

JOINT EMPLOYEE COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 11th December 2013 at Retford Town Hall

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Councillor S Greaves (Chair)
Councillors J Leigh, S May and J B Rickells

Employee Representatives:

K Circuit, R Parr, P Rodgers and J Rose

Officers in attendance: D Armiger, K Childs, C Crossland and L Hull

ACTION BY:

(Meeting commenced at 2.35pm.)

(The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure. Members of the public were asked if anyone wanted to film the meeting (or part thereof) in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's guidance; however, no-one responded.)

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

23. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11TH SEPTEMBER 2013

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2013 be approved.

24. MINUTES FOR ACTION

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action be received.

25. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

26. REPORT(S) OF THE EMPLOYER'S REPRESENTATIVES

(a) Flexible Working Guidelines Review

Members were presented with a final proposed Flexible Working Guidance document, having completed Trade Union consultation. The Council is required to have a process in place which meets the current statutory right to request flexible working and have this considered. Proposed legislative changes under the Children and Families Bill proposes to extend the right to all employees who have 26 weeks service with their employer.

The Council's current policy already complies with the proposed changes offering flexible working for a variety of reasons to all employees who have 26 weeks service. The review has included a review of the documents format/ style and user friendliness.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval.
2. Thanks be recorded to Officers and the Policy Working Group for their work in producing the document.

(b) Grievance Policy and Procedure

Members were presented with a final revised Grievance Policy and Procedure, following the completion of Trade Union consultations. Members were advised that the Policy has become more outcome focused asking what remedy the employee is seeking. The review has included a review of the documents format/ style and user friendliness.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval.
2. Thanks be recorded to Officers and the Policy Working Group for their work in producing the document.

(c) Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

Members were presented with a draft revised Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and asked for comments. The Policy is subject to the completion of Trade Union consultations.

Members were advised of the proposed main changes:

- Amendments to the document style and format
- Strengthened and improved clarification of a number of policy principles
- The introduction of a flow chart
- Strengthening of coverage of equality and diversity considerations
- Update and modernisation of the disciplinary rules to reflect current legislation and update reference to fraud, bribery and corruption and key ICT/internet usage
- Strengthening of guidance on important requirements in relation to potential disciplinary suspensions

Members and employee representatives commented that suspension should be carefully considered. There is often a stigma attached to a person on suspension. Suspension has an impact on the employee but also the organisation and colleagues. In response to the concerns raised the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised

that suspension is not a decision taken lightly and should be a last resort option. The proposed changes to the policy tighten up the procedure around suspension.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The impact and role of suspension be added to the Policy and Procedure.
3. A final draft be submitted back to the next meeting of the Joint Employee Council, following completion of consultation, prior to Cabinet approval.

(d) Living Wage Accreditation

Members were provided with an update on the Council's Living Wage Accreditation. The adoption of the Living Wage was approved by Cabinet in April 2013. Since then, considerable work has taken place to ensure Council employees earn a living wage; the scheme was backdated to 1st April 2013.

There is also a requirement to liaise with contractors whose staff work on Council premises for two or more hours per week for eight or more consecutive weeks per year, to try and ensure that those staff also receive a living wage. Three cases have been identified, discussions will be held with the contractors see if paying the living wage would be economically viable.

As a result of the work undertaken and planned to date, the Council has been successful in securing Living Wage accreditation. On 4th November the new Living Wage rate was announced as £7.65 per hour, up by 20p from £7.45 per hour.

The Chairman commented on the achievement as a result of working together. Bassetlaw District Council is the second authority in the East Midlands region to gain the accreditation. The majority of those with the accreditation in the Country are unitary authorities. He thanked everyone involved in gaining the accreditation.

RESOLVED that

1. The report be noted and the adoption of the new Living Wage rate, effective from 1st April 2014, be recommendation to Cabinet.
2. Thanks be recorded to P Rodgers for his work towards achieving the Living Wage accreditation
3. Thanks be recorded to K Childs, HR and OD Business Manager, for her work to secure the Living Wage accreditation.

27. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and after considering the public interest test as set out by the officer in the body of the report, Members agree that the following items of business involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1, 2 and 4, and, therefore, in accordance with Section 100A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting:

Agenda Item 7(a) – Staff Car Parking – Paragraphs 1 and 2

Agenda Item 7(b) - Review of Agency Workers – Paragraph 4

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

28. REPORT(S) OF THE EMPLOYERS REPRESENTATIVES

(a) **Staff Car Parking**

Members were presented with a report to consider revised staff car parking arrangements. An initial report was considered by the Joint Employee Council in March 2013 and it was agreed that comments should be invited from the Trade Unions. The Trade Union comments were appended to the report.

RESOLVED that a general review of car user allowances commence as soon as possible as part of the wider equal pay review.

(b) **Review of Agency Workers**

The Joint Employee Council were updated on the use of agency workers for the period 1st July to 30th September 2013. In addition following requests for further information at a previous meeting data was included detailing:

- Temporary staff
- Staff with flexible working arrangements
- Number of staff employed who have been previously employed by the Council
- Consultancy working

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted and option 1 be approved, to seek to reduce the incidence of agency working by requiring managers to complete the quarterly monitoring form.
2. Clarification be sought in relation to the shortfall of staff supplied by A1 Housing to cover seasonal work.

29. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

(a) **Armed Forces**

Councillor S May advised that at a recent Armed Forces meeting the issue of people in the armed forces being made redundant was discussed. She asked if there was anything the Council could do to help those returning to the community from the armed forces.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that a strategy and programme in terms of work experience for the long term unemployed, which would include the armed forces, is being looked at. He commented that he would be happy to attend a meeting to provide advice for example how to write a CV.

RESOLVED that the issue be noted and Councillor S May liaise with the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

As there was no other urgent business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for their work during the year and closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 3.40pm.)