

Agenda Item 27

Democratic Services
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Minutes

Meeting of : Joint Consultative Forum
Meeting held in : SCS Training Room, The Depot, Churchfields, Salisbury
Date : Friday 27 July 2007
Time : 10.00 am

Present

Chairman

Councillor A Thorpe (Portfolio Holder for Resources)

Councillors

Councillors M Tomlinson, W R Moss, I McLennan

Staff Side

Joan Smith (UNISON) and Rick Wells (UNISON)

Officers in Attendance

Tom Bray (Democratic Services Officer), Karen Gard (Employee Relations Manager), Rachael Herbert (People and Organisational Development), Anne McConkey (Head of People and Organisational Development) and Mark Wareham (UNISON Branch Organiser)

Apologies

Councillor M A Hewitt and Jane Mitchell (UNISON)

1. Election of Chairman:

Agreed – that Councillor A Thorpe be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman:

Agreed – that Rick Wells be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

3. Minutes:

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declaration of Interests:

There were none.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



5. Minutes from the Health and Safety Committee:

The Forum members considered the minutes from the last meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 27th June 2007. The UNISON Branch Organiser sought clarification regarding who will be the nominated Councillor involved with the Health and Safety Committee. The Chairman confirmed that he will look into this matter further and a Councillor will be appointed in due course.

Resolved – that the minutes of the Health and Safety meeting held on 27th June 2007 be noted.

6. Office Centralisation Project – Standing Item:

The Chairman informed the Forum that Full Council, on the 25th of July, had decided to modify the existing Office Centralisation Project. He confirmed that negotiations had started with contractors about the designs, stating that these negotiations were positive. He confirmed that staff had been updated at a briefing on the 26th July and would continue to be updated and consultation with all stakeholders will be ongoing.

The UNISON Branch Organiser expressed the union's concerns that the Office Project modification will mean that some staff will still be accommodated in sub standard conditions as not all staff will be moved into the modified building. In light of the unitary decision concerns were raised about poor accommodation of both Salisbury District Council staff and Wiltshire County Council staff based in Salisbury.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

7. Workforce Information – Standing item:

The Forum considered the previously circulated paper detailing the staffing establishment and equalities monitoring data and comments were made as follows:

- In light of the Unitary decision the Forum stressed that turnover figures need to be closely monitored.
- Concerns were raised about the percentage of vacancies remaining open. It was stated that the number of applications for vacancies have fallen and more people are declining work after a job offer has been given. The Head of POD confirmed that this situation is being analysed and an update will be given at the next meeting.
- The staff side was concerned about the policy of keeping non-essential posts open for three months or more and it was stated that revision of this policy will be needed. Running vacancies is bad for staff morale and existing staffing budgets should be used to fund extra staff if needed and not for the market force supplement. It was also stated that job positions should not be labelled as essential and non-essential and that if a position is vacant then the position is to be filled or the job no longer exists.
- The Forum stressed the importance of keeping staff over the next 2 years leading up to the Unitary Authority.
- The Forum were reminded that the medium term financial strategy needs to be met but with the Unitary decision a review is now necessary.

Resolved – that

1) the update be noted.

2) the Head of POD is to discuss with Management team/Service Unit Heads and unions about the vacancies policy and advise to Cabinet and report back to the next meeting.

8. Unitary Status Update:

In light of the decision made by Government on 25th July to make Wiltshire a Unitary Authority by September 2009, the Forum considered the implications throughout the meeting; therefore discussion about Unitary Status was not confined only to this agenda item. Comments about Unitary Status included:

- The Forum considered the recent decision by Government as a great concern.
- The UNISON Branch Organiser informed the Forum that the Joint Unions are planning to meet representatives from all existing authorities in September to start the joint consultation process leading up to the Unitary Authority.

- Members from the staff side raised concerns over the extra time for staff that will be needed for negotiating, putting pressure on their workload. It was confirmed that reasonable facility time would be given to those taking part in negotiations.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

9. Pensions Update:

The UNISON Branch Organiser gave an update to the Forum stating that he was pleased to report that all unions have accepted the package that was offered.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

10. Pay Update:

The UNISON Branch Organiser gave an update to the Forum stating that they were in dispute over pay and they have withdrawn from negotiations and are moving towards an industrial action ballot.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

11. Shared Services and Customer First Partnership

The Forum considered the statement put forward by the UNISON Branch Organiser and the verbal update from the Portfolio Holder for Resources, who explained there is a proposal for Building Control Services to pilot the scheme. The UNISON Branch Organiser raised concerns over the terms of conditions of staff involved in the scheme and that consultation with the unions had not taken place over this matter. He also expressed concern over staff transferring employer twice if shared services, like building control, are set up before a Unitary Authority with the complications that that brings for staff.

Resolved – the Forum will support the Shared Service approach and involve all parties in consultation about Shared Services.

12. Flexi-Time Scheme:

The Forum considered the previously circulated scheme of the Employee Relations Manager.

Resolved – that the policy be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

13. Security of Employment and Redundancy Policy:

The Forum considered the previously circulated policy of the Employee Relations Manager and the statement of UNISON/Unite.

Resolved – that

1. the policy be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval along with the Joint Union statement, which they supported, for their consideration.
2. that if the unitary decision is overturned and Salisbury District Council continues then this policy may need to be reviewed.

14. Employers' Discretions Policy Statement on Local Government Pension Scheme and Local Government (Early Termination of Employment)(Discretionary Compensation)(England and Wales) Regulations 2006:

The Forum considered the previously circulated policy of the Employee Relations Manager.

Resolved – that the policy be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

15. Flexible Retirement Policy:

The Forum considered the previously circulated policy of the Employee Relations Manager.

Resolved – that the policy be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

16. Right to request Working Beyond Retirement Age Policy:

The Forum considered the previously circulated policy of the Employee Relations Manager.

Resolved – that the policy be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

17. Terms of Reference:

The Forum considered the previously circulated amendment put forward by the UNISON Branch Organiser and the viewpoint of the Head of POD. The Forum discussed the position of the JCF and, in joint understanding, considered it an important stage in negotiations, but it will not be involved in arbitration. The current constitution did permit discussion of general terms of employment, even though this was not specifically mentioned.

Resolved – that the Terms of Reference will remain unchanged.

18. Date of the Next Meeting:

The Forum discussed the date for the next meeting

Resolved – that the next meeting be held on Tuesday 16th October at 10.00 am at the Depot.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm