

Agenda Item 17

Democratic Services
Salisbury District Council, Bourne Hill
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Minutes

Meeting of : Joint Consultative Forum
Meeting held in : Committee Room 1, The Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury
Date : Friday 14 July 2006

Present

Chairman

Rick Wells (UNISON) – Chairman.

Councillors

Mr D Culver and Miss M A Tomlinson

Staff Side

Jenny Marshall (TGWU), Jane Mitchell (UNISON) and Joan Smith (UNISON)

Officers in Attendance

Anne McConkey (Head of People and Organizational Development), Lucy Freeman (Employee Relations Officer), Lindsay Mertens (DSU), Lisa Moore (DSU), and Mark Wareham (UNISON Branch Organiser).

Apologies

Councillor A J A Brown-Hovelt (Vice Chairman), Councillor Mrs Evans, Andrea Glover (Recruitment & Retention officer), and Karen Gard (Employee Relations Manager).

165. Election of a Chairman

Nominations were called for a Chairman from the Staff side for the municipal year of 2006/07.

Agreed: that Rick Wells be Chairman for the municipal year of 2006/07.

166. Election of a Vice-Chairman

Nominations were called for a Vice Chairman from the Members side for the municipal year of 2006/07.

Agreed: that Councillor Brown-Holvelt be Vice-Chairman for the municipal year of 2006/07 (Subject to him accepting the position).



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



167. Minutes:

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

168. Declaration of Interests:

There were none.

169. Minutes from the Health and Safety Committee

The Forum members considered the minutes from the last meeting of the Health and Safety Committee on 5 June 2006.

The Chairman informed the Forum that since the meeting, feedback from the Principal Environmental Health Officer had been received confirming the replacement of the Health & Safety Advisor. The role would be carried out by the temporary Health & Safety Consultant who would allocate one day a week, and a Technical Officer who would allocate 2 days a week to the role.

The Head of People and Organizational Development informed the Forum members that she had been in discussion with the Principal Environmental Health Officer and had been informed that the Technical Officer would be taking care of the day to day issues which may arise. The temporary Health & safety Consultant would be responsible for looking at the bigger issues and long-term projects with regard to Health and Safety.

The UNISON Branch Organiser informed the Forum of his intention to raise the matter of attendance at the next Health & Safety meeting, as he felt that more senior management attendance was necessary particularly in the period of transition that the council is currently in.

The Head of People and Organizational Development informed the Forum members that although the various office moves had delayed the assignment of Health & Safety representatives for each building it remains the responsibility of every Unit Head to ensure that Risk Assessments are properly carried out.

The Forum felt it was important that Health & Safety matters were monitored closely over the next year, during the various stages of the office decant, and that the minutes from the Health & Safety meetings should be given serious consideration when brought before other Committees and Forums.

Resolved – that the minutes of the Health and Safety meeting held on 5th June 2006 be noted.

170. Office Centralisation Project – Standing Item:

Councillor Culver informed the Forum that a verbal agreement had been made regarding SDC lease at 47 Endless Street and that it would be used as an alternative to the City Hall during the decant, although the agreement was yet to be formalised in writing. This development was seen as a benefit as it had been a concern that decanting to the City Hall would cause many problems, such as a loss of bookings, which would be very hard to claw back after the decanted units returned to Bourne Hill. 47 Endless Street was already set up for office use and would provide more suitable working conditions for those due to work there, whilst financially the cost would be the same as using the City Hall.

The Forum discussed Full Councils approval of the Business Case, along with further hurdles to overcome including the possibility that the Government Office of the South West, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, could deny the Listed Building consent and call the planning application in, along with the opening of tenders which would give a more realistic idea of budget for the project. Tenders are expected to open in December 2006.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

171. Action Plan to Implement the Recommendations Arising from the Recruitment and Selection Scrutiny Panel Review

The Head of People and Organizational Development gave an overview of the Action Plan informing the Forum that on considering the recent Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Review, Cabinet requested that an Action Plan be produced.

The UNISON Branch Organiser explained to the Forum that Unison had produced a paper, which he hoped would be considered along with the review. He added that the Action Plan appeared to be well structured, and the Forum noted that the scrutiny process had been very constructive in this matter.

Resolved – that the Action Plan be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

172. Premium and Overtime Rates Discussions – Update

The Head of People and Organizational Development gave an update to the Forum, informing members that discussions regarding the above matter were ongoing. A meeting was held with the trade unions in June, at which the council's proposal and the unions' counter argument were heard, and it was agreed that further negotiations were necessary and that the Acting Chief Executive and the Head of POD would undertake further discussions with councillors on the council's proposal.

The Forum noted the importance of the matter and the fact that all involved had engaged in the process in a positive manner. Should any dispute arise with regard to this matter, the UNISON Branch Organiser stated that he hoped that all parties would commit to following a dispute resolution procedure, although it was hoped that a resolution would be achieved without the need to engage this avenue.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

173. Employee Relations at Salisbury District Council Review of 2005 and Forward Plan for 2006

The Head of People and Organizational Development informed the Forum that the aim of the review was to give a summary of past actions relating to employee relations along with current and future actions. Over the last year, extensive work in this area had helped to advance employee relations in the council and to create more ordered policies.

The Forum noted that the report was very comprehensive, and that work in the area was particularly impressive given the limited staff within the People and Organizational Development Unit. The Forum also recognised that the scrutiny process had greatly added to this work.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

174. Access to Council Services – Customer index – Draft Report

The Customer Service Manager withdrew this item prior to the meeting, with the aim of returning the matter to a future meeting of the Forum, pending significant changes to the report as a result of the release of the Information Commission report.

175. Staffing Establishment List and Equalities Monitoring – standing item

The Head of People and Organisational Development informed the Forum that the People and Organizational Development team had undertaken a thorough review of posts in the council and this was reflected in the previously circulated report. A more thorough report was in production showing a breakdown of figures by unit, which would be brought to a future meeting of the Forum

Staff turnover was shown to be at 16.5%, which was slightly down on the previous year and quite low compared to other organisations. There were some ongoing concerns that the level of ethnicity and disability in the community was not reflected in the councils staffing figures, and the Head of People and Organizational Development informed the Forum that further work would be undertaken to look into this matter when resources were available. Further work would also be undertaken to ensure that no direct or indirect discrimination was taking place within the council.

Resolved – that the update be noted

176. Recruitment and Retention Update – Standing item

The Head of People and Organisational Development informed the Forum that much of the information relating to recruitment and retention was covered in the action plan arising from the scrutiny review. The Recruitment & Retention Officer informed the Forum that in addition to the action plan, work was underway to advertise positions in the council via external recruitment websites, and procurement of an introductory discount with Monster.com – a leading national website.

Resolved – that the update be noted

177. Date of the Next Meeting:

Resolved – that the next meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum be held on Friday 29th September 2006 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1.

178. Matters if any, which by reason of special circumstances the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency.

The UNISON Branch Organiser referred to minute 158 from the last meeting, in particular to the Minister's recent announcement of a consultative paper setting out a new approach to stock transfers and the housing subsidy system.

He emphasised that at present the unions were still not aware what the Council and shadow Housing Board's positions were with regards to the Best Value Code of Practice on Workforce Matters and therefore would like the Cabinet to set out its position on this, or inform the Forum of a date when this information would be available. UNISON believe that the Best Value Code must apply to this transfer and to new starters with a new Housing Association employer.

Resolved-that Cabinet be asked to clarify their position on the Best Value Code of Practice on Workforce Matters for the council regarding the Housing Stock Transfer.

The UNISON Branch Organiser referred to minute 160 from the last meeting and informed the Forum that the new Department of Local Government had launched a consultation document on 3rd July 2006 which contained proposals that would delay the removal of the 85 Rule until 31 March 2008, extend protection to 2016 with phasing to 2020 and improve the actuarial early retirement factors for existing Local Government Pension Scheme members. The UNISON Branch organiser explained that the proposals fell short of what the Trade Unions wanted, however the discussions and decisions were still continuing in terms of a new pension scheme coming in April 2008.

The Head of People and Organizational Development gave an overview of the progress of recruitment of the Chief Executive. It was explained that a formal appointment panel had been identified, which was made up of six councillors giving a cross party membership. The first panel meeting would be on 20th July 2006. An action plan would be included in the agenda, listing the time periods for the advertising and recruitment processes. Originally Full Council had resolved that the recruitment process was expected in the latter part of 2006.

NB: Please note, since this time the Appointment Panel has resolved that it would be best if the commencement of the recruitment and selection process is deferred until after next year's council elections in May. David Crook will continue as Acting Chief Executive until the permanent Chief Executive is appointed and takes up his or her position with the council.

Meeting closed at 11.20 am