

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE  
WAYTEMORE ROOM, THE COUNCIL  
OFFICES, THE CAUSEWAY, BISHOP'S  
STORTFORD ON MONDAY  
26 SEPTEMBER, 2005 AT 11.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillors H G S Banks, M G Carver,  
A P Jackson and M Wood.

Staff Side (UNISON)

Robert Ball, Tina Darton, Jane Sharp,  
Andy Stevenson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Rachel Stopard	- Executive Director
Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Georgina Stanton	- Director of Organisational Development

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – that Councillor M G Carver be  
appointed for the Municipal Year.

2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held  
on 25 April 2005 be confirmed as a correct record.

3 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE  
MEETING HELD ON 31 MAY 2005 AND MATTERS  
ARISING

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a) Note 26 - Item from Trade Union

ACTION

The issue of fire drills was considered. The Director of Organisational Development commented that a recruitment drive had been undertaken in relation to seeking volunteers from the Bishop's Stortford site.

b) Note 25 - Health Safety and Welfare Team

The Director of Organisational Development commented that this issue would be reviewed with the Director of Regulatory Services. She commented that there were inconsistencies in relation to the Minutes which she felt, should be more "formal". The Director of Organisational Development suggested that the issue should be raised with the Head of Democratic Services.

DOD

#### 4 GRANGE PADDOCKS CAR PARK

The Staff Side submitted a report concerning a request for the resurfacing of the Grange Paddocks overspill car park with permeable paving. Given the fact that the Grange Paddocks site was located in a flood plain, the use of permeable paving was a requirement of the Environment Agency. The Staff Side commented that resurfacing of the overspill car park was urgently needed given its poor condition. Estimates for these works had been obtained by UNISON.

It was noted that concerns regarding the installation of CCTV at Grange Paddocks had been recently addressed.

In relation to surfacing works to the overspill car park, three estimates had been obtained but one quotation had been rejected on grounds of its impracticality in a flood plain. Quotations had been received for block paving (£57,342) and plastic grids (£44,636). The Staff Side explained the practical uses of each. The latter would also require the purchase of top soil of approximately £1800.

A Member suggested that the matter should be referred to Capital Strategy for further consideration of the options

ACTION

proposed. Concerns were expressed at the suggestion to improve the Riverside Walk footpath following safety issues identified in a risk assessment undertaken by the Council. There was also doubt about the ownership of the land in that it was, in part, owned by the Town Council.

Members queried how many staff used the overspill car park. The Staff Side commented that where possible, staff used the well surfaced car park at the front. Other staff were forced to use the overspill. The overspill was extremely dirty and the pot holes would only be exacerbated by winter conditions.

Members recognised the condition of the overspill car park and suggested that a survey be carried out in terms of the numbers using the car park and that this information be incorporated in the report to Capital Strategy.

An update was also requested in relation to requests by residents regarding the installation of CCTV. The Executive Director (HOPS) undertook to provide the Member with an update.

ED  
(HOPS)

The Staff Side commented upon the poor condition of the footpath along the riverside. The route was frequently used by staff as a faster way to work. The Staff Side felt that the footway walking conditions should be improved with an all weather footpath for both staff and the general public.

Members felt that the issue of upgrading the Riverside Walk was not an option they wished to support primarily in the light of the negative risk assessment and also the issue of ownership.

The Staff Side expressed regret that the Council were not considering the general needs of the public, some of whom could not drive. The Staff Side felt that the suggestion to improve the footpath should not be ruled out on the grounds that it could be unsafe.

ACTION

Members were of the view that the suggestion to improve the overspill car park should be supported and that a report should be presented to Capital Strategy setting out the resurfacing options and whether this work could be carried out in this financial year. It was also suggested that the Council should write to the Town Council to see if they wished to "lend assistance" in terms of improving the riverside footpath for recreational uses.

ED  
(HOPS)

RESOLVED – that (A) a report be prepared for presentation to Capital Strategy regarding a proposal to resurface the overspill car park at Grange Paddocks;

(B) consideration be given to including this work in the programme for this financial year;

(C) the Council should write to the Town Council regarding the condition of the riverside footpath and whether there were opportunities to improve the footpath for recreational uses.

## 5 FLEXIBLE WORKING – WORK LIFE BALANCE STRATEGY

The Employer's side submitted a progress report in developing an overarching strategy on a range of options for flexible working including home working and remote working. It was hoped that the new strategy would enhance organisational efficiency and staff well being.

The success of the pilot exercise conducted in Revenues since late 2004 was noted. The pilot study showed that there were a lot of strengths in the new methods of working and highlighted how well managed the pilot study had been with colleagues and staff working collaboratively.

ACTION

It was noted that Director's Board had agreed the key principles of the strategy. Research had been undertaken in reviewing other local authority practices and in using county networks. Of all the authorities researched, all had core hours.

The Director of Organisational Development explained the principles of the "Work/Life Balance" in terms of service delivery and staff welfare and the scope of the strategy in relation to its key benefits and key requirements.

The range of options included:

- Flexitime – adaptations to the existing scheme;
- Compressed hours – to enable time to be accumulated;
- Annualised hours – accumulation of time over a longer period;
- Home working - to maximise productivity time and minimise unnecessary travel;
- Remote working – staff provided with technological advise and HR guidance to avoid duplication and increase efficiency;
- Oasis and Hot Desking – using office space effectively, minimising unnecessary travel and increasing efficiency;
- Job sharing;
- Career breaks;
- Voluntary reduced hours;
- Term time working

ACTION

It was considered that the above mentioned strategies would maximise employment opportunities and enhance recruitment and retention within the Council. However, it was recognised that further work needed to be done to review existing arrangements for each of the options above including such issues as IT, health and safety, insurance etc.

It was anticipated that the timetable for developing the Work Life Balance Strategy would be spread over a number of months following extensive staff consultation but that it could be rolled out in March 2006.

The Director of Organisational Development stressed the need to meet the working obligations of the Council. It was noted that some sections eg housing options, might have difficulty in taking advantage of some of the work life strategy options.

The Chairman noted the positive work already undertaken. He stressed the need for compliance with the March 2006 timetable and sought assurance that processes and areas needing clarity would be resolved without delay.

A Member commented on the success of the Revenue's Pilot Study and praised its management. It was noted that the options within the strategy would require a lot of self management for it to succeed.

The Staff Side welcomed the March 2006 deadline. The Staff Side commented that the scheme was about self management and did not require a lot of work by "Team Leaders" in that it was in everyone's interest to ensure that the scheme worked effectively. The Staff Side was of the view that there could be issues regarding the scheme's application in customer services and housing, but they were confident that it could work to a greater or lesser degree in each section.

The Staff Side supported the proposal for the rolling out of the scheme to other sections. The Staff Side sought

ACTION

the scheme to other sections. The Staff Side sought assurances that in relation to home working, that this should be available to all staff, and not be divisive in application. It was acknowledged that there would be some “natural” limitations to staff options in terms of their availability ie in relation to customer services staff.

The Chairman acknowledged that the Revenue’s Pilot showed enormous strengths in the scheme and that there should be positive endorsement of the Pilot already undertaken. However it was also acknowledged that application issues and processes such as IT, health and safety, insurance required further investigation before the scheme could be rolled out.

The Panel supported the need to clarify processes and issues such as IT support, health and safety and insurance and hoped that this could be accommodated by the March 2006 timetable.

DOD

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress report on the Work Life Balance Strategy be noted and of the March 2006 timescale for its implementation;

DOD

(B) clarity be sought on the issues identified above; and

(C) a progress report be provided at the next Local Joint Panel.

## 6 NEW POLICY ON HARASSMENT AND BULLYING AT WORK

The Chairman commented that the report had been withdrawn pending the resolution of a formal complaint.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am.