

**CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF  
DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD**

**Employment Conditions Committee: 17 July 2006**

**Report of the Assistant Chief Executive**

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**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS MATTERS**

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**Background**

1. A meeting of the Works Council took place on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006. Under the Council's constitution employment issues are not matters for the Executive but require Council decision. Accordingly the minutes of the Works Council meeting are attached as Appendix A for the Committee's information, as agreed by Members and Trade Unions under the constitution of the Works Council.

**Issues**

The following issues were discussed

2. **Trade Unions' Access to Council's Intranet Site**

A very positive meeting had been held with the Trade Unions, Human Resources and ICT and a way forward has now been agreed.

3. **Sick Pay for Cleaners**

An in principle report had been agreed by Employment Conditions Committee in April to reinstate sick pay for all the Council's cleaners. A further report was to be considered at July's meeting outlining details of potential costs, process and timescales.

4. **Prime Rate - Tool Allowance**

A meeting had already taken place with the Trade Unions and information exchanged and a further meeting was to be arranged bring this matter to a conclusion.

5. **Making The Connections – Delivering Better Services for Wales (Standing Item)**

A DSU meeting was held on 26<sup>th</sup> May with Trade Unions and it had been agreed that a Trade Unions Stakeholders Group be established as part of the DSU Review Project. Meeting now scheduled for Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006 at Bessemer Close.

6. **Single Status and Job Evaluation (Standing Item)**

An update would be provided as part of today's agenda.

7. **Diversity Issues**

It was confirmed that following the presentation at the last Work's Council meeting, the Council has formally signed up to Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme.

8. **Partnership Approach – Future Plans**

The Trade Unions had been invited to a two day Partnership Workshop to be facilitated by Denis Gregory. Nominations from Service Areas had also been sought. The workshops would take place on the 10<sup>th</sup> July and the 6<sup>th</sup> September.

9. **Home Computing Initiative**

It was confirmed that in view of the benefits and tax breaks previously available under the Government's Home Computing Initiative being withdrawn from March 2006 as part of budget savings, the Council will therefore not be pursuing this initiative.

10. **The Work/Life Balance Initiative**

A presentation was made by Hayley Dunne, Business Development Manager and Jane Nyher, Service Business Development Officer, Chware Teg outlining the Work Life Balance Initiative and key partnership working opportunities for Cardiff Council. A Joint Steering Group to be established to take this issue forward.

11. **Making the Connections – Delivering Better Services for Wales**

The Chief Human Resources Officer gave a verbal update on progress made since the last meeting. There has been a positive response from the Assembly and a 12 month feasibility study has been agreed.

12. **Single Status and Job Evaluation Update**

A verbal update was provided on progress with the pilot Job Evaluation exercise. Additional temporary resources would be in post by July. The establishment of a Terms and Conditions working group to consider bonus, productivity arrangements, etc was agreed. An update report will be prepared for September meeting.

13. **In-House Occupational Health Service**

A presentation was made by Lyndon Davies, Senior Occupational Health Adviser (Human Resources) on proposals for in-house Occupational Health (OH) services. The OH team will help promote the positive image of the organisation in becoming an 'Employer of Choice' and will be a confidential and accessible Service which will fully comply with legislation and best practice.

14. **Sickness Absence Policy: Absence Management Group**

The revised Sickness Absence Policy refers to the establishment of an Absence Management Group which will review absence trends and patterns across the Council. This Group will include a Senior Trade Union representative, a Corporate Director and the Chief Human Resources Officer. A nomination was sought from the Trade Union Side to join this group. The Trade Unions requested time to nominate an agreed representative and confirmed that they would advise the Chief Human

Resources Officer prior to the proposed first meeting of that Group (Monday 24 July, 2006).

15. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that he would confirm these dates in writing to Members and Trade Unions following their ratification by Council on 22 June 2006.

16. **Service Area Joint Committees**

Dates for future Service Area Joint Committee meetings were circulated. A wide ranging discussion took place on the need for clarity in the referral process from Service Area Joint Committees to Works Council. Outstanding Service Area Joint Committee items would be resolved prior to the next Works Council meeting.

17. **Update on Creation of New Trade Union**

An update on national developments involving the GMB, TGWU and AMICUS to create a new Trade Union in 2007 was provided.

18. **Telematics Regrading Agreement**

It was confirmed that the original agreement will be honoured, i.e. regraded to the maximum of Scale 4 and that the Trade Unions would receive confirmation of this.

19. **Workplace Nurseries**

The Trade Unions raised concerns about impact of withdrawal of subsidy on parents. It was agreed that the Employee Childcare Survey should be discussed at next Works Council meeting to assess way forward on childcare options.

20. **Career Grades / Occupational Therapists Career Grade**

It was confirmed that the scheme for Occupational Therapists had been agreed from 1 April and those employees who wished to be considered should now complete the appropriate documentation and gather relevant evidence, as outlined under that scheme. It was agreed that details of all Council career grades should be collated and reviewed in consultation with the Trade Unions to ensure consistency.

21. **Essential Car Users Allowances**

The Trade Unions queried the inconsistent application of essential user allowances in that they had examples of staff who currently have written into their Job Descriptions that it is “essential “for them to use their own vehicle but they are only being paid casual car allowance. The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that this was an issue of direct relevance to Single Status and confirmed that this matter would be best considered under that project.

22. **Proposals**

It is proposed that the Employment Conditions Committee note the issues discussed at the Works Council and express any views it may have on these matters.

23. **Investment for Reform/Benefit to service user**

This report is for the information of the Committee.

24. **Council Policies Supported**

This report is for the information of the Committee.

25. **Advice**

This report has been prepared in consultation with relevant Corporate Directors and reflects their advice. It contains all the information necessary to allow Members to arrive at a reasonable view, taking into account the following advice.

26. **Legal Implications**

This is an information report and as such has no direct legal implications. Legal implications could arise should it be proposed to make policy decisions at some future date.

27. **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, a number of items referred to in the report may have financial issues which would need to be considered when they are reported upon separately.

28. **Human Resource Implications**

This report is for the information of the Committee.

29. **Trade Union Comments**

The Trade Union views on the matters discussed are recorded in the report and the attached minutes.

30. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Employment Conditions Committee note the issues discussed at Works Council and express any views it may have on these matters.

**JO FARRAR**  
**ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix A – Minutes of the Works Council 14 June 2006

WORKS COUNCIL  
14 June 2006

Present: Councillors Berman and Stephens

Approved

TU reps: Chris Alders, AEP  
Mike Love, Keith Greenslade, Andy Gardner, AMICUS  
Andy Davis, Mike Payne (FTO), GMB  
Gill Price, NATFHE  
Mike Formosa, Bob Clarke, John Toner (FTO), TGWU  
Martin Roberts, UCATT  
Mark Turner, Linda Webb-Thornton, Mike Hayes, UNISON

Officers: Philip Lenz, Bryan Johnson, Lynne David, Christina Lloyd, Jeremy Ashdown, Lyndon Davies - Human Resources, Ian Allwood – Financial Services

Others: Hayley Dunne, Business Development Manager and Jane Nyler, Business Development Officer of Chware Teg attended for Item 3: "The Work Life Balance Initiative"

Apologies: Councillors Sheppard , Walker & Walsh  
Jo Farrar, Assistant Chief Executive  
Del Jenkins, BECTU  
Ken Daniels, Derek Daniels GMB  
Nichola Burrows & Lawrence Coles, TGWU

## 1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2006 were approved as a correct record.

## 2. Matters Arising

A list of action points from the last meeting, detailing the current position on each item had been previously circulated with the agenda. The following matters were discussed.

Concern was expressed by the Trade Unions at the limited number of Elected Members in attendance at today's meeting and queried if there was a quorum at Works Council .The Chair advised that there was no quorum under the constitution and confirmed that apologies had been received from the other three Members. The Chair agreed to write to all Members of the Works Council with dates of future meetings and to remind them of the importance of attending these forums.

### **Trade Unions' Access to Council's Intranet Site**

A very positive meeting had been held with the Trade Unions, Human Resources and ICT and a way forward has now been agreed.

### **Sick Pay for Cleaners**

An in principle report had been agreed by Employment Conditions Committee in April to reinstate sick pay for all the Council's cleaners. A further report was to be considered at July's meeting outlining details of potential costs, process and timescales.

### **Prime Rate - Tool Allowance**

A meeting had already taken place with the Trade Unions and information exchanged. A further meeting was to be arranged bring this matter to a conclusion.

## **Making The Connections – Delivering Better Services for Wales (Standing Item)**

A DSU meeting was held on 26<sup>th</sup> May with Trade Unions and it had been agreed that a Trade Unions Stakeholders Group be established as part of the DSU Review Project. Meeting now scheduled for Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006 at Bessemer Close. It was noted that such updates should be in writing for future Works Council meetings.

## **Single Status and Job Evaluation (Standing Item)**

An update would be provided as part of today's agenda.

## **Diversity Issues**

It was confirmed that following the presentation at the last Work's Council meeting, the Council has formally signed up to Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme.

## **Partnership Approach – Future Plans**

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that the Trade Unions had been invited to a two day Partnership Workshop to be facilitated by Denis Gregory. Nominations from Service Areas had also been sought. The workshops would take place on the 10<sup>th</sup> July and the 6<sup>th</sup> September. A planning session between the Trade Unions and Dennis Gregory would take place following today's Work Council meeting.

At this point, UNISON raised a number of concerns they had about embarking on partnership training at a time when the Council did not appear to want to work on a genuine partnership basis. A number of examples were cited by UNISON to evidence this and included: involvement of Full Time Officials in the DSU project prior to consultation with local Trade Union representatives and contrary to the Council's own protocol agreement; the Council's unwillingness to either review the current Facilities /Time Off Agreement or implement it in full (i.e. lists of new starters still not being passed to Trade Unions); the Council's resistant stance towards the Additional Travel Allowances issue; non-response from management to a number of grievances raised and the raising of nursery fees without proper consultation.

UNISON felt that this was clear evidence that the Council was not wishing to work on a genuine partnership basis and on this basis they were unsure of the value of attending partnership workshops. In conclusion, they indicated their wish to reserve such judgment on UNISON's attendance or otherwise at these workshops until they had the Council response on a number of today's agenda items.

## **Home Computing Initiative**

It was confirmed that in view of the benefits and tax breaks previously available under the Government's Home Computing Initiative being withdrawn from March 2006 as part of budget savings, the Council will therefore not be pursuing this initiative.

## **Establishment of New Trade Union**

An update would be provided as part of today's agenda.

### **3. The Work Life Balance Initiative**

A presentation was made by Hayley Dunne, Business Development Manager and Jane Nyher, Service Business Development Officer, Chware Teg outlining the Work Life Balance Initiative and key partnership working opportunities for Cardiff Council.

The Work Life Balance Initiatives, launched in 2000 by the Department of Trade and Industry and funded by the government, was aimed at creating family friendly policies for the whole

workforce. Chware Teg has worked with over 50 organisations, and has collaborated with 3 Welsh local authorities, i.e. Wrexham, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend, on these issues.

#### Bridgend County Borough Council

- Worked with Trade Unions and managers to establish a Work Life Balance Strategy
- Introduced 12 month pilot programme and implemented various forms of homeworking
- Introduced childcare voucher scheme with 'Busybees' which was taken up by 30 employees.
- Flexitime bandwidth was increased and core hours were removed, the responsibility is now on employees to manage their own time within broad parameters and linked to business needs.

#### Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

- Pilot homeworking initiatives (e.g. Hotdesking)
- Culture Change and a huge shift in attitude towards flexible working

#### Wrexham County Borough Council

- Assessed the way they would need to work in future linked to customer/stakeholder requirements
- Employees can purchase additional Annual Leave if required
- Sickness Absence is 7.1 compared to a national average of 14.1%
- Outstanding case load in Social Care reduced from 60 to 15
- Able to offer services outside of the traditional 9to5 (e.g. 7am-7pm) which has met Customer expectations

#### What Worked Well

- Change in culture, acceptance that traditional ways of working are being challenged
- Collaborative working with Trade Unions
- Fair and equal treatment to all staff

#### Lessons Learned

- Takes time to embed strategy and ensure a gradual roll-out of programme and manage staff expectations and to work in partnership with Trade Unions and all stakeholders (Line Managers, IT, Health and Safety and HR Service Areas) throughout project
- Work Life Balance assists with recruitment and retention and helps improve loyalty of current staff. It also helps deal with stress and reduces absenteeism
- Workforce feels more valued helping to improve the external image of an organisation in becoming an 'employer of choice'
- Can be applied to a range of occupational groups across the organisation (e.g. care homes, parks, leisure centers) and is gender neutral

#### Benefits to consider

- Consultation groups with Trade Unions helps to spread benefits
- Can help improve and change culture through training for managers
- There must be a business case for approving flexible/homeworking for an individual. This would need to consider the impact on the individual, other people in the team and on the service areas clients and customers
- Whilst there has been some 'teething problems' in implementation with some local authorities it has proved to be extremely positive and beneficial. In all cases service delivery has been maintained and/or improved
- Trade Unions have had a positive role in the consultation process and have helped reduce and eliminate fear and scepticism.

The Chair thanked Hayley and Jane for their input and it was agreed that the Council would support the Work Life Balance Initiative and that a Joint Steering Group be established to take this issue forward.

#### **4. Making the Connections – Delivering Better Services for Wales (Standing Item)**

The Chief Human Resources Officer gave a verbal update on progress made since the last meeting. There has been a positive response from the Assembly to the South Eastern region proposal and a 12-month feasibility study has been agreed. The Assistant Chief Executive is to be requested to give a written update at the next meeting of Works Council.

#### **5. Single Status and Job Evaluation Update (Standing Item)**

A report was submitted to the last meeting of the Employment Conditions Committee establishing timescales for pilot job evaluation programme. It was anticipated that a total of 114 Job Description Questionnaires (JDQs) would be completed by the end of July. The JDQ's were being undertaken on site and at all hours so as to limit disruption to services being provided.

In relation to the additional resources secured for the Job Evaluation team to meet timescales, 4 temporary additional job analysts and two administrative staff have been recruited and would all be in post by July. This will enable the team to undertake more JDQs as they will have greater capacity. This would also mean a corresponding increase for Service Area Managers and Trade Unions participating in this process.

JDQs have now been completed for refuse collectors, solicitors and HR Advisors. The first briefing to Secondary Headteachers was undertaken recently and briefing packs have been circulated to School Governors. Validation panels will be established from the Summer as a pilot exercise progressed. The team has visited other local authorities (Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot) to learn from their experiences and to maintain and build networks with other authorities going through the same process.

The Joint Steering Group's next meeting is in July, and at its last meeting they agreed in principle to the establishment of a Terms and Conditions working group to consider bonus, productivity arrangements, etc. The first meeting of that Group was likely to be early July. An update report will be prepared for September to feed into the Autumn budget process.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and advised that 'Capitilisation' issues for Cardiff are not necessarily recognised by the Assembly in determining funds amongst all Welsh Councils. He welcomed support from Trade Unions on this issue.

#### **6. In-House Occupational Health Service**

A presentation was made by Lyndon Davies, Senior Occupational Health Adviser (Human Resources) on proposals for in-house Occupational Health (OH) services. Lyndon joined in February 2006 and since joining the authority, has met many Trade Unions and staff groups across the authority to understand the organisation and its expectations of the new service.

The OH team will help promote the positive image of the organisation in becoming an 'Employer of Choice' and will be a confidential and accessible Service which will fully comply with legislation and best practice. In addition to management referral, employees will be able to 'self-refer'. In addition the team will deal with pre-employment checks and promote and educate employees on Health and Wellbeing matters

The team will work with managers to recognise stress at an early stage and reduce it by using evidence-based courses and programmes. The OH Team will also support the work of the Health and Safety team in reducing occupational risks. Target health areas would include muscular-skeletal conditions, stress, infection, effects of heat/sun, noise and violence. Lyndon is keen for the



team to be proactive and follow-up on incidents and offer support, reassurance and help to remove and prevent unnecessary complications.

The OH service will play a major role in prevention and encourage health initiatives through OH intervention and case management through a prompt referral processes. Case review meetings will take place with management at regular periods. Lyndon confirmed that the OH team will not be a management tool or policing service but will be there to support.

The Trade Unions welcomed the in house Occupational Health Service and the envisaged improvements this would bring the organisation. The Trade Unions requested that doctors consider the Disability Discrimination Act and make suggestions for reasonable adjustments wherever possible. Lyndon advised that Line Managers could also suggest what can be done reasonably to assist an employee.

The Trade Unions were concerned that managers were sending employees home who were signed off by doctors as being declare 'fit for work'. Lyndon advised that managers would be required in future to contact OH should they have any concerns about an individual's health.

The need was emphasised for all to work together in building an OH service for Cardiff and an open invite was extended to Works Council Members and Trade Unions to visit the Bessemer Road facilities.

The Chair thanked Lyndon for his presentation and welcomed the progress made to date and the development of the in-house Occupational Health Service.

## **7. Sickness Absence Policy: Absence Management Group**

The revised Sickness Absence Policy refers to the establishment of an Absence Management Group which will review absence trends and patterns across the Council. This Group will include a Senior Trade Union representative, a Corporate Director and the Chief Human Resources Officer. A nomination was sought from the Trade Union Side to join this group. The Trade Unions requested time to nominate an agreed representative and confirmed that they would advise the Chief Human Resources Officer prior to the proposed first meeting of that Group (Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2006).

## **8. Dates of Future Meetings**

Provisional future dates of Works Council and Employment Conditions Committee were outlined as follows:

| <b>Provisional Dates of Future Works Council Meetings</b> |
|---|
| Wednesday 13 September 2006 at 2pm                        |
| Wednesday 13 December 2006 at 2pm                         |
| Wednesday 14 March 2007 at 2pm                            |
| Wednesday 13 June 2007 at 2pm                             |

| <b>Provisional Dates of proposed Employment Conditions Committee Meetings</b> |
|---|
| Monday 16 October 2006  |
| Monday 15 January 2007  |
| Monday 23 April 2007  |
| Monday 16 July 2007   |

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that he would confirm these dates in writing to Members and Trade Unions following their ratification by Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2006

## **9. Service Area Joint Committees**

The minutes of the following Service Area Joint Committees were attached to today's agenda for information only:

- *HANR – 8 February 2006*
- *Children's Services – 5 April 2006*
- *Corporate – 7 April 2006*
- *Adult Services – 7 April 2006*
- *Schools & Lifelong Learning – 11 May 2006*

Dates for future Service Area Joint Committee meetings were circulated. It was confirmed that the Corporate Joint Committee will now consider issues relating to Finance and ICT.

The GMB queried why a number of issues, discussed and agreed at the Adult Services JC for referral to Works Council, did not feature as part of agenda for today's meeting. The Chair confirmed that budget talks are now underway for 2007/8 and initial talks have taken place with Trade Unions which Service Areas have been asked to follow up. The Chief Human Resources Officer confirmed that talks are ongoing with the Corporate Director for Social Care regarding Career Grades for Occupational Therapists.

A wide ranging discussion took place on the need for clarity in the referral process from Service Area Joint Committees to Works Council. The Chair advised that it was important that issues should be addressed at the earliest opportunity and every effort should be made to resolve them at a local level by both sides. It was also important that the Chief Human Resources Officer was involved in consideration of any corporate issues as appropriate.

In response to Trade Union queries, the Chief Human Resources Officer advised that the establishment of Service Area Joint Committee meetings has only started recently and that it is a learning process for all involved. It was agreed that clear protocols about Member and/or Corporate Director involvement would need to be developed.

The meals on wheels service was discussed briefly. The Chair advised that he was not in favour of outsourcing the service but there are residual issues that need to be addressed. The Council wanted a service that met the needs of customers with a balanced budget. The GMB asked whether or not the £150,000 savings to be realised by Social Care is achievable. The Chair advised that he would hope that a large part is saved via the efficiency programme and it is more important to work with all service areas to balance the budget.

UNISON asked whether staff in Rothsey House (due to close) could request voluntary severance. It was confirmed that Human Resources would take this matter up as a matter of urgency with the relevant Chief Officer and advise the affected staff as quickly as possible.

The Trade Unions expressed their disappointment that the proposals for the School Reorganisation Plan had not been passed by Full Council.

It was agreed that all outstanding Service Area Joint Committee issues should be resolved prior to the next Works Council. Further, it was agreed to review the current process for referral to Works Council to determine a clear mechanism for referring any unresolved issues.

## **Trade Union Items**

### **10. Update on Creation of New Trade Union**

John Toner (Full Time Officer – TGWU) advised on latest national development in the creation of a new Trade Union, suggested in April 2005, involving an amalgamation of T&G and Amicus. An invitation was also sent to GMB for them to participate. A discussion paper was distributed to the three unions requesting feedback. T&G and AMICUS had sent a consultation paper to members and regions. GMB discussions still ongoing.

An Executive Document has also been published setting out purpose and giving an update on joint work undertaken to date and proposed new rules. It sets out the basis for a way forward to a legal

agreement. Once agreed, there will be a ballot to T&G and AMICUS members and possibly GMB. The ballot will take place end of 2006 / early 2007 and would have a major impact on industrial relations frameworks.

GMB stated that they are considering joining with T&G and AMICUS if it benefits their members but no agreement has taken place to date on regional structures. The GMB Congress will meet to discuss proposals.

The meeting was advised that there is a legal obligation to progress ballot before move to new union. AMICUS and T&G to proceed if GMB do not go forward. It is probably that there will be change but who it involves and how needs to be confirmed.

The Chair thanked John Toner for the update and confirmed that it is important that Works Council represents all Trade Unions and that a further update of merger talks will be provided at the next meeting of Works Council.

## **11. Telematics Regrading Agreement**

UNISON members in Telematics withdrew a call for a ballot for industrial action following long negotiations with the previous Chief Officer for Highways and Transportation and UNISON's Regional Officer, which resulted in an agreement for all staff concerned to be placed on the top of Scale 4.

UNISON advised that at a recent Traffic and Transportation Joint Committee, it was highlighted that it would be at the minimum point of Scale 4, which was not agreed by the Trade Unions.

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that following recent discussion with the Chief Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Officer, he had advised that whilst the financial impact was not budgeted for, the original agreement will be honoured, i.e. regraded to the maximum of Scale 4.

It was agreed that written confirmation to be sought from the Chief Transport Waste and Infrastructure Officer on agreement to pay top of Scale 4 for Telematics staff, backdated to 1st April 2006, with confirmation of payment date. Further, it was also agreed that where appropriate, the relevant Chief Officer/Corporate Director be invited to attend future Works Council on service specific issues not resolved at Service Area Joint Committee meetings.

## **12. Workplace Nurseries**

UNISON advised that the removal of the subsidy on Workplace Nurseries will place an unreasonably high burden on those parents with children at the Nurseries. UNISON believed that this was unfair as staff cannot afford the increases. They advised that they consider the provision of a workplace nursery to be contractual and that their members have submitted a grievance for consideration. However, those grievances have not been heard to date and UNISON may progress to Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure for it to be heard within 28 days. UNISON believed that this could force some staff to leave resulting in potential claims for constructive dismissal.

The Chair advised that unfortunately there were a limited number of places available and they are excellent nurseries with high standards of care which the Council would not wish to compromise. The Council is looking at other options to perhaps expand nursery provision. He confirmed that new entrants from September will be required to pay the new charge. Childcare vouchers are also going to be considered, based on the outcome of the Employee Survey, facilitated back in April by the Daycare Trust.

UNISON suggested that nurseries should be funded corporately through Service Areas based on number of employees using nurseries rather than through Children Services. The Chair confirmed that this was not sustainable financially due to annual fluctuations of staff using the nursery.

It was agreed that the Employee Childcare Survey should be discussed at next Works Council meeting to assess way forward on childcare options.

A working group has already been established comprising of Trade Unions and representatives from HR and other Service Areas to work with the Daycare Trust in developing employer sponsored childcare schemes. Arrangements would be made to include parent representatives as part of that group in determining the way forward for the councils future employee childcare provision.

### **13. Career Grades / Occupational Therapists Career Grade**

The GMB raised the general issue of career grades, and in particular, if there is to be a bar on progression through grades, criteria needs to be agreed on what qualifications/competencies are to be used. This is currently not the case and a set of inconsistent and disparate criteria are being used, not just across the Council but also within service areas.

UNISON advised that although the Occupational Therapists Career Grade was agreed with the Chief Officer over a year ago, it has still not been implemented. Members of staff affected were given a commitment at the start of this financial year that the Career Grade would be implemented this year. It has not yet been implemented and concern was expressed over wide range of career grades and use of competencies.

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that whilst there were initially some financial matters to be resolved, the scheme for Occupational Therapists had been agreed from 1<sup>st</sup> April and those employees who wish to be considered should now complete the appropriate documentation and gather relevant evidence, as outlined under that scheme. UNISON advised that if finance was to be an issue in establishing career grades, that they should be part of the negotiation meetings.

The Chair advised that whilst he is supportive of establishing Career Grade Schemes, there must be balanced budget processes to ensure there is no overspend.

It was agreed that details of all Council career grades should be collated and reviewed in consultation with the Trade Unions to ensure consistency, particularly concerning the use of broad career bands and competencies.

### **14. Essential Car Users Allowances**

The GMB queried the inconsistent application of essential user allowances in that they had examples of staff who currently have written into their Job Descriptions that it is "essential" for them to use their own vehicle but they are only being paid casual car allowance. They considered it was being implemented inconsistently across the Council and needed to be addressed corporately. They considered that if it was essential for employees to have access to a car to carry out their jobs, that they should be paid an Essential Car User allowance.

The AEP raised a similar issue and have cited the example of Educational Psychologists who undertake visits to many locations but who are only paid casual user car allowance.

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that under the National Terms and Conditions for employees, the guidance and definitions of essential users was very general and thus opens to wide interpretation which inevitably led to anomalies. As part of Terms and Conditions discussions in 1998, a proposal for dispensing with the differentiation between essential and casual users and using instead a flat rate for car use had not been supported by the Trade Unions.

The Chief Human Resources Officer advised that this was an issue of direct relevance to Single Status and confirmed that this matter would be best considered under that project. The Chief Human Resources Officer advised on the historical background to the implementation of the National Single Status Agreement and that whilst delays had been experienced in the past for a variety of reasons, it was hoped that matters could now be taken forward with Trade Unions, Service Area Managers and Elected Members.