

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held in Ancholme Meeting Room - The Guildhall on Thursday, 22 November 2018 commencing at 4.00pm.

Members: Councillor Matthew Boles (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan

Representatives of Union members: James Deacon

Representatives of Non-union staff: Amy Potts

In attendance: Alan Robinson, Strategic Lead Governance and People/Monitoring Officer
Emma Redwood, People and Organisational Development Manager
Ele Durrant, Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor David Cotton (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Rachel Parkin, Senior Home Choices Officer (Vice Chairman)

24 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THIS MEETING ONLY

Having received apologies from the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Monitoring Officer opened the meeting and asked for nominations for Chair for this meeting only. On being nominated, seconded and voted upon unanimously, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Matthew Boles be elected as Chairman for this meeting only.

25 MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this point in the meeting.

26 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 4 October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

27 **MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 14 November 2018. The Democratic and Civic Officer explained that the sole item on the schedule had been shared with the HR and Communications Team and would be shared with staff.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 14 November 2018 be received and noted.

28 **MANAGING STAFF DURING DISRUPTIONS AT WORK**

The Committee were asked to give consideration to a report from the People and Organisation Development Manager regarding a new policy for Managing Staff During Disruptions at Work. It was explained that this was a new policy designed to put guidelines in place for a number of possibilities and therefore avoid any heat of the moment decisions when faced with any kind of disruption. It was also designed to ensure parity across all departments and not leave decisions to the discretion of Team Managers, which could lead to staff receiving conflicting information as to what to do.

The Committee heard that there were two specific scenarios that were addressed within the report. The first being situations where the council made the decision that staff could not work, and the second being where staff made the decision that they could not work. An example given was in the case of severe weather such as snow storms. If the council made the decision that staff should not come to work because of safety concerns or no access to the council building, staff would be paid for their usual working hours but would be expected to be easily available to work should alternative arrangements be possible, such as another place of work or roads being re-opened. However, if members of staff made their own decision not to come to work without the direction from the council, they would need to arrange with their manager whether this time be taken as annual leave, flexi time, unpaid time off or look into working from home. It was explained that Team Managers should have this discussion with their teams in advance of such a situation arising in order that no member of staff was left unaware of how they would be affected. It was also clarified that no one would be expected to come into the office to work if they believed it to be unsafe and that Team Managers would be expected to be flexible in their handling of such scenarios, for example allowing more time than usual for flexitime to be repaid.

A Staff Member of Committee explained that in their team meetings the Manager had requested for staff to get into the habit of taking their work tablet home every night so that should something arise needing them to work from home, they would be able to do so. It was enquired whether this

flexibility was expected across the council and the People and Organisation Development Manager explained that it would depend on individual facilities at home and would need to be agreed within the team. A staff member would need prior agreement from their manager in order to work from home.

There was discussion around the bad weather in February 2018 and how it had proven to be an example of the system working well, with very few council services being impacted as staff had been able to continue working either from home or by working reduced hours in the office. The policy had been designed to ensure that these arrangements were fair across all teams and that staff would know what was expected of them. It was acknowledged that a number of staff live outside of the district and therefore weather conditions could be different across the areas. A Member of Committee enquired about childcare considerations and it was explained that this policy did not cover situations where staff could not come into the office because of childcare issues. Such scenarios would be covered by other arrangements.

It was highlighted again that the council operate a flexible working policy and the objective was for staff to be able to continue working as far as possible without detriment to themselves. It was also clear what the expectations would be should the council decide staff could not work, that is, they would receive full pay but be expected to be available if and when necessary. There was discussion regarding the waste operatives and it was confirmed that the council would often make the decision for waste collections to be suspended in the interests of operative and public safety. In those situations, the operatives would receive full pay and be expected to be available to return to work when possible.

There was an enquiry as to what provisions the council had to deal with situations where people may be unable to return home, whether there were air beds or safe houses or suchlike. It was explained that there were frequent emergency planning meetings where provisions for food, beds and the like were planned out. There were also key locations identified for use by the council depending on the circumstances of the emergency. It was identified that there were options for working elsewhere, should the building be inaccessible, such as other council offices or venues such as village halls with internet access. It was again highlighted that the weather conditions experienced at the end of February 2018 had been a test for the council and it had proven to be an excellent example of how the emergency planning and business continuity plans worked well.

At the conclusion of discussions, it was

RESOLVED that:

- a) Members, unions and staff representatives support and recommend the 'Managing Staff During Disruptions at Work' policy to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for adoption; and

- b) Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Resources to make minor housekeeping amendments to the policy in future, in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee and Chairman of JSCC.

29 REVIEW OF DISCIPLINE AT WORK PROCEDURE

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the People and Organisation Development Manager regarding recent updates made to the Discipline at Work procedure. She explained that most of the changes had been minor housekeeping amendments however there were additional details regarding disciplinary hearings. It was highlighted that the minimum notice period for a hearing had increased from three to five days.

There was concern from a Member of Committee that five days' notice would not allow a member of staff sufficient time to collate any relevant information, evidence or arrange for union representation if necessary. The People and Organisation Development Manager highlighted that a disciplinary hearing was the final stage of the process and so there would have been plenty of opportunity prior to the hearing date to present relevant information and suchlike. She also clarified that the notice period was the minimum time required from receiving the hearing pack to the date of the hearing. Often there would be a greater amount of notice time and also the person would already be aware of the move to a hearing and so would have the opportunity to consult with unions if necessary.

There was further discussion with regard to who could accompany a staff member to a hearing and it was agreed that ordinarily this would be a union representative or a work colleague, however, other requests could be considered on a case by case basis. It was also discussed that there were different ways of dealing with the suspension of a member of staff to avoid it being seen as anything other than a neutral period away from the office. The Monitoring Officer highlighted that there was a separate policy which dealt with Statutory Officers. There was acknowledgement from the Committee that it was important for any disciplinary proceedings to be fair and handled discreetly and for any outcome to be the right decision.

RESOLVED that:

- a) Members, unions and staff representatives support, note and recommend the reviewed Disciplinary Procedure to the Corporate Policy & Resources committee for formal adoption; and
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Resources to make minor housekeeping amendments to the policy in future, in consultation with the chairman of the Corporate Policy & Resources committee and chairman of JSCC.

30 **WORK PLAN**

The Work Plan for the business of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee was presented. Members were advised that there was no business scheduled for the January meeting and although there was one item potentially to be added to the work plan, this would not be ready in time for the January meeting. With this in mind, it was proposed, seconded and with unanimous agreement

RESOLVED that the meeting of the JSCC in January be cancelled due to insufficient business.

There was further discussion regarding the report about mental wellbeing in the workplace and it was confirmed this would be brought to Committee in 2019.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

31 **TO NOTE THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman confirmed that, as had been discussed earlier in the meeting, the January meeting would be cancelled due to lack of business.

NOTED that the next meeting of the JSCC be held on Thursday, 28 March 2019, 4.00pm in the Council Chamber, Guildhall.

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm.

Chairman