

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Tuesday 9 December 2014 commencing at 4.00pm.

Present: Councillor David Cotton (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Bowler
Councillor Jackie Brockway
Councillor Pat Mewis

Representatives of Union members: Karen Lond (Vice-Chairman)
Paul Key

Representatives of Non union staff: Carol Bond
Kate Hearn

In attendance:
Ian Knowles Director of Resources and Section 151
Lesley Beevers Regulatory Team Manager, Public Protection Services
Kim Leith Health and Safety Co-ordinator
Matthew Broughton Health and Well-being Manager
Emma Redwood Team Manager, Human Resources
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: None received

The Chairman opened the meeting by thanking everyone for their kind words and support over the last few weeks following his recent bereavement.

29 MINUTES (JSCC.25 14/15)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 13 October 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

30 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

31 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (JSCC.26 14/15)

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 1 December 2014.

The Director of Resources provided the Committee with a brief verbal update on progress with the Re-structure at the Head of Service Level during which the following points were noted:-

- The Consultation Period had ended on 14 November 2014.
- As at 20 November, all current Heads of Service were briefed and placed “at risk” and the posts removed from the establishment.
- Assessment Centres had taken place the previous day, 8 December 2014.
- Final Interviews would be held on 11 December 2014
- Individuals concerned would be advised of the outcome on 12 December 2014.
- Any vacancies remaining thereafter would go out for external recruitment.
- The possibility of requiring interims in the short term had been considered.
- Feedback would be provided to Team Managers on the 16 December regarding the outcome of the recruitment process.
- All staff would be advised of the outcome prior to the Christmas break.

In responding to concerns, it was clarified that the Strategic Lead posts had been deemed new posts and thus it was appropriate that current Heads of Service had been placed “at risk” as these posts no longer existed. By way of re-assurance it was further confirmed that HR advice had been received throughout the process to ensure it was both a fair and objective one.

In respect of the recent briefings which had been held for all staff on the re-structure, a member of the Committee asked that it be noted that some Customer Service Staff had not been able to attend due to the duties rota

RESOLVED that progress on the matters arising schedule as set out in report JSCC.26 14/15, and the verbal update on the restructure provided by the Director of Resources and set out above, be received and noted.

32 I-COUNT PROGRAMME – VERBAL UPDATE

The Health and Well-Being Manager addressed the Committee with regard to the I-Count Programme and in opening re-freshed the Committee on what the i-Count programme was, who it covered and how it was funded. Since the Committee, received their last update in March, further activities/ opportunities had been organised for the workforce including: -

- 3x sessions of Mindfulness Training – well received with 40-45 attendees
- Body MOTs – very well received with all available appointments being filled
- Flu Jabs – back by popular demand, with 60 -70 people participating.

- 2x “Making Every Contact Count” Sessions – the nature of the programme was outlined to the Committee.

Going forward, the Lincolnshire Sports Partnership would shortly be launching their “Work Place Challenge” programme and it was intended for employees to be invited to take part. This was a free scheme through which sporting competitions were arranged. Officers had also spoken to other local businesses regarding the programme, with some having agreed to also participate.

It was noted that £5,000 remained unspent and anyone with suggestions should contact the Health Team. Previously spend had had to occur within year however the County Council had recently confirmed unspent monies could be carried forward.

The Health and Well-being programme had been suggested as an area for future investment in the Health Team’s most recent Service Plan, as once the above mentioned funding had been used there was no current budget provision for this programme of work. In responding to questions, the Health and Well-Being Manager confirmed that he would be leaving the authority and with regards to the continuation of the work he currently undertook, this would be subject to a conversation with the newly appointed Strategic Lead for the area, once in post.

A Member of the Committee advised of the numerous free / special offers relating to healthy lifestyles, received on-line, and offered to forward these to the Health and Well-being Manager for circulation to wider staff if deemed appropriate.

With regard to Flu Jabs, the Chairman considered it important that budget provision be made for these going forward, considering this was a much cheaper alternative, than if staff were off sick. It was again confirmed that this had been proposed in Health Team’s Service Plan, but all budget requests had to be considered alongside the wider context.

RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

33 STRESS STEERING GROUP UPDATE (JSCC.27 14/15)

The Regulatory Team Manager addressed the Committee with regard to the work of the Stress Steering Group and provided the following update: -

- Stress risk assessments had been completed by all service areas.
- The risk assessments had been collated and identified risks had been categorized into the seven strands of risk outlined by the HSE in their Stress Management Standards guidance.
- The risks and relevant mitigating actions had then been rated Red, Amber and Green by the service area.
- WLDC has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure that stress is effectively managed.

- In order to ensure that the Authority was complying with legislative requirements and following the guidance in the HSE Management Standards, a Stress Steering Group had been established.
- The group needs to assess the issues that have been raised in the risk assessments and surveys that have been undertaken and devise an action plan to mitigate the stressors.
- The group currently consisted of: a head of service, a union member, employees, health and safety coordinator, HR.
- The steering group had met twice and some actions were beginning to emerge.
- Current good practices within the organisation were being identified and an action plan was being developed to mitigate the risk.

In responding to the Committee's comments and questions, Officers confirmed that staff felt more able to raise the issue of stress, and were accessing support more readily. Individual action plans had been developed for some staff who had reported stress management concerns. It was further confirmed that support was offered for all types of stress not just that which may be caused by the workplace.

There was concern from a Member of the Committee that a one size fits all approach was being taken. This was disputed and it was confirmed that the depot stress risk register had been considered by the Group. Following further discussion it transpired that the concerns raised arose from the Managing Attendance Policy and the different nature of work undertaken by depot staff as opposed to office based staff, something some were of the view was not taken into consideration when managing attendance and thus this could cause stress.

In response, representatives from UNISON advised that a meeting had been arranged with those concerned to look at the managing attendance policy with a view to establishing whether there needed to be revisions made to address the points made.

As a result, it was suggested that a representative from the depot should be invited to attend the Stress Steering Group. The Chairman also indicated that he would welcome a report (verbal if deemed appropriate) on the differing stresses for depot and office based staff, along with any relevant feedback from the planned meeting mentioned above.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the update be received and noted; and
- (b) a report (this could be verbal if appropriate) on the differing stresses for depot and office based staff, along with any relevant feedback from the planned meeting mentioned above, be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

34 FIRE SAFETY POLICY (JSCC.28 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which presented the Fire Safety Policy.

It was confirmed that the Policy would be applicable to all tenants within the Guildhall.

The Chairman called for a practice fire evacuation to be held during a planning committee as this was where he considered there likely to be risk, simply due to the nature of the meeting and people arriving and departing a various times throughout.

In light of the ongoing restructure, recommendation two was slightly amended to reflect that the named post would no longer exist, and on that basis it was: -

RESOLVED that it be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee that: -

- (a) the Fire Safety Policy be approved for formal adoption; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Service for Public Protection (or equivalent level of officer (Strategic Lead) responsible for Public Protection pending the outcome of the ongoing restructure) to make minor house-keeping amendments to the Policy in the future, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Policy and Resources Committee and Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

35 STAFF SURVEY RESULTS (JSCC.29 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which presented the findings of the most recent staff survey.

The comparative headlines were shared with the Committee these being: -

Vision – there had been a slight improvement from 2013 and an overall improvement since 2011 of 10.4%

Clear objectives – there had been a slight decrease from 2013 by 1%

Satisfied with job – there had been an improvement from 2013 of 3.7%

Motivated – there had been a very small decrease from 2013 less than 1%

Valued – there had been a slight improvement from 2013 by 1.4%

Communication – there had been an improvement from 2013 of 5.4%

Demands – there had been an improvement from 2013 of 2.7%

Whilst a positive direction of travel had been demonstrated across nearly all of those areas surveyed, Officers indicated those areas where they would focussing their

attention with a hope to see greater improvements going forward, these being Valued and Communication. It was accepted that “being valued” was in the eye of the beholder and hence it was important to develop a suite of options for use by managers to help staff feel recognised, whilst still accepting that on occasions difficult conversations needed to be had. The Staff Champions Group would be used to discuss the survey results and identify areas and actions for improvement.

The Committee welcomed the results, were delighted at the improved response rate and liked how they could now compare data year on year and more clearly identify the direction of travel.

RESOLVED that the results of the staff survey be noted.

36 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE REVIEW (JSCC.30 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which presented an updated Grievance Procedure for the Authority for adoption.

The current Grievance procedure was implemented in 2007. However, it had been recognised that the procedure required reviewing to give more clarity to staff and managers and also to make provision to deal with collective grievances should they arise.

The reviewed procedure defined the circumstances when it was, and was not, appropriate to use the grievance procedure.

The reviewed procedure also clearly outlined the steps to be followed in terms of an individual grievance, mirrored by the collective grievance, with the timescales for each stage of the process and the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.

As with the previous procedure, the main objective was to resolve the matter quickly and informally and to avoid escalation to a formal hearing. However, it was recognised that not all grievances would be resolved informally and the Policy allowed for escalation to the formal procedure.

The stages for a collective grievance mirrored those for an individual grievance except that the group could nominate a spokesperson from amongst them to present and speak on their behalf.

Lengthy and detailed debate ensued with some Members expressing concern that the time in which the individual concerned received initial notification that a grievance had been lodged was too lengthy, and explained her reasons for this.

In responding it was confirmed that this was the maximum length time, and notification may be given early, however it was important to not make the timescales too restrictive and number of scenarios were offered to highlight where problems may arise.

With regard to collective grievances a Member raised further concerns with the content of the final two paragraphs. The Human Resources Team Leader again advised that legal advice had been sort and explained why the suggested amendments to these areas would not be appropriate, again offering scenarios to demonstrate instances; this was accepted.

The Vice Chairman than advised that the Regional Office had offered further comments on the collective grievance section of the Policy and still had areas of concern that they would wish to see addressed. Unfortunately there had not been time prior to the meeting for these to be raised with HR and on that basis it was: -

RESOLVED that the report be deferred, pending further discussion between HR and Unison, and re-submitted to the Committee's January meeting for further consideration.

37 WORK PLAN (JSCC.31 14/15)

Members gave consideration to their future work plan as set out in report JSCC.31 14/15. It was noted that if any Committee Member wished to see a report on a particular issue, this could also be raised.

As earlier resolved, the Grievance Procedure would be re-submitted to the January meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman requested that an update report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee with regard to the New Look Reception – How is it working? It was suggested the Communications Team Manager would be best placed to address the Committee.

Some Members indicated they would welcome a tour of the new facilities and the Director of Resources undertook to look into this matter.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan, as set out in report JSCC.31 14/15 be amended as discussed throughout and noted.

The meeting closed at 5.28 pm.

Chairman