

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Thursday 2 June 2016 commencing at 4.00pm.

Present: Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Jessie Milne

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

Representatives of Non union staff: Rachel Parkin

In attendance:
Alan Robinson Strategic Lead for Democracy and Business Support
Michelle Howard Team Manager – Home Options
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Jackie Brockway
Kate Hearn

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2016/17 CIVIC YEAR.

The Strategic Lead for Business and Democratic Support opened the meeting and sought nominations for the position of Chairman.

RESOLVED that Councillor David Cotton be appointed as Chairman for the 2016/17 Civic Year.

Councillor David Cotton thereupon took the chair and thanked the Committee for nominating him as Chairman.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2016/2017 CIVIC YEAR.

Nominations were sought and received for the position of Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED that Karen Lond be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the 2016/17 Civic Year.

3 MINUTES (JSCC.01 16/17)

(a) Meeting held on 31 March 2016

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 31 March 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the word “home” being included at the end of the second sentence of the third paragraph on page 21.

(b) Extraordinary Meeting held on 20 April 2016

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 20 March 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

5 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (JSCC.03 16/17)

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 24 May 2016.

It was noted that all actions had been completed.

RESOLVED that progress on the matters arising schedule as set out in report JSCC.03 16/17 be received and noted.

6 TO VARY THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

A request had been received to revise the order of agenda, taking Paper E as the first item for consideration, after which time the agenda would be discharged as published. Having been moved and seconded it was : -

RESOLVED that the order of the agenda be revised as detailed above.

7 REVIEW OF THE CRB POLICY CHANGING IT TO THE DBS POLICY (JSCC.05 16/17)

Members were asked to give consideration to a report which reviewed the CRB Policy in order to bring it into line with the new DBS Regulations. By way of background and context the Committee noted that the DBS had been created with the merger of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The ISA had been created to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and adults.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), an Executive Agency of the Home Office, provided wider access to criminal record information through its Disclosure service.

The service enabled organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that which involved children or vulnerable adults.

It was noted the DBS held two separate lists of individuals: those who were barred from working with children and those who were barred from working with vulnerable adults, known as 'barred lists'. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 states all those who will be working in 'regulated activity' with either children or vulnerable adults, must be checked against the relevant barred list.

The council had had a CRB Policy for a number of years but this was now out of date and needed bringing into line with the new DBS Regulations.

It was noted that work would take place with all Team Managers to assess the roles within the council in order to decide which if any roles needed a DBS check and at what level.

Managers would assess all roles and complete the DBS check assessment form, to evidence if a check was required for a role or not. Meetings would be arranged with managers on a priority basis to work collaboratively to complete the assessment process.

It was stressed that this work was about assessing the requirements of a 'job role' to be checked and not about whether an individual person needed assessing. In light of this the Policy would not be a requirement of all elected Members.

The policy had been revised following research and consultation with the internal Safeguarding working group. The policy had also been sent to Unison and Staff representatives for comments. Since publication, as a result of further comments received, it was noted that a further revision to Section 11 of the policy was required namely that it be amended to read

“Employees supervising young people during work experience and apprenticeships

If, as part of an employee's duties they are asked to supervise young people (under 18's) on work experience or through an apprenticeship, an enhanced DBS with Children's Barred list may be required. Advice should be sought from the HR team prior to agreeing to any supervision of young people”

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

- (a) the revised CRB Policy changing into DBS Policy be approved for formal adoption subject to Section 11 being amended as detailed above; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Resources to make minor house-keeping amendments to the Policy in the future, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

8 STAFF SURVEY ENGAGEMENT GROUP – UPDATE/PROGRESS

The Strategic Lead for Democracy and Business Support provided a verbal update to the Committee on the work of the Staff Survey Engagement Group.

As opposed to re-running the Staff Survey, the engagement Group had been established in the first instance to undertake proactive work with the workforce. Having reviewed the results of the last survey the Group had identified two areas to focus on, these being “The Council Communicates Well” and “I feel Valued and Recognised”. The Membership of the Group comprised representatives from a number of Teams including the Depot and whilst not all teams were covered Group Members had given a commitment to engage wider than their own personal team.

At the last meeting the Group had selected communication as the first priority to be addressed and had devised a number of mini-projects aimed at helping to improve communication across the organisation, examples being providing staff an opportunity to set an element of the Corporate Update agenda, and regularising Senior Officer Blogs. The next area to be addressed by the Group was Reward and Recognition.

It was noted that further updates would be submitted to the Committee as the Group’s work progressed.

The Joint Staff Consultative Committee welcomed the work that was being undertaken.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

9 ABSENCE UPDATE REPORT – 15/16 YEAR END POSITION (JSCC.04 16/17)

The Committee gave consideration to a report which presented an update on levels of sickness absence for West Lindsey District Council employees for the 15/16 year end position. The report also provided comparative figures from previous years and comparative benchmarking data

Debate ensued and all were in agreement that this was a fantastic year end position with the best attendance record achieved since data had been collected (2009).

Furthermore the organisation had out performed those it benchmarked against achieving only 6.07 days lost per FTE.

The Joint Staff Consultative placed on record their thanks to all employees for their hard work and dedication shown throughout the year. It was proposed and seconded that a formal communication be sent from the Committee to all staff expressing thanks. It was further suggested that this could be communicated via Minerva and the new TV screens / noticeboards.

In light of the positive attendance statistics and continued improvement in this area, UNISON, representatives made reference to the Managing Attendance Policy, in particular the trigger points contained therein, and suggested that it was maybe time that these were reviewed. These trigger points had never been supported by UNISON as there was a view that they were too stringent for manual, labouring and driving jobs (operational services functions). It was also suggested that they were not being used or applied fairly.

Officers confirmed that this matter had been raised previously and if UNISON were seeking a change in Policy they should make a formal request to the Human Resources Team Leader in the first instance for a formal discussion.

The statistical data contained within the report was discussed at length. The Committee were reminded of how misleading statistics could be, particularly in a small organisation; 1 or 2 long term sick cases could result in a significant impact on the percentages.

Referring back to the trigger points the staff representative present did not view the managing attendance meetings as a disciplinary matter or something negative but rather part of the pastoral care offered by the organisation and considered communicating them in such a way may be of assistance.

It was confirmed that staff achieving 100% did receive a thank you letter from the Chief Executive / relevant Director.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the levels of sickness absence for the year to date, April 2015 – March 2016 be noted; and
- (b) a formal communication be sent from the Committee to all staff expressing thanks for their hard work and dedication shown throughout the year.

10 HOME WORKING POLICY – POLICY REVIEW (JSCC.06 16/17)

Members were asked to give consideration to a report which reviewed the current Homeworking Policy and recommended a number of changes to be adopted subsequently by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

It presenting the report it was noted that the council had had a Home Working Policy in place for a number of years, however the working environment and IT infrastructure had changed considerably to enable staff to work from other locations, including working at home.

The old policy had been reviewed and it had been agreed that a thorough rewrite of the policy would be required to bring it up-to-date and to provide a clear and manageable procedure for the council.

The Authority had recognised the importance of providing a flexible working environment, which maintained high quality services whilst enabling staff to improve their work life balance.

As with other forms of flexible working there is no automatic right to be able to work from home, nor was all work suited to working from home so availability would be based on:

- The needs of the service and the council
- Suitability of the employment and person to be able to work from home
- Demonstrable benefits and measurable outcomes for the service
- The nature of the post involved
- The suitability of the proposed work place
- Access to an adequate broadband connection
- The completion and suitability of the working from home self assessment

Whilst the policy would apply to all staff regardless of length of service, it was recognised that some roles would be more suitable to allow working from home than others, as outlined in section 2 of the report and included in the policy.

Finally the policy had been developed by the People and OD Team Manager in partnership with Team managers. Consultation had also taken place with the Health and Safety Co-ordinator and Unison and staff representatives.

This Policy had been deferred by the Joint Staff Consultative Committee at its meeting on 31 March 2016 due to disagreement over sections 11 and 12. UNISON sought and received clarification as to which elements of the Policy had now been amended. It was confirmed that Section 11 had been amended to now read “when an employee is working at or from home they must claim any mileage / journeys in line with the Travel and Subsistence Policy”. This Policy was the subject of a separate report due for consideration by the Committee. No amendments had been made to Section 12 of the Policy (Specialist Equipment) for the reasons cited at the previous meeting.

In response to concerns Officers confirmed house-keeping amendments were such matters as a change in job title for example. All housekeeping amendments had to be made in consultation with the two Chairmen specified in the recommendation and no fundamental change to Policy could or would be made without Committee approval.

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

- (a) the Homeworking Policy be approved for formal adoption; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Resources to make minor house-keeping amendments to the Policy in the future, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

11 TRAVEL POLICY – POLICY REVIEW (JSCC.07 15/16)

Members were presented with a revised Travel and Subsistence Policy in which a number of changes were being proposed.

This Policy had been deferred by the Committee at their meeting on 31 March 2016 when information, namely guidance from the HMRC, had been tabled at the meeting which some were of the view challenged the Policy's interpretation regarding mileage claims when working from home. There were some that expressed the view that ordinary return to work miles should not be deducted before submitting a travel claim as stated in the Policy.

The Human Resources Team Leader at the time had indicated that she was not comfortable in trying to interpret tabled information and would welcome further opportunity to consider the information outside of the meeting. It had been acknowledged that HRMC rules and guidance could be extremely difficult to interpret and information had previously been sought from the HMRC website in developing the Policy.

Discussion had ensued with both UNISON and Officers citing reasons as to why they considered their interpretation to be correct.

Since the report's deferral further consideration had been given to this area and further negotiations had taken place, however no general consensus had been reached and no amendments had been made to the Policy as a result. The staff representatives had confirmed that the Policy as presented was their understanding of the Policy and how they currently claimed. However the UNISON view differed and UNISON were not of the belief that this was how the Policy was intended. Management's view was that the Policy presented had been intended to provide more clarity to staff and not to change the principles that were already in place.

Both management and UNISON had provided other local authorities schemes as evidence to support their view. Discussion again ensued with both UNISON and Officers again citing reasons as to why they considered their interpretation to be correct.

Elected Members were not comfortable with the confusion that still remained and had been provided with evidence to support both interpretations. It was suggested

an options paper would be of assistance, in further determining the matter and on that basis it was

RESOLVED that in light of the comments expressed during consideration of the Travel Policy it be deferred with a view to an options paper being re-submitted to a future meeting.

12 WORK PLAN (JSCC.08 16/17)

Members gave consideration to their future work plan as set out in report JSCC.08 116/17. It was noted that if any Committee Member wished to see a report on a particular issue, this could also be raised.

Officers undertook to populate the Work Plan further following completion of Human Resources Team's Service Plan.

A Committee Member requested that future absence update report data be broken down into operational staff and office based staff.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan, as set out in report JSCC.08 16/17 be received and noted.

13 TO NOTE THE MEETING AND BRIEFING DATES FOR THE 2016/17 CIVIC YEAR

RESOLVED that the meeting and briefing dates for the 2016/17 civic year be noted as follows: -

Meeting Date	Briefing Date
• Thursday 2 June 2016	-
• Thursday 7 July 2016	27 June
• Thursday 8 September	25 August
• Thursday 6 October 2016	22 September
• Thursday 24 November 2016	10 November
• Thursday 19 January 2017	6 January
• Thursday 30 March 2017	16 March

The meeting closed at 5.21 pm.

Chairman