

# Public Document Pack

*Employees Consultative Committee - 06/10/14*

## EMPLOYEES CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Monday, 6th October, 2014

**Present:-** Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Beech, Cooper and Sweeney

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Phil Bartels and Cllr John Taylor.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. EXCLUSION RESOLUTION

**Resolved:** That the public be excluded from the meeting.

### 4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee discussed item 8 on the minutes relating to time off for dependents. It was agreed that the cost of the scheme needed to be looked at and an update on this brought to the next meeting.

In relation to item 10 on the minutes relating to night time working, the Trade Unions expressed some concern that their opposition to the scheme had not been adequately reported to the staffing Committee. It was noted that the minutes had recorded that the Trade Unions were opposed to the proposals contained within the report and that they had put forward an alternative proposal. The minutes had been considered by the Staffing Committee at its previous meeting when the issue of night time working had been considered.

**Resolved:** (a) That a report on the cost of the 'Time off for Dependents Policy' be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

(b) That the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March be agreed as a correct record.

### 5. EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION SCHEME

A report was submitted to update the Committee on its previous recommendation to obtain views and comments of employees on the Council's Employee Recognition Scheme by requesting them to complete a questionnaire.

It was noted that the scheme would not be running in November this year due to the fact that the questionnaires had not yet been distributed to employees. The Committee agreed that the questionnaires needed to be sent out before Christmas this year and the results brought back to a meeting of this Committee prior to a recommendation being made to the Staffing Committee. Officers confirmed that care

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would be taken to ensure that employees who did not have access to emails would receive paper copies of the questionnaire.

The Committee discussed the questionnaire and suggested that additional sub headings could be added to the last section requesting employees to consider how they might be more involved in the process. Officers agreed that an updated version of the questionnaire would be sent to the Chairs of both sides of the Committee for agreement prior to distribution to employees.

**Resolved:** (a) That the final section of the questionnaire be amended to specifically request employees to consider how they might be more involved in the process.

(b) That a copy of the updated questionnaire be sent to the chair of the employees and the chair of the employers for agreement prior to distribution to employees.

### **6. DIGNITY AT WORK**

A report was submitted to obtain the Committee's view on the proposed Dignity at work Policy which was intended to replace the existing Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy.

The new Policy had been reviewed to better detail the legal position after the introduction of the Equality Act 2010. The Act saw the development of the law with regard to employers' responsibility for preventing bullying and harassment and for the increased definition of a protected characteristic. It also emphasised the importance of trying to resolve matters through either informal discussion or through the use of mediation in the first instance.

The trade Unions agreed that it was far better to have a subcommittee meeting to deal with matters prior to any concerns being brought before the full committee for discussion.

A Cllr questioned why these matters were now being considered by the Committee rather than by the executive and human resource offices. Officers stated that these matters had previously been dealt with by officers but that Council had agreed to the setting up of the Staffing Committee with delegated authority to deal with such matters.

**Resolved:** (a) That the policy be submitted to the Staffing Committee for approval.

(b) That the committee recommend that the Policy be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **7. EMPLOYEE PROTECTION POLICY**

A report was submitted to obtain comments from the Committee in relation to the proposed Employee Protection Policy.

The Policy and its arrangements had previously come under the title of 'Potentially violent Persons'. The Head of Environmental Health highlighted some areas of the document that needed slight amendment but these did not change the substance of the Policy at all.

**Resolved:** That the Policy be approved.

## **8. CAR LEASE SCHEME - INSURANCE**

A report was submitted to obtain the Committee's views/comments on the issue that had been raised by the Joint Trade Unions in relation to the Council's Car Leasing Scheme – Insurance.

As part of the Terms and Conditions review on 8 August 2013 a Collective Agreement was signed by the Trade Unions and the Chief Executive to reduce the council's subsidy payment in relation to existing car leases effective from 1 October 2013. This was to support the achievement of revenue budget savings.

On 22 May 2014 the joint Trade Unions issued a grievance in relation to the car insurance on the grounds that it appeared that the employees were paying a contribution to the costs of the insurance when it had been thought that the Council was covering the entire cost of the insurance.

The Chief Executive stated that the issue of insurance had been discussed and that he had been asked, by the Trade Unions to ascertain whether an employee was able to take out his or her own insurance in relation to a lease hire car. The Chief Executive had made this request to the lease hire companies and reported back to the Trade Unions that the insurance had to be taken out by the Council and could not be taken out by the individual. This did not mean that the Council would automatically cover the entire cost of the insurance.

The Committee considered the lease documentation attached at Appendix G which showed the contributions made by the employee and the contributions made by the Council. The Chief Executive highlighted that there was not an assurance that the Council would pay the entire cost of the insurance only that the insurance had to be taken out in the Council's name. Each employee who signed up to the scheme was entitled to a set contribution and that they were aware when they signed the documentation as to what this contribution was. Any outstanding costs not covered by the Council contribution had to be met by the employee themselves. The agreement with the Council related to the specific document signed by the employee at that time.

The Trade Unions questioned what would happen if the Council contribution was not enough to cover the insurance charge and the excess protection. Officers stated that this was a separate matter and that the Acting Head of Human Resources would look into the example of this that was provided by the Trade Unions; it was conceded that at some stage the subsidy would not be enough to cover all of these costs.

**Resolved:** That the Acting Head of HR investigate the matter relating to the case put forward by the Trade Unions where the Council subsidy was not sufficient to cover the insurance and excess protection and report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

**9. EXTRA STATUTORY TUESDAYS**

The Joint Trade Unions had identified an issue over the re-imbursment of the two days extra statutory holidays onto employee annual leave. This issue related to employees that finish employment whether due to Leaving, dismissal, Bereavement, Early retirement or Retirement within one financial year.

The issue arose when Human Resources considered the remaining annual leave for the employee (now including the 2 extra days) and the pro rata holidays that the employee was due. The Trade Unions considered that the employee could be in a detrimental position if they had already worked one or two of those bank holidays.

The Trade Unions stated that there needed to be a different way of calculation in relation to the 2 extra days such as keeping them separate from the existing annual leave entitlement and therefore not including them in any pro rata calculations. The Trade Unions felt that if these days had not been already taken then they should be reimbursed in full rather than through a pro rata calculation.

Officers stated that the process was fully in line with HR regulations in the Green Book and questioned whether the suggestion from the Trade Unions would apply to new staff or just existing staff that had previously benefited from the two compulsory extra days leave thus resulting in a two tier work force. The Employers remained in support of the scheme and questioned whether the Trade Unions would consider implementing their proposal for a limited time only.

The Trade Unions re stated their opposition to the current practice and emphasised that had they been aware of this then the Collective Agreement would not have been signed. They were not in favour of any changes being for a limited time only and stated that their proposal would also need to apply to new members of staff.

It was agreed that this would be reported to the next meeting of the Staffing Committee.

**Resolved:** That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Staffing Committee and that the continued objections of the Trade Unions be noted.

**10. URGENT BUSINESS**

A question had been risen by the Joint Trade Unions in relation to the organisation of the elections by the Returning Officer and in particular the staffing arrangements. Concerns had been raised that there were many staff that were not aware of the process for appointing staff.

Discussions had already taken place between the Democratic Services Manager, the Trade Unions and the Acting Head of Human Resources and the following steps had been agreed:

- Paper copies of the application form could be sent out to all employees attached to payslips (depending on costs).

- A paper copy could be included in all induction packs for new starters.
- Paper notices/leaflets could be sent out to all departments as per the internal job vacancies that are advertised in the Council, these could also go on department notice boards.
- Advert on the intranet noticeboard.
- Emails to all Heads of Service and business Managers (they will also have a copy of the paper notice) to disseminate to staff. The topic could be discussed at team briefs.
- Depending on when it is published place an advert in the reporter or Sentinel.

**Resolved:** That the agreed actions be included in the election plan for 2015.

**COUNCILLOR MRS ELIZABETH SHENTON**  
**Chair**

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