

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 3
DECEMBER 2014, AT 2.30 PM

PRESENT: **Employer's Side**

Councillor Linda Haysey (Chairman)
Councillors A Jackson and J Thornton

Staff Side (UNISON)

Ms F Brown, Mr S Ellis and Mr A Stevenson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Property Services
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

9 **GENERAL LEAVE POLICY**

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report following a refresh of the General Leave Policy which had been last reviewed in 2007.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side stated that there were no changes in terms of entitlements but that the report now referred to the introduction of a Carers Policy (see Minute 11).

In response to a query from Councillor J Thornton regarding how many staff had taken career breaks, the Secretary to the Employer's Side stated that not many had taken the opportunity. She stated that any staff applying for a career break needed to advise Human Resources what they would be doing in that time. A

Unison representative who had taken a career break stated that he did not have to justify how he would spend the time when he had applied.

The Secretary to the Employer's Side explained the position regarding part time employment and bank holidays and how this was applied on a pro rata basis. A Unison representative stated that because she worked compressed hours, she lost the benefit of a bank holiday credit to her hours. The Secretary to the Employer's Side agreed to look into this.

The Panel recommended approval of the report.

RECOMMENDED – that the General Leave Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

10 **REVISED FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY**

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report setting out the key changes to the Council's Flexible Working Policy which had been amended to reflect new statutory rights.

Councillor J Ranger suggested that paragraph 5.1.1 should be clarified by the inclusion of "37 hours a week". This was supported. In response to a further query regarding the flexitime scheme and "banking" time, the Secretary to the Employer's Side explained how this worked. She further explained that this did not include everyone, such as those working shift patterns and casual staff working at Hertford Theatre.

The Panel recommended approval of the report as now amended.

RECOMMENDED – that the Flexible Working Policy, as now amended, be approved.

11 CARERS POLICY

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report detailing the new Carers Policy which had been developed as a result of recommendations from the Council's Health and Wellbeing Panel. She stated that the policy mirrored that of Hertfordshire County Council.

In response to a query from Councillor A Jackson regarding Bereavement Leave, the Secretary to the Employer's Side confirmed that this incorrectly stated "should not exceed 5 days in a leave year" and should match the wording in the general leave policy

Councillor J Thornton raised the issue of an informal caring arrangement of a friend. The Director of Finance and Support Services reminded Members about the duty of care the employer had to its employees and suggested that the definition of the caring role, could be specified further. This was supported. The Director of Finance and Support Services stated that it was for the employee to declare if they had a caring role and that a member of staff should not feel under pressure to have to declare this, although we would encourage staff to, so that we can support them better.

In response to a query from the Chairman, regarding the process of fairness or resolving a problem, the Secretary to the Employer's explained that the first step would be to discuss the issue with their line manager and then, if this was not satisfactorily resolved, to use the Grievance Procedure. The Secretary to the Employer's Side explained that the spirit of the policy was to help staff in supporting their caring role.

Councillor A Jackson agreed that the policy was about identifying and recognising the challenges and in trying to provide support. He welcomed the fact that the Council now had a separate policy rather than it being embedded within other policies.

The Panel, recommended approval of the report as now

amended.

RECOMMENDED – that the Carers Policy, as now amended, be approved.

12 **RETIREMENT POLICY**

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a revised Retirement Policy which had last been reviewed in 2012. The Secretary to the Employer's Side stated that the policy had been updated to remove the statutory default retirement age and the need to comply with a duty to prepare and publish a written statement of its policy relating to certain discretionary powers under the Regulations which applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

In response to a query from Councillor J Ranger regarding the move into retirement over a two year period, the Secretary to the Employer's Side explained that this was to ensure that people actually retired at the end of the period and reminded Members that the Council had other policies to enable staff to work flexibly. The Director of Finance and Support Services explained that flexible retirement allowed the Council to retain key skills and knowledge and allowed for better succession planning.

The Panel recommended approval of the report.

RECOMMENDED – that the Retirement Policy, be approved.

13 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M Alexander. It was noted that Councillor J Ranger was substituting for him.

14 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 August 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

As this was the last meeting before Christmas, the Chairman wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

It was noted that there were no reports to consider from the Secretary to the Staff Side.

The meeting closed at 3.10 pm

Chairman
Date