

No.

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 13th February, 2017.

Present: Councillor G. Roberts (Chairman); Councillors K. Hatton and A.G. Powell.

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

Officers: Ms. S. Alderman, Mr. R. Bergman, Mrs. S. Clifton, Mrs. A. Davies, Mrs. P. Ham, Mr. H. Isaac, Mrs. C. Mason, Mrs. L. Mills, Ms. A. Rudman, Ms. I. Thornton and Mr. A. Unsworth.

(a) Apologies for Absence -

These were received from Councillors F.T. Johnson, Mrs. M. Kelly Owen and Mrs. A.J. Preston, Mr. T. Greaves (GMB) and Mr. R. Hughes (UNISON).

(b) Minutes and Matters Arising -

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17th October, 2016 be approved as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

(c) Declarations of Interest -

Councillors K. Hatton and G. Roberts declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 8 - Reshaping Services Update. The nature of the interest was that they were Members of Town Councils with permission from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on the matter.

(d) Trade Union Items -

No Trade Union items were received.

Mr. Pappas raised the issue of outstanding policies and asked whether this could be addressed at the Employment, Policy Formulation and Review Group. The Operational Manager for Human Resources confirmed that it could be.

(e) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Groups -

The minutes of the following Directorate Consultative Groups were received:

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- Resources - 20th October, 2016
- Resources - 26th January, 2017
- Social Services - 11th October, 2016
- Social Services - 23rd November, 2016
- Social Services - 15th December, 2016
- Social Services - 19th January, 2017
- Visible Services and Housing - 5th October, 2016
- Visible Services and Housing - 2nd November, 2016
- Visible Services and Housing - 11th January, 2017.

Mr. Pappas expressed concern about the level of monies being spent on agency staff. At present, there were 91 full time posts being filled by agency workers in one service area and further advised that there had been a number of accidents involving these staff.

The Chairman expressed the view that this was a general policy matter and queried whether it could be raised at a more appropriate forum. The Head of Human Resources advised that a current work stream was considering the matter of third party spending, one of which was in relation to agency staff, and advised that he would bring this matter to the Change Forum. The Chairman suggested that it could also be brought to the JCF as a potential future item.

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

(f) 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:

- Learning and Skills - 1st February, 2017
- Resources - 27th April, 2017
- Social Services - 2nd March, 2017
- Visible Services and Housing - 1st February, 2017.

(g) Minutes of Corporate Health and Safety - 5th December, 2016 -

In making reference to a query raised by C. Jordan at the 5th December meeting, the Corporate Health and Safety Officer informed the Forum that the clinics for staff injections were starting on 17th February, 2017.

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety meeting held on 5th December, 2016 be noted.

(h) Reshaping Services Update -

The Head of Performance and Development presented an update report on the implementation of the Reshaping Services Programme, which had been considered by Cabinet on 23rd January, 2017.

The Officer advised that the Reshaping Services Programme aimed to address the unprecedented financial challenges by re-shaping Council services to meet the future needs of the citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan. The programme comprised three inter-related workstreams of projects as follows:

- Service specific workstream projects
- Corporate workstream projects
- Programme activity.

The Officer provided the Forum with an update in regard to the progress of these three workstreams.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted.

(i) Staff Charter - Update from Employee Survey -

The Head of Human Resources apprised the Forum of the positive results from the recent 2016 Employee Survey and related activity as part of the promotion of the Staff Charter.

The survey ran for a period of 6 weeks from 19th September, 2016 to 30th October, 2016 with the aim of gathering opinions on 20 staff expectations, as set out in the Staff Charter. Employees were asked to score each assertion by reference to the following scale:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree.

The survey was sent to a total of 2,563 employees. 61% of the surveys were sent electronically (via email); the remaining 39% were sent via hard copy to home addresses. The overall return rate for the Employee Survey was 1,240, which was 48% of all employees.

The Head of Human Resources apprised the Forum as to the key outcomes of the survey as follows:

- The overall average response rate to the 20 expectations within the Staff Charter was 71% (i.e. strongly agreeing or agreeing). This was an

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encouragingly high score and would set the benchmark for future engagement work and subsequent surveys.

- The level of positive responses was relatively high across all Directorates ranging from 68% in the Learning and Skills and Environment and Housing Directorates to 76% in the Managing Director and Resources Directorate.
- The level of positive responses from within the 17 service areas was slightly more diverse ranging from 58% in Visible Services and Transport to 94% in the Director's Office within Environment and Housing Services.
- The highest overall positive response rate related to the assertion "I am trusted to get on with my job". Some 91% of employees responded positively to this statement. It was particularly interesting to note that this statement attracted the highest score in all Directorates and in 12 out of the 17 service areas.
- The above statement also attracted the highest positive response rates in each of the length of service categories and in all but one of the salary grade categories.
- The next two highest responses were in relation to "I have regular contact with my manager" (81%) and "I am treated with respect" (81%). This was, again encouraging and would provide a strong basis for further development as part of the Staff Charter.
- The lowest level of positive response (albeit still relatively high) related to the assertions "I feel supported in achieving my potential" (64%), "I am kept informed about the wider work of the Council" (61%) and "I am helped to understand my contribution to the wider Council" (51%).
- The responses relating to personal development and the degree to which staff understand their wider contribution were reflected across all Directorates and also in the grade and length of service categories.

The Officer advised the Committee that the Staff Engagement work over recent months had, to a degree, anticipated the need for further work in relation to some of the Staff Charter areas and particularly in relation to employee development, communications and the continuous need to connect employees to the broader objectives of the Council. Therefore, the following schemes had been developed:

- A new Staff Appraisal Scheme (#ItsAboutMe)
- A Passport to Training Scheme
- A review of the Council's strategy in relation to the identification and delivery of development needs.

Progress had been made in relation to other areas of the Staff Charter commitments including the strengthening of the Council's Leadership Café, the development of a revised Management Competency Framework and the launch of a joint CMT / Staff Engagement Group and Core Brief Editorial Group.

The Employee Survey would be repeated in 2017 and then annually thereafter. The 2016 results would provide a clear baseline against which the Staff Charter (and related activities) could be measured.

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The Head of Human Resources was confident that the combination of the high levels of positive results from the Survey and the lower levels of absence and turnover were indicative of the positive work being done in relation to staff engagement, and the development and delivery of the Staff Charter.

The Chairman expressed the view that the results of the Survey would provide a baseline against which the Council could compare itself with other Local Authorities.

AGREED - T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

(j) Management of Attendance Update -

The Head of Human Resources presented the absence data for the nine month period up to 31st December 2016, which showed the number of days absence per full time equivalent (FTE) across the Council. A summary showing the performance across Directorates and services was set out in Appendix A to the report

The Head of Service advised that the performance over the first nine months of the year continued to show an improvement between the last year and the current performance. The gap between performance at 31st December, 2015 and 31st December, 2016 was 0.73 days per FTE. The gap between the target and current year performance at the end of December was 0.63 days per FTE. All Directorates were showing better attendance levels above target and above last year's performance. Attendance levels in schools were better than target, but below performance at the same point in 2015. The focus on absence would continue to support the Council's performance objectives in Quarter 4.

The Head of Service advised that although sickness absence levels were improving, the statistics could change quickly and stressed the importance of continuing to monitor performance management through targets and reports. Furthermore the commencement of the new Care First Assistance Programme, staff engagement and priority absence reporting would assist with lowering absence levels. He hoped that the end of year absence levels would be below target and an improvement on last year's levels.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted.

(k) Care First Employee Assistance Programme - Summary of Usage -

The Head of Human Resources advised the Forum that the Care First Employee Assistance Programme was launched in June 2016 and presented the summary of usage of the service for Quarters 1 and 2.

The number of contacts made had increased from 62 in Quarter 1 to 77 in the second Quarter. The number of requests for face to face counselling sessions had increased from 18 to 27 cases, which was encouraging.

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The Head of Service advised that the Council needed to undertake further promotion of this Programme, particularly in regard to the management support facility, lifestyle and online counselling. In addition, Care First sent monthly updates to the Council on a variety of topics which would need to be made available to staff. The Occupational Health Service was updating the Occupational Health pages on the StaffNet, and a reminder would be sent to Managers to advise staff of all the services provided. Information would also be included in the Core Brief.

The Chairman expressed the view that the scheme was an excellent asset to the Council and provided a superb, much need facility. He made reference to the numbers of new clients in both quarters and felt that the Programme provided managers with extra skills to help support staff. Furthermore he felt that usage figures would only increase as employees and managers became more aware of the services available.

Mr. Stokes shared his concerns that the statistics did not provide an indication of how successful the services were in helping service users, particularly in relation to work related issues such as stress. Although the usage figures were increasing, the data did not show whether the service was helping employees back into work.

The Head of Human Resources advised that the Council would be provided with regular evaluation data from Care First which would be reported to the Forum. The Chairman added there was usually a multiplicity of reasons why individuals sought support, which would make it difficult to measure the success of the service; however the Care First programme was being increasingly used by employees and he felt this was an indication of success. Furthermore, as usage increased, the service would gain a reputation as a helpful service for both employees and managers, however it would be useful to employ measures to evaluate the success of the programme.

Mr. Dimmick expressed concern that service users may not want to provide feedback as they might feel it could affect the confidentiality of the service; therefore he felt it would be difficult to measure the success of the programme. He advised that he had recommended the service to employees and acknowledged that the programme was in its early stages.

Mr. Stokes reiterated his concern in regard to trying to identify the causes of work related stress in employees using the services, as there had been a threefold increase in service users citing work related issues. The Chairman expressed the view that if the scheme was used to try and establish the causes of work related issues it could undermine the fact that the services were confidential. Furthermore, rather than using the scheme as a diagnostic tool, the Council's sickness and Management of Attendance Policies should be used. Mr. Stokes expressed the view that further discussion was required, with the Head of Service and Operational Manager for Human Resources, in relation to these issues.

AGREED - T H A T the report be noted.

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(l) Feedback on Policy Development -

The Human Resources officer for Policy advised that the current position, as at 24th January, 2017, on HR Policy Development, since the last JCF meeting was as follows:

- Corporate Management Team
Manual Handling
Management of Contractors
- Further issues to be clarified prior to proceedings
Flex Scheme and Special Leave Scheme
Violence and Aggression at Work
- Terms and Conditions
Managing Attendance at Work
- Change Forum
Learning and Development Strategy
- Employment Policy Formulation and Review Group
Mental Health and Wellbeing
Domestic Abuse
Management of Contractors.

AGREED - T H A T the current position in relation to the HR Policy Development be noted.

(m) Proposed Timetable of Meetings 2017/18 -

The Chairman informed the Forum that he would not be running for office at the next Local Government Election, therefore, this would be his last meeting as Chairman of the Joint Consultative Forum. He thanked all Members, Trade Union Representatives and Officers for their co-operation, professionalism and continued hard work and advised that it had been a pleasure to be the Chairman of the Forum.

Mr. Pappas, Joint Secretary for the Trade Unions, returned the sentiment and thanked the Chairman for his contribution to the work of the Forum.

Following consideration of the proposed meeting dates for the municipal year 2017/18, it was

AGREED - T H A T the proposed meeting dates as listed below be agreed.

- 3rd July, 2017
- 16th October, 2017
- 12th February, 2018.