

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held in the MS Teams on Thursday, 6 July 2023 commencing at 4.00 pm.

Members: Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway (Chairman, from Minute 2)
Councillor John Barrett
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Moira Westley

Representatives of Union members: James Deacon (Vice Chairman, from Minute 3)

Representatives of Non-union staff: Amy Potts
Jenna Comins

In attendance: Jeanette McGarry, Assistant Director People & Democratic Services
Michelle Thompson, Human Resources Manager (Temporary)
Katy Allen, Corporate Governance Officer
Ele Snow, Senior Democratic and Civic Officer
Andrew Warnes, Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: No apologies were received.

1 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE CIVIC YEAR

The Democratic and Civic Officer opened the meeting and sought nominations for the position of Chairman.

Members then deliberated on two candidates who put themselves forward. On receiving nominations and having been proposed and second, upon taking the vote, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Jackie Brockway be elected as Chairman for the 2023/24 Civic Year.

Councillor Brockway thanked the Committee for electing her as Chairman and took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

2 TO APPOINT A VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE CIVIC YEAR

The Chairman asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman. On being nominated and voted upon unanimously, it was

RESOLVED that James Deacon be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the 2023/24 Civic Year.

3 MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on Thursday, 30 March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that the new Members of the Committee matters arising was part of the discussion for item 7f. The Officer updated Members on the new working group of non-union staff representatives, and that attendance of this group would be on a rotating basis. It was additionally raised that there were further outside discussions on the quorate aspects in the item, and the slight tweaks from previous discussions.

With no further comment, the Matters Arising schedule was **NOTED**.

6 REVIEW OF THE LONE WORKING POLICY

The Chairman invited the Human Resources Manager to present the first report, which was a review of the lone working policy. These were primarily housekeeping changes to the current policy, which included updates to the officer positions, a new template on risk assessments with guidance on dynamic risk assessments, and additional clarity into the policy.

Debate ensued, and Members drew out multiple aspects of the current policy, standard practices at West Lindsey District Council, and other related policies to lone working such as home working. In response to queries on the interaction with home working, the Officer clarified that employees contacts still require attendance at Guildhall for business related aspects and was guided separately to lone working. This guidance included flexible working, with regular one to one meetings between employees and their managers, as set by the service managers. It was also emphasised that teams should be meeting regularly.

With regard to known lone workers, these were primarily office-based workers, which included planners and environmental health officers going out on site, with nobody lone working full time. In a later exchange, the

Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that for those making regular visits that they were provided with information such as mental health and violence, alongside information shared from Lincolnshire County Council. Members also heard that conversations were ongoing with the depot staff with waste management to ensure their safety and audit check-ins with other staff whilst out in the District.

In a related exchange about the raising of issues by employees, the Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that there was separate guidance for 1-2-1s that allowed for discussion over safety issues. It was referenced that a discussion with the Director responsible for the depot in regard to staff safety whilst working in the District would be of use to the Committee.

There was a discussion on the usage of tracking tags and panic alarms as a way of protecting staff and safeguarding in case of issues, with case studies raised and examples of where it could be used by staff. These included litter pickers, officers making home visits, and those making visits to other places. In a later comment, it was raised that there might be concerns of the rare cases of employees making home visits getting trapped in a customer's home, and how staff can assess those risks.

Officers suggested the tracking of waste service vehicles, team members and reviewing this policy with further staff input could be considered and implemented as future working practices.

At the end of the discussion, the Chairman requested that the Committee's concerns about the lack of tracker tags, dynamic risk assessment knowledge, and the request for any additional protection for lone workers be raised with the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee when it considered this report.

Having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. the amended Lone Working Policy be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for formal adoption; and
2. any future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Staff Consultative and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees.

7 **REVIEW OF THE RETIREMENT POLICY**

The Chairman invited the Human Resources Manager to present the next report, which was a review of the retirement policy. The amendments

proposed were for all employees and were mainly for housekeeping.

Debate ensued, and Members were appreciative of the policy in place. In response to a topic raised on those above retirement age to continue working, the Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that the Equalities Act did not have a set age for a person to retire. This was further elucidated that this is if they were fit enough, and if they wanted to continue to work.

In a separate question, it was confirmed that the death in service benefit was part of the employment contract signed by all employees.

Having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. the amended Retirement Policy be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for formal adoption; and
2. any future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of Joint Staff Consultative Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

8 **REVIEW OF THE CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY**

The Chairman invited the Human Resources Manager to present the third item, which was a review of the close personal relationships policy. It was explained that this was a new policy for employees, with Members having their own policy within the code of conduct. The policy was expected to provide guidance to managers for those employees at the beginning of a personal relationship that could affect the recruitment and any related processes.

Debate ensued, and Members were appreciative of a clear and set guidance for everyone. In response to a set of queries on the scope of the policy, and a hypothetical scenario of an affair, Members learned that the policy covered the need for declaring contracts and consultants, and that each case would be handled on an individual basis. The reasoning for the policy included a push to have open declarations that can be safely processed, with the objective of a reduction in the risk within the organisation of any issues.

In a separate query, the Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that the crux of the policy was to avoid situations of making unclear decisions without proper governance.

Having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. the Close Personal Relationships Policy be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for formal adoption; and
2. That any future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of Joint Staff Consultative and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

9 **REVIEW OF THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

The Chairman invited the Human Resources Manager to present the fourth item, which was a review of the disciplinary procedure. This was primarily a housekeeping report.

The Officer brought to members attention to the sanction levels, with first warnings amended to last for 6 months, with final warnings being in place for 12 months. This followed the ACAS code of practice to have consistent sanctions.

Debate ensued, and Members questioned about the processes that follow within the policy. In response, the Human Resources Manager explained that that there was some capability of leeway within the process. It was further explained that the warning only formally sits in the employee's record for that mandated time, with the main intention to ensure that the lesson is learned.

If another disciplinary occurred after that period, the previous disciplinary would be taken into consideration. Dependent on the severity of the act, such as gross misconduct, the process can go all the way to a final warning. In a separate query, the Officer confirmed that the disciplinary record of officer do not get disclosed to future employers.

Having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. the amended Disciplinary Procedure and Rules be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for formal adoption; and
2. any future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

10 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT AND REVISED EQUALITY POLICY

The Chairman invited the Corporate Governance Officer to present the fifth item, which was the Annual Equality Report and revised Equality Policy. This was a new report and was scheduled to be considered on an annual basis. It also included a new policy, which included broader actions related to equality. It also included an action plan for the next 12 months. Members were also made aware of an internal audit ongoing at the time of the meeting.

Debate ensued, and Members asked multiple queries related to domestic abuse as mentioned in the report. The Committee learned that for any raised issues that a safeguarding process is put in place for anyone with concerns, with an appointed Safeguarding Officer responsible. The process was available on Minerva, with any staff able to make a safeguarding referral. Regarding informing outside agencies, it would be in agreement with the individual, and that the Authority had relationships with organisations that it could refer individuals to in arranging their safety. The process allowed for referrals for employees.

The Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that it could happen to anyone, and that it was critical to ensure services were available, and that advice was available to everyone. In related question, there was also the availability of the Employee Assistance Programme, where staff could raise specific issues, and request counselling through the programme should they wish.

In response to a specific query about the difference of the levels between men and women full time and part time partly came from more flexible working requests from women within the Authority.

In a final query about related to purported discrimination based on speech, there had been recent instituted training for staff which covered related to this concern.

Having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that:

1. the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report be noted;
2. the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee for approval;
3. the actions to take the agenda forward be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee for approval.

11 AMENDMENTS TO JSCC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members gave consideration to an Amendment to the JSCC Terms of Reference. The Senior Democratic and Civic Officer presented the report. Members heard that the Committee had run without formal staff representation since the leaving of Rachel Parkin, and that with the new recruitment The change would amend the terms of reference to allow both union and non-union staff members to equally split the representation.

Discussion ensued, and Members were supportive of the changes. It was noted that union representation in the organisation was low, but Members gave personal experiences on union membership.

Having been proposed and seconded, upon taking the vote, it was

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that approval be given for staff representation on the Joint Staff Consultative Committee (section 1.2 paragraph (b) of the Constitution, Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference) to be amended as followed:

“(b) not more than four employee representatives and six reserve employee representatives (to be made up of equal representation of union appointed and staff elected employee representatives where possible; should an equal balance not be possible, vacancies may be filled by staff members whether union or non-union)

12 UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL PAY AWARD

The Chairman invited the Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services to present the last item, which was an update to the National Pay Award negotiations for 2023/24.

The Officer explained that there had been no further update since the information in the report had been provided, with ongoing discussions on the pay award.

With no questions and no need to take a vote, the report was **NOTED**.

13 WORK PLAN

The Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services informed the Committee that the workplan for the 2023/24 Council year would be populated as and when, and noted the return to a normal level of items.

In response to a query from the Vice Chairman, Members learned a staff survey was planned to be held in the next few months, following

considerable change since the previous staff survey, in aim to monitor staff resilience.

With no further comments from Members of the Committee, the Work Plan was **NOTED**.

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

The date and time of the next meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to be held at 4pm on Thursday, 7 September 2023, was **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 5.11 pm.

Chairman