

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 17th October, 2016.

Present: Councillor G. Roberts (Chairman); Councillors K. Hatton, A.G. Powell, Mrs. A.J. Preston and C.J. Williams.

Representatives of the Trade Unions: Mr. N. Stokes (GMB), Mr. G. Pappas (UNISON), Mr. D. Dimmick (NASUWT), Ms. M. Canavan (NUT), Mr. S.J. Robertson (UNITE), Mr. K.J. Armstrong (UNISON) and Mrs. G. Southby (UNISON).

Officers: Mr. R. Bergman, Mr. A. Unsworth, Mrs. A. Davies, Mrs. P. Ham, Mr. H. Isaac, Mrs. S. Clifton, Mrs. C. Mason, Ms. E. Morgan and Mrs. K. Bowen.

(a) Apologies for Absence -

These were received from Councillors F.T. Johnson, Mrs. M. Kelly Owen and Mr. T. Greaves (GMB).

(b) Minutes and Matters Arising -

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July, 2016 be approved as a correct record subject to amendments to those present being amended to read Mr. D. Dimmick, Mr. S.J. Robertson, Mrs. G. Southby and Ms. M. Canavan. Officers also in attendance that day were Mr. A. Unsworth and Ms. C. Mason and apologies for absence be included for Mrs. S. Clifton.

In considering any matters arising, Mr. Pappas, UNISON, referred to item (e), school support staff in Vale Schools, advising that since the last meeting of the JCF there had been an agreement to implement salary protection and redeployment arrangements with both sides still discussing the length of the consultation process. Mr. Stokes stated that a degree of urgency was required in dealing with this matter with the Council needing to consider the issue in a positive way.

With specific reference to Penarth Learning Community caretakers, Mr. Pappas advised that there were a number of local issues that needed to be resolved. The Interim Director of Learning and Skills advised that such local issues should be addressed by the school. Mrs. Davies in response advised that a letter had been forwarded to Headteachers with reference made to standards, risk assessment and competency. In conclusion, the Head of Human Resources considered that progress had therefore been made.

Mr. Pappas requested an update on how many people were using the Care First facility. Mrs. Davies responded that the first quarter's report had recently been received and following analysis a report would be brought to the JCF. Mr. Dimmick stated that he had received a report in respect of the Freephone service from a

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member of staff who had informed him that they had contacted the number provided and was told that the initial discussion would be dealt with over the telephone. The member of staff was not satisfied with this course of action as they had wanted a face to face discussion. The Head of Human Resources requested Mr. Dimmick to provide further information on this matter in order to pursue it.

(c) Declarations of Interest -

Councillors G. Roberts and A.G. Powell declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 7 Reshaping Services update in that they were Members of Town Councils with permission from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on the matter.

(d) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Groups -

The minutes of the following Directorate Consultative Groups were received:

- Resources - 21st July, 2016
- Social Services - 20th July, 2016
- Visible Services and Housing - 8th June, 2016
- Visible Services and Housing - 6th July, 2016
- Visible Services and Housing - 14th September, 2016
- Learning and Skills - 5th October, 2016.

In referring to the meeting of Learning and Skills on 5th October, 2016, Mr. Pappas referred to the number of redundancies to date at Ty Deri and advised that there were a number of ongoing issues. The Interim Director of Learning and Skills advised that the Department was currently looking at a number of options but no decision had been made to date on the provision. Mr. Pappas' concerns were that he understood that the school could potentially lose a number of highly qualified staff which would mean that it would be very difficult to retrieve all those skills and that pre-planning was key. The Interim Director advised that the service was still running as a facility but there had been a reduction in demand and the loss of staff reflected that situation.

Mr. Stokes referred to current proposals regarding the facility at Rhoose Road and wondered whether there was potential for residents to use the facility at Ty Deri. Ms. Clifton advised that consultation in relation to Rhoose Road had just been completed and that she would have a conversation with the responsible officer. The Interim Director further advised that the options that were currently being put forward to the Council's Business Cabinet to facilitate a strategic approach.

Mrs. Southby advised that from a human perspective she considered that the services provided at Rhoose Road were excellent. Aware that Business Cabinet would be considering options, the Chairman requested that an update be presented to the JCF in due course.

In referring to the proposals for two new secondary schools in Barry, Mr. Dimmick took the opportunity to thank the Local Authority for the letter that was sent to staff in respect of this matter. With regard to any advice that would be forwarded to the new

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Governing Bodies regarding the restructuring of schools, Mr. Dimmick urged that this information also be shared with Trade Unions. The Interim Director confirmed that she would make the necessary arrangements.

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the Directorate Consultative Group meetings be noted.

(e) Dates of Directorate Consultative Group Meetings for Noting -

AGREED - T H A T the following dates for Directorate Consultative Group Meetings as detailed below be noted:

- Resources - 20th October, 2016
- Social Services - 11th October, 2016
- Visible Services and Housing - 5th October, 2016.

(f) Corporate Assessment 2016 -

The Head of Performance and Development presented the report advising that the Corporate Assessment had sought to answer the question “Is the Council capable of delivering its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens?”. The Vale had received a positive outcome as a result of the Assessment. He indicated that no recommendations had been made by the Wales Audit Office albeit there were a small number of proposals for improvement under the headings Performance Management, Finance, ICT and Asset Management. The Forum was further advised that officers were currently working on an Implementation Plan with the intention of a report to be presented to Cabinet in January 2017.

There being no discussion on the report, the Chairman took the opportunity to congratulate all on an excellent report and took the opportunity to thank the Trade Unions for their level of co-operation during the process.

(g) Reshaping Services Update -

The Head of Performance and Development, in presenting the report, advised that the purpose of the report was to provide the JCF with the details of the latest update for September 2016 on the reshaping services programme and stated that a more detailed version had been submitted to Cabinet which was also available on the Council’s website. The overall summary included a financial summary, details of service specific projects, corporate projects, risks and issues log. In referring to the RAG status the Head of Service advised that the measurement was a subjective judgement and that most, although not all had savings targets attributed to them. By way of explanation the Head of Service stated that if a project was unable to achieve target this would be described as red, if an expectation of approximately six months to achieve target was envisaged this would generally be referenced as amber.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted.

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(h) Update on Staff Engagement Strategy -

The Head of Human Resources advised that the Staff Charter had been officially launched on 19th September, 2016 following a year-long engagement exercise with staff from across the Council. Copies of the Staff Charter were also available at the meeting for Members of the JCF.

The Charter had been a significant product as a result of the process and part of the Reshaping Services agenda. An Employee Survey had also been forwarded to all staff and to date the percentage that had been returned equated to 33%. The Head of Service took the opportunity to urge all present, to encourage their colleagues to respond. Mr. Pappas confirmed that having discussed the Charter with a number of his colleagues they were very supportive of the Charter. The Head of Service further informed Members of the JCF that the new Council appraisal scheme and Management of Attendance Policy were also in place.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted.

(i) Managing Attendance at Work Policy Update -

Members were reminded that agreement had been reached in June 2016 with the Council's Green Book Single Status Trade Unions and the new policy had been launched on 1st October, 2016. The intention was to review the policy with trade union colleagues on a six-monthly basis over the next 18 months. A meeting had been arranged during the week to review the policy following its launch in the previous few weeks.

Following queries in relation to sickness absence, the Head of Human Resources advised that at the end of the previous financial year, long term absence had increased from 67% to 69% and short term absence was 31%. It was noted that full details of sickness absence was monitored by the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee with some general information being provided to all Scrutiny Committees under the new Performance Framework system.

The Head of Service confirmed that over the last six months there had been a reduction in the level of overall absence. Trade Union representatives concurred that a review of the policy on a six month basis was important. Whilst accepting that the Policy had been agreed by his Single Status colleagues, Mr. Dimmick suggested that the reference on the first page of the document "Improving Attendance and Wellbeing" should read "Supporting Wellbeing and Improving Attendance".

Following the discussion in relation to supporting staff being one of the aims of the Policy, the Chairman requested that any views on the Policy should be considered as part of the review process.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted.

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(j) Feedback on Policy Development -

The Human Resources Officer for Policy advised that since the last JCF meeting in July 2016, a First Aid at Work Policy had been approved. The Change Forum had considered the Salary Protection Local Agreement with the report, advising that further issues to be clarified prior to proceeding related to the Flex Scheme, Special Leave Scheme, Violence and Aggression at Work.

The Chairman, in conclusion, stated that in his view the work undertaken showed an improvement in where the Council was at to the previous year.

Although there were no Trade Union items reported on the agenda for this meeting, the Chairman requested that should there be any items from the Trade Unions for the next meeting, these be placed first on the agenda.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted and any Trade Union items to be reported at the next meeting be placed first on the agenda.