

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 2nd July, 2018.

Present: Mrs. J.E. Charles (Chairman); Councillors Mrs. P. Drake, B.T. Gray, G. John and N.C. Thomas.

Representatives of Trade Unions: Miss. M. Canavan (NUT), Mr. G. Davies (Unison), Mr T. Greaves (GMB), Mr. G. Pappas (Unison), Mrs. L. Lancaster (NASUWT) and Mr. A. Unsworth (GMB).

Officers: Mr. T. Baker, Mr. L. Bonnie, Mrs. A. Davies, Mr. H. Isaac and Ms. E. Morgan.

(a) Apologies for Absence -

These were received from Mr. N. Stokes (GMB) and Mr. R. Hughes (GMB).

(b) Minutes and Matters Arising -

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Declarations of Interest -

Councillors Mrs. J. Charles, Mrs. P. Drake, B.T. Gray, G. John and N.C. Thomas all declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 9 - Reshaping Services Update. These Councillors had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on related agenda items.

(d) Minutes of the Directorate Consultative Groups -

The minutes of the following Directorate Consultative Groups were received:

- Learning and Skills - 28th February, 2018
- Resources - 24th April, 2018
- Social Services - 21st February, 2018
- Social Services - 22nd March, 2018
- Social Services - 19th April, 2018
- Visible Services - 7th April, 2018
- Visible Services - 4th April, 2018.

It was subsequently

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

No.

(e) Minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Meeting -

It was noted that the Corporate Health and Safety Group had not met since the last JCF held in February 2018.

(f) Dates of Future Directorate Consultative Groups -

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

- Learning and Skills - to be arranged
- Resources - 24th July, 2018
- Social Services - 27th June, 2018
- Visible Services - meetings scheduled for the 1st Wednesday of every month.

(g) Update from the Employees Survey (2017) -

The Head of Human Resources by way of PowerPoint presentation provided a detailed analysis of the results from the Employee's Survey for 2017. This included an analysis of engagement levels by Directorate, Service Area, length of service and grade.

The Forum was advised that there were 1415 responses to the survey which equated to an overall return rate of 57%. The Head of Human Resources stated that this was an encouraging rate of return, which exceeded industry standards for such engagement exercises and represented an improvement on the return rate for 2016 of 48%.

It was noted that the Council received a 33% return rate from those employees who received hard copy surveys and 71% from those who accessed the survey through email. Return rates were relatively even across the four Directorates ranging from 42% for Social Services to 73% for the Resources Directorate.

In summarising some of the key outcomes from the survey, the Head of Human Resources advised:

- The average positive response rate to the 20 expectations within the Staff Charter was 72% i.e. those employees either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the assertions made. This was an improvement on last year's positive rating of 71%.
- The level of positive responses was again high across all Directorates ranging from 67% in the Environment and Housing Directorate to 76% in the Social Services Directorate.
- The level of positive responses from within the 22 Service Areas was slightly more diverse ranging from 59% in the Additional Learning Needs Division

No.

within Learning and Skills to 97% in the Directors Office within the same Directorate.

- Positive response ratings were highly in 15 out of the 20 Staff Charter expectations which was encouraging considering the volume of change across the Council during 2016/17 and the ongoing response to budgetary and service demands.
- The highest overall positive response rate related to the assertion 'I am trusted to get on with my job'. Some 92.5% of employees responded positively to this statement compared to 91.5% in 2016. This statement also attracted the highest score in all Directorates and in 12 out of the 22 Service Areas.
- The next two highest responses were in relation to 'I am clear what is expected of me' (83.2%) and 'I am treated with respect' (82.5%). These were 78.4% and 80.6% in the previous year.
- The expectations which had shown the overall biggest improvement of the preceding 12 month period were 'I am clear about what is expected of me', 'I am listened and my view considered' and 'I receive strong and supportive leadership'.
- Improvement in 'clarity about what is expected of me' was not only the expectation with the best level of improvement but also the most consistent improvement area of four of the 22 Service Areas.
- The lowest level of positive responses was in relation to assertions 'I have the opportunity to test out new ideas' (63.2%), 'I am kept informed about the wider work of the Council' (58.6%) and 'I am helped to understand my contribution to the wider Council' (50.5%).
- The assertion with the highest improvement rate was 'I am clear about what is expected of me'. The assertion with the highest fall in positive responses was 'I am kept informed of the wider Council'.
- The forum noted that for those staff employed for 20 years or more, there was a low positive response rate (59.66%) to the assertion 'I feel supported in achieving my potential'.
- The responses relating to the opportunity for employees to test out new ideas had also been identified as a specific Staff Charter related work stream.

A Member queried how an analysis would be undertaken of staff attitudes. In reply, the Head of Human Resources stated that for 2017 this was difficult as there was not a free text box within the survey. This would be changed for 2018. A key aspect was that the data would be considered by all Directorates and would be used to understand some of the views expressed by staff.

Subsequently it was

AGREED - T H A T the presentation on the Employees Survey 2017 be noted.

(h) Update on the Employee Awards Evening -

The Head of Human Resources provided a short video following the Employee Awards evening. Prior to the video, the Head of Human Resources stated that the key aim of the evening was to be accessible, sustainable and cost neutral. It was

No.

noted that an amount of £730 had been raised, with a contribution made to the Mayor's Charity.

Subsequently, it was

AGREED - T H A T congratulations be sent to the winners of the Employee Awards for 2018.

(i) Reshaping Services Update -

The Head of Performance and Development referred to the report for April 2018 which provided an overview of progress for all projects associated with the Reshaping Services Programme.

Mr. Pappas of Unison raised the point regarding the Youth Service project and stated that the programme criteria was not presented correctly to the unions. In reply, the Head of Human Resources advised that this had been corrected through a recent report to Cabinet.

Subsequently it was

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

(j) Response to Government Green Paper - Strengthening Local Government - Delivering for People -

The Head of Performance and Development presented the Council's response to the Welsh Government Green Paper - Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People. He advised that the proposal had since been withdrawn by the Welsh Government Minister, which would have resulted in the forced merger between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff Council. This was something that the Vale Council had objected to.

It was subsequently

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

(k) Policy Review Update -

The Operational Manager for Human Resources advised that the current position, as at 2nd July, 2018, on HR Policy Development, since the last JCF meeting was as follows:

- Further issues to be clarified prior to proceedings
- Violence and aggression at work
- Terms and Conditions
- Re-deployment procedure (revisions approved)

No.

- Compensatory rest a local collective agreement
- Flexible working procedure
- Mental health and Being Policy
- Grievance Policy and Guidance
- Re-grading Procedure
- Change Forum
- Management of Absence (revisions approved)
- Professional fees retention agreement
- Grievance Policy and Guidance
- Flexi Scheme and Special Leave Scheme.

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

(I) NJC Single Status Pay Award -

The Operational Manager, Employee Services provided a verbal update on the National Joint Council Single Status Pay Award. He advised that the Council was currently working on the second year pay deal, which would affect 4,000 Council and school staff. The award for 2018/19 had been successfully implemented and so work was currently progressing for the 2019/20 pay award. This was more complicated as a new pay structure needed to be agreed, which was further complicated due to the different pay structures required for Council based and school based staff.

The Operational Manager added that a number of options were being explored and consideration was needed around affordability, equal pay, usability and retention of staff. Another important consideration was to do with timeliness. This was because the new pay structure had to be in place before April 2019 and so there would be a lot of work behind the scenes such as updating of the IT systems. In order to progress the new pay structure, the Operational Manager had met with the three school cluster headteachers and the Council's Corporate Management Team had been consulted. The Operational Manager advised that it was reassuring to know that the Vale was ahead of most other local authorities in Wales.

Mr. Pappas of Unison asked what would happen if the new pay structure was unaffordable. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that the Council was adopting a similar approach to the one used previously and it was hoped that the Council would only have to make small tweaks as opposed to wholesale changes.

AGREED - T H A T the verbal update be noted.

No.

(m) Trade Union Items -

- Foundation Living Wage

Mr. Pappas advised that it had been requested for the Council to consider implementing the Foundation Living Wage. He also asked whether the Council would be implementing the Accreditation Living Wage, which would see contractors or occasional staff paid the Living Wage. In reply, the Head of Human Resources stated that the Council's minimum hourly rate was £9.18, and so was probably higher than the projected Living Wage. This was as a result of the Cabinet decision to remove the lowest spinal point on the pay structure and was a good step towards achieving the aim. The Head of Human Resources also stated that the Council was well aware of the difference between the Foundation Living Wage and the Accredited Living Wage, but he was unable to answer on the future direction of the Council's Administration.

- Flexible Working Scheme

At the meeting, and having received reassurance, Mr. Pappas withdrew this item.

(n) Proposed Timetable of Meetings -

Following consideration of the proposed further meeting dates for the municipal year 2018/19, it was

AGREED - T H A T the proposed meetings dates as listed below be agreed:

- 15th October, 2018
- 11th February, 2019.

(o) Chairman's Announcement -

The Chairman paid tribute to the Head of Human Resources who was leaving the employment of the authority. The Chairman expressed thanks and appreciation for his hard work and dedication and wished him well for the future. These sentiments were echoed by Mr. Pappas on behalf of the Trade Unions.