

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

Employment Conditions Committee: 16 October 2006

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

Employee Relations Matters

Background

1. A meeting of the Works Council took place on 13th September 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. **Sick Pay for Cleaners**

The Chair confirmed that a report, outlining details of potential costs, process and timescales was considered at July's Employment Conditions Committee where it was agreed that 1st April 2007 was the agreed date for implementation of payments. Further meetings between the relevant Service Areas and Trade Unions will be arranged to implement these arrangements.

3. **Work Life Balance Strategy**

A very positive briefing session was held with Trade Unions on the 28th June, 2006 and discussion that followed highlighted that WLB was a possibility for all employees and not just those with family or caring responsibilities or those in 'white collar' positions. A second Trade Union Briefing session was scheduled for the 27th September, 2006.

4. **Making the Connections – Delivering Better Services for Wales (standing item)**

The Assistant Chief Executive referred to the July 2006 Executive Business Meeting report, circulated as part of the agenda which provided a summary on progress made since the last meeting. Two major projects have been identified – Shared Services, on which Cardiff Council is the lead and a second, Waste Management of which there is no progress to report to date

The feasibility study will be prepared by a mixed Project Team from South East Wales Local Authorities and independent consultants. Services identified as the

initial key areas for the study to focus on Payroll and staff records, Council Tax and NNDR, Debt Recovery, Training, Internal Audit, IT and Procurement.

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

A further update on progress was made and included a proposed change to the Job Evaluation process for the roll out of job evaluation to the rest of the Council. The first Validation Panel was also held on 5th September and moderated the Cleansing Operatives posts. More Validation Panels will be set up in October and November to complete the process. A Terms and Conditions Working Group had also been established and the first meeting was held at the end of July.

The Steering Group therefore agreed in principle to a change in the Job Evaluation process and that a modified approach of a “Workshop Process” be implemented for the 2nd stage roll out of job evaluation to the rest of the Council. This approach was still very postholder friendly, maintains the Trade Union and line manager involvement in the process and will be discussed at the next Steering Group meeting.

6. In-House Occupational Health Service

The in house OHS has been providing a service to the Council from the 11th September. A second Occupational Health Adviser and a medical secretary have now been appointed.

7. Sickness Absence Policy : Absence Management Group

The Trade Unions were reminded of their crucial role in this group and were asked to agree a nominee for the 2nd meeting which was scheduled for 21st November at 3.00 pm.

8. Date of Future Meetings

An updated schedule of Trade Union meetings was circulated to all.

9. Service Area Joint Committees

Until such time as a review of the Council’s Employee Relations Framework was completed, an interim mechanism involving Corporate Directors for referring future items from Service Area Joint Committee to Works Council was agreed.

10. Childcare Survey

A presentation was made by Brenda Davis, Childcare Projects Officer on the Cardiff Childcare Workforce Survey carried out, by the Daycare Trust on Council employees.

The survey results showed that there was support for the introduction of a voucher scheme. Some insufficiencies around holiday childcare and out of school facilities were highlighted and the need for better understanding of flexible working practices was identified. The conclusions were that employer sponsored childcare would benefit individuals and thereby the organisation as it would demonstrate a commitment to the Work-Life Balance, give the Council a competitive edge as an

employer of choice, would aid recruitment and retention and help reduce sickness absence.

A Working Group, comprising Trade Unions, managers and parent representatives, will be convened to consider the issues and options for the delivery of a voucher scheme.

11. Partnership Working with the Trade Unions

Following 2 recent Partnership Training Workshops, which involved Service Area Managers and the Trade Unions, a number of initiatives needing priority attention were identified, including a review of the Facilities Agreement and the Employee Relations Framework.

12. Budget Update

A verbal update was provided on the projected overspend within Adults Services and the measures to be put in place to limit its impact. It was confirmed that the budget for 2007/8 was likely to be difficult and that Service Areas were already considering how best to meet the prescribed level of savings required. The Trade Unions would continue to be consulted on these matters throughout this period.

13. Service Area Joint Committees – Issues for Works Council (Standing Item)

It was confirmed there were no issues to be brought forward from any Service Area Joint Committee.

14. Prime Rate

It was confirmed that the Chair had agreed in principle to proceed. However in view of certain issues raised, a meeting will be scheduled with Schools and Lifelong Learning to resolve the issue of funding.

15. Essential Car Users Allowances

The principle was discussed at last Works Council and in the light of the Trade Unions' concerns, it was suggested that the matter be referred to the next meeting of the Terms and Conditions Working Group whose remit was to consider a range of Single Status issues.

16. 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.

17. Investment for Reform/Benefit to service user

This report is for the information of the Committee.

18. Council Policies Supported

This report is for the information of the Committee.

19. **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.

20. **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.

21. **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.

22. **Human Resource Implications**

This report is for the information of the Committee.

23. **Trade Union Comments**

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

24. **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 13 September 2006

APPENDIX A

WORKS COUNCIL

13 September 2006

Present: Councillors Berman, Sheppard and Stephens.

Approved

TU reps:

Chris Alders, AEP
Mike Love, Andy Gardner, AMICUS
Andy Davis, GMB
Ken Daniels, Derek Daniels GMB
Gill Price, NATFHE
Bob Clarke, Lawrence Coles TGWU
Ian Titherington, Mark Turner UNISON

Officers: Jo Farrar, Assistant Chief Executive , Christine Salter, Philip Lenz, Bryan Johnson, Lynne David, Pete Charles, Norah O'Leary - Human Resources.

Others: Brenda Davis , Childcare Projects Officer from Schools & Lifelong Learning attended for Item 5 "Childcare Survey"

Apologies:

Councillors Walker & Walsh
Del Jenkins, BECTU
John Evans, NAHT
Linda Webb-Thornton, UNISON

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2006 were approved as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

An update was given regarding Sick Pay for cleaners. The Chair confirmed that a report, outlining details of potential costs, process and timescales was considered at July's Employment Conditions Committee where it was agreed that 1st April 2007 as the agreed date for implementation of payments. Further meetings between the relevant Service Areas and Trade Unions will be arranged to implement these arrangements .The affected staff would also be advised of these proposals and timescales for implementation, including the issue of revised contracts of employment, as appropriate.

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.

Work Life Balance Strategy

A very positive briefing session was held with Trade Unions on the 28th June 2006, the presentation and discussion that followed highlighted that the WLB was a possibility for all employees and not just those with family or caring responsibilities or those in 'white collar' positions.

A second Trade Union briefing session was scheduled for the 27th September. Steering Group and Project Group representation will be discussed and Terms of Reference developed and agreed at that meeting.

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

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

Single Status and Job Evaluation (Standing Item)

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

In-House Occupational Health Service

The in house OHS has been providing a service to the Council from the 11th of September. A second Occupational Health Adviser, Tony Matthews and a medical secretary have now been appointed.

An invitation letter was circulated to Trade Unions inviting them to visit the OHS premises at Bessemer close on the 18th September '06 at 2.00pm.

Sickness Absence Policy: Absence Management Group

Although a nomination had been required, there had been no Trade Union representative present at the first meeting which had taken place 24th July. The Trade Unions were reminded of their crucial role in this group and asked to have a nominee decided in time for the next meeting which was scheduled for 21st November 'at 3.00pm.

Trade Unions commented that they had not had the opportunity to meet and discuss this issue due to the number of other commitments they had.

Date Of Future Meetings

An updated meeting schedule of Trade Union meetings was circulated to all. The meeting was advised that Human Resources had met with the new Chief Officer for Strategic Planning & Environment, Sean Hannaby, regarding the setting up of his Service Area Joint Committee and to discuss budget issues. These meetings with the Trade Unions would be scheduled shortly.

Service Area Joint Committees

A meeting had already taken place with the Trade Unions to discuss a clear mechanism for referring future items from Service Area Joint Committees to Works Council. An interim arrangement was agreed upon, whereby the issue would be referred to the Corporate Director for resolution as opposed to waiting for the following Works Council meeting. If the issue is not resolved at that level it can then be referred to the Works Council for resolution. A flowchart representing this process was circulated to all and the interim arrangement was agreed. This arrangement would remain in place until such time as the review of the Employee Relations Framework, agreed during the recent Partnership workshops involving Trade Unions and Service Area Managers, was completed.

Update of Creation of New Trade Union

There was no update on progress since the previous Works Council.

Telematics Regrading Agreement

This issue has now been resolved.

Workplace Nurseries

A presentation on childcare will be provided as part of today's agenda.

Career Grades / Occupational Therapists Career Grade

The career grade issue in Adults Services was now resolved. Work was underway in collating information on career grades across the Council to ensure consistency of application.

Essential Car Users Allowances

Trade Unions raised concerns over the inconsistent application of essential and casual Car Users Allowance and the use of statements in Person Specifications requiring individuals to have a driving license but not necessarily entitling them to essential car user allowance. The Trade Unions commented there were ongoing queries in particular from Home Carers, as to when the issue would be rectified.

The Chair confirmed that the principle was discussed at last Works Council and in the light of the Trade Unions' concerns, he suggested that the matter be referred to the next meeting of the Terms and Conditions Working Group whose remit was to consider a range of Single Status issues.

3. Making the Connections – Delivering Better Services for Wales (standing item)

The Assistant Chief Executive discussed points from the Executive Business Meeting report circulated as part of the agenda which provided a summary on progress made since the last meeting. Two major projects have been identified – Shared Services, on which Cardiff Council is the lead and a second, Waste Management, of which there is no progress to report to date.

The Steering Group have put out to tender for consultants to carry out the feasibility study. At this stage a preferred supplier has been identified, details of which will be confirmed at the next Works Council meeting. The feasibility study will be prepared by a mixed ProjectTeam from South East Wales Local Authorities and independent consultants. The following services have been identified as the initial key areas for the study to focus on Payroll and staff records, Council Tax and NNDR, Debt Recovery, Training, Internal Audit, IT and Procurement. It was hoped that the feasibility study would be completed by the end of November.

4. Single Status and Job Evaluation Update (Standing Item)

Regular reports have been provided to the Works Council on the progress of the Job Evaluation Pilot Exercise. The report given provided a further update on the progress made and advised on the proposed change to the Job Evaluation Process in the roll out of job evaluation to the rest of the Council.

Key Tasks Undertaken

All staff groups and managers whose posts are included in the Pilot Exercise have received a briefing session on the process to be undertaken and these have been well received by the staff. Over 180 JDQ interviews had been carried out by the end of August and it was likely that the remaining interviews will be completed by mid September. Job Analysts have entered most of the JDQ's into the computer package and have started the checking and sending out of the JAR's. This process has commenced for Cleansing Operatives, Cleaners (Parks), Human Resources Lead Advisers, Solicitors and Legal Assistants and Cooks. The first Validation Panel was also held on 5th September and moderated the Cleansing Operatives posts. More Validation Panels will be set up in September and October to complete the process.

As part of the programme of work, the Steering Group also agreed to set up a Terms and Conditions Working Group. The first meeting of this Group was held at the end of July and was a positive meeting. Terms of Reference were agreed along with an agreement to an audit of terms and conditions with the issue of bonus schemes being reviewed as a priority. This Group will also meet on a monthly basis.

Roll Out of the 2nd Stage of the Job Evaluation Process

One of the purposes of the Pilot Exercise was to “test the job evaluation process and determine whether or not it needs amending before the main exercise is undertaken”. It was therefore decided by the Steering Group that discussions on the options for a job evaluation process for the 2nd stage should commence in advance of the roll out to the rest of the Council so that there could be a smooth transition following the completion of the Pilot.

Officers of the Job Evaluation Unit therefore visited a number of Local Authorities in the South Wales area to discuss and review with them their job evaluation processes and to learn from their experiences. At the last meeting of the Steering Group presentations were made by officers and trade union representatives of Caerphilly and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Councils on their job evaluation processes.

The views of the Steering Group were then sought on the presentations made by both Councils in regard to adopting similar approaches for the future roll out of the 2nd stage of job evaluation within Cardiff. There was an overall consensus of opinion within the Steering Group that a change was needed to speed up the process whilst still maintaining a very “postholder friendly” approach.

The Steering Group therefore agreed in principle to a change in the Job Evaluation process and that a modified approach of a “Workshop Process” be implemented for the 2nd stage roll out of job evaluation to the rest of the Council. This approach is still very postholder friendly and maintains the trade union and line manager involvement in the process. A draft process is currently being discussed by the Steering Group.

The manager of the Unit thanked the Trade Unions for their involvement throughout and made the following recommendation “that Works Council note the excellent progress made to date on the Job Evaluation Pilot Exercise and endorse the change in the process for the 2nd stage of the roll out of job evaluation within the Council”.

The report was welcomed by the Trade Unions who then went on to raise the issue of how the Council intended to fund back pay. The Chair advised that the WLGA was currently looking at the issue and the potential of capitalising costs.

5. **Childcare Survey**

In 2005, Daycare Trust was commissioned to undertake a range of work relating to development of employer-supported childcare schemes in Cardiff. An element of this project included research into the childcare needs of Cardiff Council employees through a comprehensive survey.

A presentation was made by Brenda Davis, Childcare Projects Officer on the Cardiff Childcare Workforce Survey carried out, the aim of which was to

- Identify new funding solutions to enhance Cymorth Fund resources
- Research and develop new structures for the strategic planning of childcare places in Cardiff
- Consider long term sustainability of funding for childcare provision.

The survey was circulated to all employees including those on maternity and paternity leave in April 2006 payslips and was also available on Cardiff Councils website. Of the 18,000 distributed, 730 were returned reflecting a response rate of 4.83%.

The number of responses and the range of comments made suggests that childcare is a significant issue amongst employees of Cardiff Council and is an ongoing issue for male and female employees across all levels and service areas, not just for those who currently have children. The survey results showed that there was support for the introduction of a voucher scheme, some highlighted some insufficiencies around holiday childcare and out of school facilities and identified the need for better understanding of flexible working practices. The conclusions were that employer sponsored childcare would benefit individuals and thereby the organisation as it would demonstrate a commitment to the Work-life Balance Strategy, give the Council a competitive edge as an employer of choice, would aid recruitment and retention and help reduce sickness absence.

The report made the following recommendations;

- Firstly, a more flexible approach to flexitime.
- Secondly, better information about childcare and financial support for childcare (particularly) tax credits to assist employees plan for their childcare needs.
- Finally, that the Council introduce a Salary Sacrifice scheme for childcare vouchers.

It was therefore proposed that the Working Group, comprising Trade Unions, managers and Parent representatives, should be convened to consider the issues and options around the delivery of a voucher scheme. An update report would be submitted to this meeting in December with fully costed recommendations going forward to Employment Conditions Committee in January 2007 for their consideration. The Chair thanked Brenda for her presentation and the detailed information packs which were also circulated at the meeting.

6. Partnership Working with the Trade Unions

The Chief Human Resources Officer gave a verbal update on the 2 Partnership Training Workshops held to date which involved Service Area Managers and the Trade Unions. He circulated a handout which captured comments from the Workshops. The Trade Unions confirmed that the two workshops held proved a very useful exercise and have already highlighted a number of initiatives needing priority attention. Key areas for joint review were highlighted as the Facilities Agreement and the Employee Relations Framework. Arrangements would be made to take these matters forward

7. Budget Update

The Chair provided a verbal update. He advised on the projected overspend within Adults Services this year which would necessitate a contribution from all Service Areas. Adults Services had already put a number of measures in place to limit the impact of the projected overspend. In response to a Trade Union question, the Chair clarified that the projected overspend was due to

a number of factors including statutory care requirements and the transition of service users from Childrens to Adult care arrangements and the associated costs.

He explained that the budget for 2007/8 was likely to be difficult and that Service Areas were already considering how best to meet the prescribed level of savings required. He outlined the Autumn timetable for this process and advised that the Trade Unions would continue to be consulted on these matters throughout this period.

8. Service Area Joint Committees – Issues for Works Council (Standing Item)

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

- *Transport, Infrastructure and Waste – 25 May 2006*
- *Transport, Infrastructure and Waste – 27 July 2006*
- *Corporate – 20 July 2006*
- *Schools & Lifelong Learning – 6 July 2006*

The Chief Human Resources Officer confirmed there were no issues to be brought forward to Works Council at this time.

9. Trade Union Items

Prime Rate

Following a number of discussions and meetings, an update on the current position has been requested by the Trade Union. The Chair advised he had met with officers that morning and had agreed in principle to proceed. However in view of certain issues raised a meeting will be scheduled with Schools and Life Long Learning to resolve issue of funding.

10. A.O.B.

Pension Panel

- The Chair advised that the Pension Panel had met that morning and reported that the Fund had achieved an annual return of 24.4% in 2005/06 which was in line with the scheme specific benchmark. A summary of the year's performance will be included with the October payslips.
- The Chair further advised that Paul Keeping had been appointed as Operational Manager for Equalities & Diversity. He confirmed that he was due to meet Paul in the next few weeks and that he would be suggesting that a report be considered here in December on the Equalities and Diversity agenda and its challenges for the Council.