of the six month deadline in that it provided an opportunity for the changes to "bed down" and to ensure that changes were evaluated in a timely fashion. Staff Side sought assurances that once the line manager had agreed when the substantial changes started, that it should be backdated to that date.

Councillor J Ranger stated that he could not see a problem with the six months deadline if staff were having regular appraisals which would highlight any changes to the job. He reminded the Panel that both the line manager and the employee signed off the PDR evaluation. The Staff Side acknowledged this, but stated that line managers might not carry out appraisals because of competing priorities.

The Director of Internal Services suggested that either the employee or line manager could request that that a job be re-evaluated and that it should be backdated to the date of that request. He stated that this could be further clarified in an email which confirmed that the job needed to be re-evaluated and which might fix a date for the evaluation to take place which was anticipated to be within six months. Councillor A Jackson agreed that the request by either party should be the

trigger and start date of the process.

The Staff Side referred to the issue of appeals and was concerned at the prices quoted in using Hay Staff for assistance given that there were very few appeals. The Staff Side stated that where an employee appealed against a grade, then that application should be considered by an individual outside of the Council so that it reassured the employee that the independent person had an objective view of matters.

An Officer referred to paragraph 13.7 which allowed the opportunity to bring in external assistance. She stated that regard was taken of internal staff, who had appeal experience and if necessary, the Council would bring in external expertise.

The Panel supported the suggestion that paragraph 5.2 be amended by the inclusion of "that either employee or the Line Manager request that a job be re-evaluated and that this date shall be the effective date".

RESOLVED – that the revised Job Evaluation Policy as amended, be approved.

30 EQUAL PAY

A report was submitted by the Secretary to the Employer's Side setting out the proposed methodology for the 2011 Equal Pay Audit. The Secretary to the Employer's side explained why it was necessary to carry out an audit of all posts in the Council and referred to the data to be used for comparative purposes set out in the report now submitted. It was noted that the report would be presented to CMT in September / October 2011, then Local Joint Panel and Human Resources Committee.

The Panel was advised that the data cleanse had elicited a 90% response.

Councillor J Ranger suggested that Step 5 (as contained in the Green Book) and set out in the report now submitted, might be construed as prejudicial to men. Whilst acknowledging that it was not the Council's own Step Process, he stated that the Council was not bound to follow the Green Book and that consideration be given to inserting the word "men". This was supported.

The Panel agreed the methodology for the 2011 Equal Pay Audit as amended.

RESOLVED – that the methodology for the 2011 Equal Pay Audit as amended, be approved.

31 DISTURBANCE POLICY

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report on a revised Disturbance Allowance Policy following a review to ensure that it was fit for purpose, aligned with legislation, best practice and supported the C3W Programme. The key changes were set out in the report now submitted.

The Director of Internal Services stated that the proposals were generous and relatively expensive when compared to other councils within the County. He referred to the Council's shared services agenda and cautioned Members of the need to ensure harmonisation of policies. He stated that there would need to be further discussions with colleagues in other Councils on this and other policies.

The Secretary to the Staff Side requested a review of the policy in six months. The Director of Internal Services suggested that as part of the review, the scheme should be benchmarked by other authorities as this data would assist discussions for the harmonisation of policies. The Staff Side sought confirmation that the new arrangements proposed, honoured existing employees who had moved from Bishop's

Stortford to home.

The Director of Internal Services referred to the proposed shared arrangement with Stevenage Council and of the possibility of staff from both Councils with different levels of disturbance allowance. He suggested that it would be appropriate for all staff to receive similar treatment.

The Panel agreed the policy and supported a proposal that the policy be reviewed in six months and that, in the meantime, the policy be benchmarked against other councils in Hertfordshire with a view to achieving significant harmonisation of the policy without prejudicing existing staff.

RESOLVED – that (A) the revised Disturbance Allowance Policy be approved;

(B) the policy be reviewed in six months and that, in the meantime, the policy be benchmarked against other Councils in Hertfordshire with a view to achieving significant harmonisation of the policy without prejudicing existing staff.

32 URGENT BUSINESS

The Secretary to the Staff Side requested that an item of urgent business be considered concerning UNISON's response to the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service with Stevenage. UNISON requested that the issue be discussed as an urgent item to facilitate the business of the Council given that the issue would be discussed at the Executive on 15 June 2011.

The Director of Internal Services was concerned about the relevancy of the item being considered at the Panel, as he felt the proposals did not raise any HR policy issues.

Councillor J Ranger acknowledged the Director's comments but felt that there were some aspects within the papers which had been circulated earlier, that were relevant for the Panel

and which warranted consideration.

Staff Side thanked Councillor J Ranger for his support. The UNISON representative stated that there were decisions which would be taken by the Executive on 15 June 2011 which could affect staff, as such, she stated that this was the appropriate forum. Councillor A Jackson supported the request by UNISON and agreed to articulate their views to the Executive.

The UNISON representative referred to the Revenues and Benefits standards of service and of the fact that staff had built up areas of expertise. The benefits of shared services were acknowledged, but she expressed concern that the time frames for consultation left staff with the impression that comments were not being listened to. She stated that staff were concerned about accommodation. She acknowledged that some staff would be based at Bishop's Stortford but that there would be an additional 40 extra staff from Stevenage in Hertford and that this might force people to work from home.

The Staff Side sought assurances that the savings proposed would be made and that this would not be detrimental to the service. She referred to the TUPE regulations and the conflicting and confusing statements on the legal position in not being able to make staff redundant if connected with TUPE but that staff could be made redundant under TUPE for "economic, technical or organisational" reasons and referred to the fact that six staff would be lost in order to make efficiency savings.

The UNISON representative referred to the gap in grades between 5 – 9. She expressed doubts about the use of generic job descriptions because there was a need to specialise in some areas of revenues and benefits. From a financial perspective, she queried whether the level of contingency should be larger.

The Staff Side referred to IT and of proposals to reduce this service. The representative expressed concern at this possibility within the context of a proposal to take on staff from

Stevenage.

Councillor A Jackson referred to the Executive’s preferred route of shared services and of the needs to balance this in regard to the right philosophy, attitude and culture towards the provision of quality services. He stated that the shared approach contributed significantly to the savings which needed to be made in the years ahead. He stated that job descriptions would form a part of conversations between HR and UNISON.

The Panel received UNISON’s comments. Councillor A Jackson agreed to pass these on to the Executive on 15 June 2011

RESOLVED – that (A) UNISON’s comments be received; and

(B) the Leader pass on UNISON’s comments to the Executive on 15 June 2011.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

Chairman
Date