

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 15th October, 2018.

Present: Mrs. J.E. Charles (Chairman); Councillors G. John, L.O. Rowlands (Substitute for Councillor B.T. Gray) and N.C. Thomas.

Representatives of Trade Unions: Miss. M. Canavan (NEU), Mr. T. Greaves (GMB), R. Hughes (UNISON), Mrs. L. Lancaster (NASUWT), Mr. G. Pappas (UNISON), and S. Robertson (UNITE) and Mrs. G. Southby (UNISON).

Officers: Ms. S. Alderman, Mr. L. Bonnie, Mrs. A. Davies, Mr. H. Isaac, Ms. E. Morgan, Mrs. A. Phillips and Mr. A. Unsworth.

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors Mrs. P. Drake and B.T. Gray.

(b) Minutes and Matters Arising –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July, 2018 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that the former Head of Human Resources was present.

(c) Declarations of Interest –

Councillor Mrs. J.E. Charles, G. John and L.O. Rowlands all declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 – Reshaping Services Update. These Councillors had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on the related agenda items.

(d) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Groups –

The minutes of the following Directorate Consultative Groups were received:

- Social Services – 30th July, 2018
- Visible Services – 4th July, 2018
- Visible Services – 5th September, 2018.

Mrs. M. Canavan stated that there had not been a meeting of the Learning and Skills Consultative Group for some time and she stated that the next meeting was due in February 2019. This, she stated, was too far away and an earlier meeting should be arranged. In reply, the Operational Manager Human Resources stated that he would take this up with the Director of Learning and Skills.

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

The minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Group meeting held on 1st October, 2018 were received.

The Corporate Health and Safety Officer provided a brief update on the Care First Scheme and stated that this had been in place for two years and a positive increase in numbers had been seen. In addition, the flu vaccination sessions were up and running with a number of sessions in the Civic and the Alps offices. The forum noted that if staff were unable to book a slot then they could just turn up and a vaccination would be administered (pending availability of vaccinations).

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Health and Safety Meeting held on 1st October, 2018 be noted.

(f) Dates of Future Directorate Consultative Group-

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

- Learning and Skills – 13th February, 2019
- Learning and Skills – 12th June, 2019
- Resources – To be arranged
- Social Services – To be arranged
- Visible Services – Meeting scheduled for the first Wednesday of every month.

(g) Proposed 2019/20 NJC Pay Structure –

The Operational Manager Employee Services provided an update on the NJC Single Status Pay Award. In summary he referred to the following points:

- Cabinet had considered five options for a new pay structure and had chosen to implement Option 5. This was subsequently supported by Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee. Since this decision, over 4,000 staff had been sent letters in order to explain the potential change to their grade/pay
- The new pay structure would result in the Council having a minimum hourly rate of £9.18 which would likely be above the Foundation Living Wage.
- There were currently a number of overlaps of grade between the bottom and top which caused issues with supervision of certain positions and the new pay structure was designed to address this.
- With regard to communication, staff would be able to attend a number of road shows before and after forthcoming school half term prior with HR and relevant trade unions.

- Details of the potential the change were also available to all staff through an update provided on StaffNet and on a council web page..
- If staff required further advice then an HR e-mail in box had been created and a help line had been set up.
- Salaries were based on full time annual rates.
- Grades would change from letters A-K to numbers 1-11 and there was no change to the Job Evaluation Scheme.
- The new pay structure for 2019/20 would be implemented from 1st April, 2019.

Mr. Hughes of Unison stated that the new minimum hourly rate was fantastic news but the rate for the Foundation Living Wage (FLW) had not yet been set. This was still a positive step for the lower paid workers. He added that he would like the administration to fully embrace the accreditation membership of FLW.

Subsequently, it was

AGREED – T H A T the new pay structure for 2019/20 be noted.

(h) Reshaping Services Update –

The Head of Performance and Development referred to the report for 15th October, 2018 Cabinet meeting which provided an overview of progress for all projects associated with the Reshaping Services programme.

Mr. Pappas of Unison, in referring to the Catering Services project, queried whether the increase in the minimum hourly rate had been taken into account when calculating possible savings. In reply, the Operational Manager Human Resources stated that this comment would be referred back to the appropriate officer.

Subsequently, it was

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

(i) Staff Survey 2018 –

The Operational Manager Human Resources provided an update on the Staff Survey 2018.

He outlined that the Staff Survey was launched on 1st October, 2018 and would run until mid-November. The Survey remained structured around the Council's four values and was closely aligned with the Staff Charter. A copy of the questionnaire was attached for information.

An information and awareness campaign had been running for several weeks on StaffNet in order to promote the work that had been undertaken to support staff over the past year, including the Staff Awards evening, GEM Scheme and the launch of NewsNet as a communication tool.

The results of the Survey would be publicised to office based staff via e-mail, with hard copies posted to those without access to ICT equipment. In some instances, such as frontline Neighbourhood Services staff, local arrangements to complete the Survey face to face at drop in sessions had been made. There would also be boxes at each Council site for hard copy forms to be deposited in and the Survey for all staff remained anonymous.

This year the opportunity had been taken to refine the questions set in use in order to drill down into specific areas where it would be useful to understand the influence line managers and corporate management had on the way staff perceived the support they received.

Following feedback, the results for the Survey would be provided to the Corporate Management Team earlier than in previous years and this was planned for December. This would enable there to be an opportunity for local service area based action plans to be developed in conjunction with service planning. These service area action plans would be further enhanced by the inclusion of line manager specific questions in the survey.

The Forum was advised that the overall results from the Staff Survey would be used to inform the narrative of the Big Conversation 2 which was scheduled for early 2019 and would be further explored as part of future Management Development Sessions and the Chief Officer Briefing Sessions which would take place on a six monthly basis.

The Chairman thanked staff for their participation.

AGREED – T H A T the update on the Staff Survey be noted.

(j) The Big Conversation 2 –

The Operational Manager Human Resources advised that in 2015, the Council's Senior Management Team held a series of approximately 50 briefing sessions to which all non-school based staff were invited to attend. The sessions, called The Big Conversation, introduced the pressures on the Council's budget and services and launched the Reshaping Services as the Council's response. There was an invitation for staff to become part of the cultural change required to ensure the Vale of Glamorgan remained a high performing Local Authority.

In terms of achievements since 2015, the Operational Manager outlined the following:

- The development of the Staff Charter
- The introduction of the Annual Staff Survey to measure employee engagement
- Review of the Appraisal Scheme and launch of the #ItsAboutMe
- A refreshed approach to internal communications via NewsNet

- Introduction of employee recognition schemes including the Going the Extra Mile scheme and in 2018 the first Annual Staff Recognition Awards Evening
- A relaunch of the Council's approach to induction of new starters
- The development of an Ideas and Innovation Scheme
- Introduction of Charter Champions and a Corporate Management Team / Staff Engagement Group
- Introduction of six monthly Management Development Sessions based around a staff designed management competency framework which culminated in a Chief Officer Briefing Session
- Further development of the Council's Leadership Café.

The Forum was advised that the above had increased employee engagement and had supported the new approach to working around outcomes as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Operational Manager advised that it was considered timely to now hold The Big Conversation 2. This was planned for early 2019 and would see the Senior Management Team go out to various locations in the Vale to deliver an updated message that would cover the following:

- An update on the Reshaping Services programme and the successes and learning so far
- An emphasis on how the Council could work differently to spend the approximately £4 in every £5 that remained in the Council's budget and to consider ways of generating income
- Provide an update on the engagement work that had been undertaken
- Identify volunteers to becoming involved in the next set of engagement activities.

The Forum was advised that the next set of engagement activities would build on a more local focus of the Staff Survey 2018, the results from which would be distilled into local action plans. It was proposed that Service Area Engagement Champions would be sought to identify and promote engagement. These Champions would provide a pool of resources that could be used to help support corporate initiatives around such themes including communications, inclusion, recognition, etc. They would also provide an opportunity for more people to become involved in taking the Council forward to meet the challenges of the future. It was planned that the details for The Big Conversation 2 would be formulated in the Autumn, ahead of the sessions in early 2019.

Mr. Pappas of UNISON, referring to future budgetary pressures, requested an update on the 'graph of doom'. In reply, the Operational Manager Human Resources stated that future budget settlements from Welsh Government would be challenging, and the Council had to be honest about this with staff.

Having considered the update, it was

AGREE – T H A T the update on The Big Conversation 2 be noted.

(k) Dying to Work –

The Operational Manager Human Resources provided an update on the Dying to Work campaign.

He advised that on 1st September, 2018, the Managing Director and the Leader along with representatives from the Trade Union Council Wales signed the Dying to Work Charter which reaffirmed the support, protection and guidance available to staff following a terminal diagnosis.

By signing, the Council had formally acknowledged its continued commitment to protect staff diagnosed, and ensure that they could expect a protected period where they could not be dismissed as a result of their condition.

In terms of how staff would be supported, this would include the following:

- Terminally ill workers would be secure in the knowledge that they would be supported following their diagnosis and the Council would recognise that safe and reasonable work could help maintain dignity, and offer a valuable distraction while also being therapeutic.
- It would provide employees with security of work, peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families.
- By signing the Charter the Council demonstrated its support to the TUC's Dying to Work Campaign so that all employees battling terminal illness had adequate employment protection and had their death in service benefits protected for their loved ones they left behind.

The Forum noted that a copy of the signed Charter, which was attached at Appendix A, was displayed outside Committee Rooms 1 and 2 in the Civic Offices.

Subsequently, the Forum endorsed the Council's commitment as set out within the Dying to Work Charter.

(l) Date of Future Joint Consultative Forum meeting

It was noted that the next Joint Consultative Forum meeting would take place at 10:00am, Monday, 11th February, 2019.