

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 23rd January, 2023.

Present: Councillor S. Campbell (Chair), J.E. Charles, M. Cowpe, W.A. Hennessy S.D. Perkes, and N.C. Thomas.

Representatives of Trade Unions: C. Brown (ASCL), J. Davis (Unison), C. Davies (GMB), T. Greaves (GMB), G. Hallett (NAHT), G. Pappas (Unison), M. Canavan (NEU), and S. Townsend-Ryan (Unison / Vice-Chair).

Officers: J. Ballantine, T. Baker, L. Bonni, G. Davies, T. Dickinson, H. Iqbal-Rayner, G. Jones, M. Thomas and S. Williams.

(a) Apology for Absence –

This was received from Councillor P. Drake.

(b) Minutes and Matters Arising –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17th October, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Declarations of Interest –

Councillor Charles declared an interest, in Agenda Item 8. Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22, in that she had a pension with Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund. As this did not represent a prejudicial interest, Councillor Charles remained for the duration of the meeting.

Councillor Cowpe declared an interest with regard to this meeting, in that she was a member of a Trade Union. As this did not represent a prejudicial interest, Councillor Cowpe remained for the duration of the meeting.

Councillor Perkes declared an interest, in Agenda Item 8. Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22, in that she had a pension with Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund. As this did not represent a prejudicial interest, Councillor Perkes remained for the duration of the meeting.

(d) Trade Union Items –

In terms of the proposed industrial action to be undertaken by teaching staff, a request was made for a meeting between the relevant teaching unions and the Council's Human Resources (HR) and Learning and Skills teams. The Head of

Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that HR were seeking guidance on this and would be speaking with teaching unions, etc. in due course.

A further item was raised by the Vice-Chair with regard to staff making mileage claims, particularly those staff who were working a 'hybrid' or 'blended' approach which meant travelling directly from home to various sites but staff could only claim the distance between their place of work and where they were formally based. This would mean that staff could be running at a loss in terms of fuel costs and mileage claims and may require a review of their contracts.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that there were a number of factors around mileage claims for staff. Due to rising fuel costs the in Autumn, there had been discussions with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in terms of a new, but temporary, mileage rate agreement at 50p per mile. From this there was a joint, voluntary protocol between Leaders of Local Authorities in Wales, facilitated through the WLGA Executive Board and the Trade Unions of the Joint Council for Wales, to introduce a measure that provided for this temporary increase in mileage reimbursements costs in the short term to address current market volatility in fuel rates. There were also a few, rare instances where HR would be working with staff to review their contracts, but otherwise, the mileage allowance would link in with existing staff contracts, with either staff claiming mileage from their official work site (as per HMRC) or they would need to use the Council's pool cars in order to get to and from their places of work.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the Trade Union items raised at the Forum be noted.

(e) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Groups (For Information) –

**(i) Minutes of Visible Services and Housing Consultative Forum:
7th December, 2022.**

The Forum considered the minutes relating to the Visible Services and Housing Consultative Forum on the 7th December, 2022.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Visible Services and Housing Consultative Forum be noted.

(f) Dates of Future Directorate Consultative Groups for Noting –

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

- (i) Visible Services and Housing JCF: 11th January, 2023.
- (ii) Learning and Skills JCF: 8th February, 2023 and 5th June, 2023.

(g) Presentation: Vale of Glamorgan Council Budget Update –

The briefing / update was presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy, who set out the following:

- The provisional settlement for the Vale of Glamorgan Council and other Welsh Local Authorities, had been relatively better than expected amounting to a 7.9% increase.
- Funding and additional investment for the Council and its services i.e. schools were outlined, as well as investment for additional learning needs (ALN) and social services, plus the significant cost pressures around certain areas, i.e. pay, the 'Real Living Wage' energy, residential / domiciliary care, homelessness, etc, as well as sharing the updated 'funding gap' and the impact on the Draft Budget from all these factors.
- Measures to be used to help alleviate cost pressures temporarily were set out, such as the use of Council reserves and longer-term savings proposals / income generation and the alignment / identification of central reserves for key areas with specific risks i.e. Pay Pressures, Energy Pressures, Corporate Landlord, General Investment and Digital Strategy.
- The Capital Strategy / Programme and funding going forward was outlined, as well as the timetable for the Budget and related proposals / settlement.

Following the update, the following comments and queries were raised by members of the Forum:

- J. Davis (Unison) asked for a breakdown of the aggregate Pay and Energy cost pressures for the Council (totalling £15m), which worked out as £4.2m for energy and just over £10m for pay.
- M. Canavan (NEU) stated that some Local Authorities were providing additional funding for teaching staff pay rises, and it was not good that schools in the Vale were having to fund pay increases, etc. via their existing funding. It was explained that the Council was looking to identify further funding for this area.
- Councillor Charles asked about the funding and cost pressures around Social Services. It was explained that there had been significant changes to Social Services' funding, grants, etc. with considerable cost pressures coming from domiciliary care and the need to commission more services via third parties, due to issues around recruitment and retention in the Care Sector. There had been a temporary £3m adjustment for 2023/24, with Social Services underwriting this. The full effects of the cost pressures would be felt in 2024/25. On Councillor Charles' query on the reserves used for this area, these were approximately £6.5m, but these would be checked.
- C. Brown (ASCL) expressed concern around the potential 'cuts' for schools, with only two schools projected to outturn within the Vale of Glamorgan and the other schools in the County being impacted. It was explained that such decisions had not been taken lightly and the Local Authority had tried to take a balanced approach, as well as sharing the relevant information with schools.

Schools did face significant issues financially, and the Council would look to support them as much as possible to help balance their budgets.

- The Vice-Chair asked about the funding provided by Social Services to third party care providers for the provision of additional care and support and how this was monitored to ensure that money was spent wisely. It was explained that the Council maintained a good relationship with Third Sector care providers, as well as robust information sharing with these. Best practice on this area was also shared among Local Authorities. Additional funding would also help to increase the commissioning of care with third parties. The Operational Manager – Accountancy stated she would need to check if the relevant mechanisms and approach on monitoring of funding and support from third parties for care, etc. could be enforced legally. The Vice-Chair added that ideally the Council should adopt a more ‘in-house’ model of care provision, such as the one used by the Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS) around areas such as reablement. It was explained this was kept under review, and more information would be sought on this topic.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the presentation / briefing on the Vale of Glamorgan Council Budget Update be noted.

(h) Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager Employee Services, who advised the Forum of the following:

- Cardiff Council was the Administering Authority for the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund which was part of the national Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for England and Wales.
- The Pension Fund was a statutory occupational pension scheme for all local government employees (including both Council and school support staff) with teachers under a separate scheme.
- For those staff who were employed by third parties to undertake work for the Council (i.e. cleaning staff), the relevant businesses or organisations could also be admitted into the LGPS (known as ‘Admitted Bodies’).
- Approximately 4,000 staff paid into the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund on a monthly basis.
- This was a significant pension scheme, with the total value of the Fund having increased by 7.2% over the year with a valuation of almost £2.7 billion as at 31st March, 2022. This was invested wisely but had been impacted by external events over the period, such as the war in Ukraine.
- There were 8 such LGPS funds in Wales, who had formed the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) in order to pool their funding to provide a better investment and return for the LGPS’ respective pension funds.
- There was increasing consideration of environmental and other ethical concerns in terms of the partnership’s investments, i.e. significant investment had been made into a Low Carbon Tracker fund. However, this was a

gradual process, in order to not disrupt or negatively impact employees' pensions.

- For the new financial year (April 2023), there would be a significant increase in employee pensions from the fund due to less cost pressures and increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Following the report, the following comments and queries were raised by members of the Forum:

- Regarding the Chair's query on Council employees' being able to choose what type of investment they wanted for their pension, it was explained that Investment Portfolio Managers managed these investments due to the large amount of money involved. The Managers managed these investments using a 'risk matrix' and the majority of investments had been invested in lower / medium risk investments, and a smaller number in higher risk investments. Over a 10-year period the average annual return on employee pensions was 7%, significantly better than a bank or savings account.
- Councillor Cowpe asked about the savings made on pension contributions for the period covered in the report. The Operational Manager – Accountancy explained that there had been a 2% reduction based on the net effect on pay / National Insurance pressures.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Pension Fund Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 be noted.

(i) Date of Next Meeting –

AGREED – T H A T the date of the next Joint Consultative Forum meeting would be Monday, 24th April, 2023 at 10.00 a.m.