

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 11th February, 2019.

Present: Mrs. J.E. Charles (Chairman); Councillors Mrs. P. Drake, B.T. Gray, S.J. Griffiths and G. John.

Representatives of Trade Unions: Mrs. S. Alderman (GMB), Miss. M. Canavan (NEU), Mrs. A. Davies (GMB), Mr. D. Eveleigh (GMB), Mrs. L. Lancaster (NASUWT) and Mr. G. Pappas (UNISON).

Officers: Ms. J. Ballantine, Mr. L. Bonni, Mrs P. Ham, Mr. H. Isaac, Mrs. A. Phillips and Mr. A. Unsworth.

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors V.J. Bailey and N.C. Thomas.

(b) Minutes and Matters Arising –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 15th October, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Declarations of Interest –

Councillors Mrs. J.E. Charles, Mrs. P. Drake, B.T. Gray, S.J. Griffiths and G. John all declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 11 – Reshaping Services Update. These Councillors had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on the matter.

(d) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Group Meetings –

The minutes of the following Director Consultative Group meetings were received:

- Learning and Skills: 17th December, 2018;
- Social Services: 16th October, 2018;
- Visible Services: 7th November, 2018;
- Visible Services: 5th December, 2018.

Furthermore, the Chairman confirmed that the minutes of the Social Services Consultative Group meeting on 25th January, 2019 would not be agreed until 20th February, 2019 and that the meeting of the Visible Services Consultative Group scheduled in January 2019 had been cancelled.

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Directorate Consultative Group meetings be noted.

(e) Minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Meeting –

The Chairman confirmed that the next Corporate Health and Safety Meeting was due to be arranged shortly and therefore there was nothing outstanding to report to the Forum.

AGREED – T H A T the future scheduling of the next Corporate Health and Safety Meeting be noted.

(f) Dates of Future Directorate Consultative Group Meetings –

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

- Learning and Skills: 6th February, 2019;
- Learning and Skills: 12th June, 2019;
- Resources: To be arranged;
- Social Services: To be arranged;
- Visible Services: Scheduled for the first Wednesday of each month.

(g) Employee Pay Policy –

The Operational Manager for Employee Services provided an update on the Employee Pay Policy 2019/20.

The Officer advised that the Council had a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 to prepare a pay policy statement for the new financial year 2019/20 and that the statement needed to be approved and published by 31st March, 2019. The statement provided a framework for ensuring that employees were rewarded fairly and objectively, in accordance with the service needs of the Council and that there was openness and transparency in relation to the process.

The Pay Policy had been incrementally developed since 2012 to incorporate the following:

- Guidance from Welsh Government as contained in the document “Pay Accountabilities in Local Government in Wales” as updated January 2016;
- Changes as prescribed by the Local Authorities Standing Orders (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 which took effect from 1st July, 2014;
- Changes as prescribed required by the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015 to ensure that any proposed changes to the salary of Chief Officers (as defined in the Localism Act 2011) were made following consultation with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales;

- Necessary refinements as a result of changes to the Council's senior management structure over recent years; and
- The effects of national and locally negotiated pay and associated benefit awards along with the provisions of the National Living Wage.

The Officer added that the Council's updated pay structure for NJC Green Book employees had been reflected in the 2019/20 Pay Policy Statement following an extensive development and consultation exercise and the subsequent approval by Cabinet and the Council and to the signing of the Collective Agreement between the Council and the recognised Trade Unions.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that the positive report put before the forum had already been presented to Cabinet and would be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committee and then to Full Council for final determination on 27th February, 2019.

AGREED – T H A T the Employee Pay Policy 2019/20 be noted.

(h) Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy –

The Corporate Health and Safety Officer advised that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and recognised that mental health in the workplace was a health and safety issue and acknowledged the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

The Officer drew the forum's attention to the policy as contained in the agenda papers and noted that the policy applied to everyone in the Council. Managers were responsible for its implementation and the Council overall was responsible for providing reasonable resources in respect of mental health support. On this point, the Officer added that appropriate training / information would be provided as part of the support.

The Council was committed to supporting staff through new or difficult periods in their lives and wished to create an environment where individuals were not blamed for suffering mental ill-health and where they were encouraged to seek practical help and support. As well as the Council signing up to the "Time to Change" pledge, in 2015, which was a national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by many people with mental health problems, the Officer apprised the forum of the following progress points:

- The Council provided access to a confidential, independent counselling service via "Care First";
- Two new online training e-modules had been added to the Council's Corporate Training system i-Dev;
- As part of a Mental Health and Wellbeing Sickness Absence Management Toolkit, a Top 10 Tips for Managing Stress / Mental Health and Wellbeing document had been designed for managers;

- The Council had already appointed an Elected Member as a Mental Health Champion and discussions were underway to appoint further Mental Health Champions across the Council in the future;
- Promotional events were taking place across the Council such as “Time to Talk” day which was recently undertaken on 7th February, 2019; and
- A new mobile Occupational Health nurse had been appointed and was offering free health screening for all employees on Thursdays.

AGREED – T H A T the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and relevant appendices be noted.

(i) Digital Employee Update –

The Operational Manager for Human Resources Employee Services provided an update on Digital Employee progress and in particular, the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) e-bulk system and the e-recruitment system implementation.

The Officer advised that the DBS e-bulk system had been live since 31st January, 2019 and already had been extremely successful in reducing the turnaround time for DBS applicants. During the pilot project to date, the turnaround time had been reduced from approximately six weeks to as little as 34 hours and therefore officers would be looking to roll out the scheme to wider parts of the Council over the next few months. The Officer also advised that the new e-system could be developed into an income generation opportunity for the Council by receiving applications from external applicants / partner organisations. Colleagues were advised that the next phase of the implementation plan would be taking place in conjunction with the Licensing Department as part of the process for validating taxi driver licence applications.

With regard to the e-recruitment system, the Officer advised that the Council was currently on Week 5 of a 14 week implementation plan to better improve the online application process. This would in turn improve the experience of individuals wishing to make an application to the Authority which should subsequently improve the levels of applications received.

AGREED – T H A T the update on digital employee progress be noted.

(j) Flexi Scheme –

The report, presented by the Operational Manager for Human Resources, provided an update to the Forum on the implementation of the flex-time pilot (live from 4th February, 2019) and provided a verbal update on the system upgrade.

The Officer began by advising that during November 2018, it was reported to the relevant Trade Unions as well as the CMT / Staff Engagement Group that the Council proposed to introduce a number of amendments to the flex-time scheme. The amendments would run as a pilot for six to nine months across different sections

of Council services which currently operated the flex-time scheme. The Special Leave Policy would remain operational during the pilot.

Further discussions had since taken place between management and Trade Unions in the intervening months regarding the proposals for the pilot regarding the suitability of Timeware to facilitate the flex trial during the pilot. Although the update to the Timeware system was the subject of delay, it had been determined that the flex-time pilot would go live.

The Officer drew the forum's attention to Appendix A of the report which was a copy of the initial draft Flexi Scheme Pilot Provisions. The key amendments agreed between management and the Trade Unions to the flex-time scheme for the pilot phase were:

- Removal of core time;
- Extending the band width during which flex-time would be accrued from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.;
- Minimum of a 30 minute break for every consecutive six hour period worked.

The Officer confirmed that there would be no change to the debit / credit hours to be carried forward and no change to the number of flex days that may be taken in an accounting period, i.e. 2 x half days or 1 x full day for Full Time staff, pro rata for Part Time staff and that the services nominated to run the pilot had been confirmed by CMT and represented a cross section of the workforce. The intention was to assess how the above proposals would impact on service delivery for office based employees, those employees who worked in the community and those services who worked off site:

- Audit;
- Council Tax;
- Electoral Registration;
- Human Resources;
- Housing;
- Planning;
- Social Services.

The Officer added that services would still need to be covered between the Council's opening hours of 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Friday, therefore varying start / finish times would need to be agreed with the line manager.

Any issues or concerns that arose during the pilot period would be reported to HR and the Systems Administrator and regular reviews of the pilot would be undertaken between management and Trade Unions. The intention, if the pilot was successful, was to replace the current flex-time scheme with the revised scheme on conclusion of the pilot.

In conclusion, the Operational Manager for Human Resources advised that feedback on the pilot to date had been very positive and the only theme of questioning that

had been raised to date was as to the logic behind only certain departments being involved in the pilot. The Officer also advised that the findings of the pilot within the Audit Department was of particular interest as employees within that department spanned four different Local Authorities and it was therefore a very good test for the Council to assess its flexi arrangements in comparison to other Local Authorities which would support future collaborative work.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his presentation of the report and reiterated the concern of Elected Members that adequate staffing remained in place during key working hours to ensure that services remained as productive as possible. However, the Chairman acknowledged that this point was addressed within the Officer's report.

AGREED – T H A T the Flexi Scheme Update be noted.

(k) Reshaping Services Update –

The Head of Performance and Development provided an update on the Reshaping Services programme implementation. In summary, he referred to the following points:

The Officer drew the Forum's attention to the recently published summary highlight report as contained within the agenda papers and advised that a report had recently been taken to the Reshaping Services Programme Board which was chaired by the Managing Director and which met regularly to review progress made on the various projects that formed part of the programme.

The Officer added that the Council was currently taking stock of its Reshaping Services in consideration of the financial pressures and necessity to make further savings in the future. To date, the Council had been successful in saving approximately £55m since 2010 and that the financial year 2019/20 would be used to design Tranche 4 of the Reshaping Services programme to make further savings that would come into effect in 2020/21.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that the current saving target would be met by the end of the current financial year however, given that it was necessary for the Council to save a further £15m, pressures on services would increase.

AGREED – T H A T the Reshaping Services update and contents of the report be noted.

(l) Staff Engagement and The Big Conversation 2 –

The report provided the Forum with an overview of the staff engagement activity that had been undertaken by a series of work streams over the past year as well as a summary of the 2018 Staff Survey. A report setting out the results of the 2018 (and latest) staff survey was appended to the report.

The Head of Performance and Development also provided an update on The Big Conversation 2 consultation event which was currently taking place during February and March 2019 as a means of meeting with all staff in order to provide an update on key Council issues and to provide an opportunity for all colleagues to become involved in engagement and innovation activities.

Finally, the report outlined the way in which engagement and innovation activity would be progressed in 2019 and future years.

AGREED – T H A T the staff engagement and Big Conversation 2 update be noted.

(m) Trade Union Items –

The Chairman advised that she had not received any items to be considered.