

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 3rd July, 2017.

Present: Councillor L.O. Rowlands, Mrs. J. Charles, S.J. Griffiths, A. Hampton and N.C. Thomas.

Also present: Councillor G. John.

Representatives of the Trade Unions: Ms. M. Canavan (NUT); Mr. D. Dimmick (NASUWT); Mr. R. Hughes (UNISON), Mr. G. Pappas (UNISON); Mr. S. Robertson (UNITE) and Mrs. G. Southby (UNISON).

Officers: Ms. S. Alderman, Mr. R. Bergman, Mrs. S. Clifton, Mrs. A. Davies, Mr. G. Davies, Mrs. P. Ham, Mr. H. Isaac, Mrs. E. Morgan and Mr. A. Unsworth.

(a) Appointment of Chairman –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer sought nominations for the appointment of Chairman.

Having received nominations, Elected Members of the forum proceeded to vote, the outcome of which was that Cllr Janice Charles should be duly appointed. Following this, an Elected Member raised a query regarding the JCF's constitution and the process to appoint the Chair, with specific reference being made to whether the Trade Unions should be able to nominate a person. The Head of Democratic was subsequently asked to advise the forum, and he commented that there was an inference that the Chair should be appointed from the Elected Members and that the JCF's constitution probably could be made clearer.

AGREED – T H A T Councillor Mrs. J. Charles be appointed as Chairman for the duration of the Administration.

(b) Apologies for Absence -

These were received from Councillors Mrs. P. Drake and B.T. Gray, Mr. T. Greaves (GMB) and Mr. R. Hughes (UNISON).

(c) Notification from the Trade Unions of the Name of the Vice-Chairman –

AGREED – T H A T it be noted that Mrs. G. Southby has been appointed to the position of Vice-Chairman for the duration of the Administration.

(d) Minutes and Matters Arising –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 13th February, 2017 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that for item k and face to face counselling, the number of requests should read the number of sessions.

There were no matters arising.

(e) Declarations of Interest –

No declarations were received.

(f) Trade Union Items –

No Trade Union items were received.

(g) Presentation – Care First Employee Assistance Programme –

Mrs. P. Garland-Smith provided an overview of the Care First Employee Assistance Programme.

Mrs. Garland-Smith advised that the Programme was launched in June 2016, the contract for which had been extended out to 2019. This followed an all-Wales tender, which meant, that Care First was the sole provider of counselling services throughout Wales.

Mrs. Garland-Smith then provided an overview of Care First's lifestyle website, which was an interactive online portal, where employees, managers and their families could access information, advice and answers to problems occurring as part of every-day life. Topics covered included issues from relationships, childcare and consumer issues through to stress, health and fitness. Mrs. Garland-Smith stated that there was a lot of information contained on the website, particularly in relation to mental health, for which, it was hoped that staff and managers would utilise before a referral was made to a counsellor.

Mrs. Garland-Smith stated that a large amount of work had been undertaken around management support, which could assist managers with difficult situations. An important element of the website would be the cognitive behavioural therapy information which managers had found very useful.

The Forum was also advised that shortly a survey around the use of the website would be undertaken across the whole of Wales, the findings of which would be reported back to the National Procurement Service. Mrs. Garland-Smith stated that any information that could be provided would be used in order to create a better service. Mrs. Garland-Smith also stated that to date, no formal complaints of the service had been received.

Mr. Pappas, in referring to the Care First website, stated that some of his Union members would not be able to access the internet and he stated that he had concerns that those staff would be under the “radar”. In reply, Mrs. Garland-Smith stated that managers would be able to make referrals on behalf of their staff via the informal route. She also stated that most people had access to mobile phones and she referred to the Care First’s Zest website which provided information and support around healthy living and wellbeing. Mrs. Garland-Smith also stated that 54 staff from the Vale of Glamorgan had registered to use this website. This was a downloadable app which allowed users to scan food products such as monitoring sugar content, which many people found easier than joining a slimming club.

Mrs. Southby stated this was a very good approach. A big issue would be Mental Health and although it was good that more people were becoming aware of this, it was important to recognise how important face to face contact was. In reply, Mrs Garland-Smith advised that face to face was still available. In addition, the Head of Human Resources stated that before the arrangements with Care First were in place, the Vale of Glamorgan had a contract with Cardiff Council, which was only available via face to face. The new service was now of a much wider scope and available to over 5000 staff members, although there was a recognition that the service could be more accessible.

In closing this item, the Chairman stated that it would be useful for an update on the take up and how well the service had been promoted.

AGREED – T H A T the update on the Care First Employee Assistance Programme be noted.

(h) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Groups-

The minutes of the following Directorate Consultative Groups were received:

Learning and Skills – 1st February, 2017
Resources – 26th April, 2017
Social Services – 3rd April, 2017
Visible Services and Housing – 1st February, 2017
Visible Services and Housing – 1st March, 2017
Visible Services and Housing – 5th April, 2017
Visible Services and Housing – 3rd May, 2017.

The Director of Learning and Skills, with regard to the minutes of the Directorate of Learning and Skills JCF meeting held 1st February 2017, advised that a report had been presented to the Council’s Corporate Management Team and it had been agreed that EWC fees for support workers would be paid.

Mr. Dimmick raised a point regarding Co-education in Barry, and he stated that he was aware that an executive headteacher would be appointed with responsibility for

both the Barry and Bryn Hafren sites. Mr. Dimmick commented that had this been included as part of the consultation process, then NASUWT would have responded and made representations.

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Directorate Consultative Groups' meetings be noted.

(i) Dates of Directorate Consultative Group Meetings for Noting –

AGREED – T H A T the following dates for Directorate Consultative Group meetings as detailed below be noted:

- Learning and Skills – 12th April, 2017
- Resources – 20th July, 2017
- Social Services – 6th June, 2017
- Visible Services and Housing – 7th June, 2017.

(j) Minutes of Corporate Health and Safety – 19th June, 2017 –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety meeting held on 19th June, 2017 be noted.

(k) Reshaping Services Update –

The Head of Performance and Development presented an update report on the implementation of the Reshaping Services programme.

The officer advised that the Reshaping Services programme aimed to address the unprecedented financial challenges by reshaping Council services to meet the future needs of the Vale of Glamorgan. The programme comprised three integrated work streams of projects as follows:

- Service specific work stream projects
- Corporate work stream projects
- Programme activity.

The officer provided the Forum with an update in regard to the progress of these work streams.

AGREED – T H A T the report be noted.

(l) Staff Engagement Strategy Update –

The Head of Human Resources presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the Council's Staff Engagement Strategy.

The Head of Human Resources stated that progress continued to be made in implementing the five supporting actions and commitments within the Staff Charter. To date some seven out of the 15 commitments had been delivered with a further eight making good progress. A full summary of actions against each of the 15 commitments was given at Appendix A.

The Forum was advised that the third meeting of the CMT / Engagement Group had taken place on 10th May, 2017 and the Forum was advised that this was now a regular quarterly meeting. This was held in accordance with Staff Charter Commitment 8. The meeting was attended by employee nominated Charter Champions and the Council's Senior Management Team.

In addition, a newly designed staff appraisal scheme had been launched during September 2016 which was in relation to Staff Charter Commitment 2 and this had resulted in a 96% response rate in the first year. The scheme had since been relaunched for 2017/18.

The Forum noted that a new management competency framework had been launched in March 2017 in regard to Staff Charter Commitment 3. The framework was designed in consultation with a range of managers and Charter Champions with a focus for 2017/18 being to deliver a management development programme.

A newly formed Staff Editorial Team continued to meet and was shortly due to launch the new version of the Staff Bulletin. This would be delivered to office based staff via the StaffNet and to frontline staff via email to their personal addresses.

In addition, the Council's Leadership Café continued to be strengthened and was well attended by colleagues across all service areas. The next such event was an evening with the Corporate Management Team and it was anticipated that this would be well attended.

Finally, the Head of Human Resources stated that over the last three months a particular focus had been placed on development work in five particular work stream areas. Each work stream area was sponsored by a Chief Officer as follows:

- Management Development – Head of Human Resources
- Communications – Head of Performance and Development
- Skills Development – Head of Finance
- Recognition – Managing Director
- Innovation – Director of Environment and Housing

AGREED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

(m) Management of Attendance Update –

The Head of Human Resources presented the absence data for the period 1st April, 2016 to 31st March, 2017.

The outturn figures for 2016/17 at 8.80 days per Full Time Equivalent was below the annual target of 8.90 days per Full Time Equivalent and an improvement on last year's levels of 9.56 days per Full Time Equivalent.

The Forum was also advised that these rates were also the lowest reported by any of the other 21 Local Authorities according to data recently collected by the Welsh Local Government Association.

The majority of Directorates had improved their performance in comparison to the previous year. Corporately, the combined performance of all Directorates produced an improved reduction of 1.52 days absent per Full Time Equivalent compared to the previous year.

With regard to the management of attendance, the Head of Human Resources stated that a new approach had been adopted across all Directorates and was in accordance with the new Managing Attendance at Work policy. This was agreed with Trade Union colleagues in June 2017 and was hoped to provide a more consistent approach and a better balance between the management of long term and short term sickness.

The Forum was advised that a significant contributor to the improvement of absence figures in 2016/17 had been the strengthening of the approach to performance management and around regular monitoring. This would continue during 2017/18. In addition, the effective management of absence and delivery of outturn figures within target had been included in appraisal targets for all Directors / Heads of Service and was a key area of review at the end of the financial year.

In summary, the Head of Human Resources stated that with support of Trade Union colleagues and other stakeholders, this had led to an improved performance for 2016/17 which was under the Council's annual absence target. Although this was encouraging, and highlighted the hard work undertaken across the Council, it was imperative that a sustained focus on this be maintained during 2017/18.

An Elected Member stated that absence rates in some Directorates appeared high, and with specific reference to levels of stress within Social Services, the Member queried what was in place to reduce this. In reply, the Head of Human Resources advised that within Social Services the level of sickness absence was 11.30 days per Full Time Equivalent, which was against an annual target of 11.60 days. This was an improving picture compared to previous years. He advised that although stress was having an impact on the overall level, other factors were also prevalent such as absences arising from manual handling and the physical nature of some posts.

In terms of actions to address this, the Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding advised that focus had been placed on staff within Care Homes, the structure of team meetings had changed and there was greater dialogue around the use of the Attendance Management Policy. In addition, because of the professional nature of Social Services, the same level of support and supervision was available to all staff, not just those with a professional qualification.

AGREED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

(n) Feedback on Policy Development –

The Human Resources Officer for Policy advised that the current position as at 8th June, 2017 on Human Resources policy development which was as follows:

- Further issues to be clarified prior to proceeding
Flexi scheme and special leave scheme
Violence and aggression at work
- Terms and Conditions
Regarding procedure
- Change Forum
Regarding procedure
Salary protection local agreement.

AGREED – T H A T the current position in relation to the Human Resources policy development be noted.

(o) Chairman's announcement –

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank the HR Policy Support Officer for her 24 years' service with the Council and wished her well for her retirement.

In addition, Mr. Pappas asked if he could express thanks and gratitude to Mr. Dimmick, who was leaving the employment of the Council.