

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 2000 AT 1.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Mrs. P. Baldwin - Chairman
Councillor M.G. Parker - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, R.W. Gough, Mrs. K. Gwynne, D. Jones, C.P. Mann, A.J. Pritchard,
Mrs. J.A. Pritchard and L.G. Whittle

Together with:

S. Rosser (Deputy Chief Executive), J. Powell (Personnel Manager (Employee Services)) and
Mrs. K. Wall (Committee Services Officer).

Trade Union Representatives

S.I. James (UCATT), J. Reece (UCATT), N. Davies (AEEU), K.A. Bevan (TGWU), D Quick (MPO),
P. Short (UNISON), J. Eynon (NAHT), N. Blundell (UCATT), K. Lewis (NAS/UWT),
M. Thompson, M. Richards, M.J. Payne (GMB)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from M. Davies (Chief Executive), A. Jones and Councillor
C.P. Mann.

911 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 200 were received and noted.

Matters Arising

(i) Re-grading Appeal Process

A query was raised regarding progress made in dealing with outstanding re-grading
appeals.

Mr. Powell reported that since the last meeting of the Committee, the Regrading Panel had
considered an outstanding regrading appeal in respect of a member of staff within Housing.
It was anticipated that other outstanding appeals would be processed during November
and December.

(ii) **Review of the In House Provision of Residential Care in the Borough**

Mr. Short (UNISON) enquired whether the further information in respect of this issue, mentioned at the last meeting of the Committee was now available.

Mr. Rosser indicated that the information was still being collated and a report was still under preparation, which would form part of the Best Value Review of substitute and alternative care.

(iii) **Voluntary Stock Transfer**

Following a query from Mr. Short (UNISON), officers agreed to establish the current position in respect of the proposals to transfer the Council housing stock to an independent landlords and advise the union representatives accordingly.

(iv) **Client/Contractor Merger and Restructure**

A trade union representative enquired about the consultation to be undertaken in respect of the client/contractor merger and restructure.

The Chair indicated that she had written to the Head of Personnel in respect of the proposals for restructuring catering services, requesting that a meeting be held with the Head of Catering. She reported that she had not yet received a reply.

Mr. Powell stated that he would investigate the issues raised and would progress the matter as quickly as possible.

(v) **Temporary Employees**

A trade union representative enquired about the status of temporary employees within the authority.

It was reported that Cabinet had considered a report on the status of temporary employees and had agreed that any temporary member of staff who had been employed for more than two years would now become permanent members of staff. It was also noted that as part of the harmonisation exercise, a review would be carried out in respect of the terms and conditions of casual and relief employees.

Mr. Payne, Regional Organiser of the GMB referred to staff employed in Home Care who worked regular hours, but were classed as casual workers and therefore did not benefit from national terms and conditions. He also mentioned temporary employees in grounds maintenance and stated that grass cutting duties were classed as casual work.

The meeting acknowledged the difficulties experienced by temporary staff in obtaining loans and applying for mortgages and it was agreed that the situation needed to be regularise as part of the harmonisation discussions.

912 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th July 2000 were received and noted.

913 **REPORT ON PROGRESS ON HARMONISATION DISCUSSIONS**

Consideration was given to the officer's report which outlined the progress made in respect of the harmonisation discussions.

It was noted that numerous discussions had been held between officers and trade union representatives to consider harmonisation issues. These discussions had the following objectives:-

- * to harmonise terms and conditions
- * to determine a set of fair and reasonable terms and conditions which could be applied consistently
- * to eliminate TUPE
- * to achieve significant financial savings to meet budget problems and to allow investment in front line services

Mr. Powell stated that a full set of proposals had been drawn up and the trade unions had agreed that they would examine the document and consult their members.

Discussion had also taken place on the possibility of a staged approach to the proposals and the report set out a proposed timetable for implementation of the proposals.

Stage 1 outlined short term changes which could be implemented with immediate effect, Stage 2 outlined longer term issues e.g. agreeing the remaining package, the phased implementation and the question of protection and Stage 3 outlined the longer term issue of a grading review.

Consideration was then given to the timetable detailed on page 2 of the report and it was noted that Stage 1(a) - The abolition of subsistence allowances and out of pocket expenses with effect from 1st January 2001 had been agreed previously by the trade unions and could therefore be implemented.

It was acknowledged that the proposals contained in Stage 1(b) and Stage (2) of the timetable were contentious issues and it was noted that not all the Trade unions had yet given their formal views.

It was reported that the GMB had held a Branch Meeting on 12th October and a letter from Mr. Payne, Regional Organiser outlining the response to the harmonisation proposals was attached to the officer's report.

Mr. Powell indicated that UNISON had held a Branch Meeting on 26th October and that he would welcome formal feedback from this meeting and comments from the other unions represented on the Joint Consultative Committee.

The Chair thanked Mr. Powell for the information provided and stated that although UNISON had not provided written formal feedback from the Branch Meeting, a verbal update had been provided.

Trade Union representatives and Cabinet Members were then invited to make comments.

A verbal report was given on the discussions which had taken place at the UNISON Branch Meeting on 26th October and representatives from GMB, MPO and UCATT also reported the views of their members.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Unions would indicate the proposals they were prepared to negotiate further and those they were not.

For ease of reference, consideration was given to the proposals as listed on page 2 of the officer's report and the following comments were made:-

Stage 1(a) Abolition of subsistence and out of pocket expenses.

The unions agreed that these proposals had been accepted previously and could therefore be implemented with effect from 1st January 2001, as stated in the officer's report.

Stage 1(b) Opening of Council Offices on the extra three statutory holidays attached to Bank Holidays

The unions expressed their opposition to this proposal.

Stage 2 - Longer Term Proposals

Flexi Scheme - the unions expressed their opposition to the proposals in respect of the Flexi Scheme.

Standby/Call Out Payments - the unions stated that they were prepared to negotiate on these proposals.

Temporary/Casual/Relief Employees - the unions stated that they were prepared to negotiate on these proposals.

Bonus Scheme Review - the unions stated that they were prepared to negotiate on these proposals.

Excess Travelling Expenses - the unions stated that they were prepared to negotiate on these proposals but emphasised the need for protection for existing staff.

Car Allowances - the unions stated that they were prepared to accept the proposal that new appointments would be paid on the middle band allowance for essential car users, plus the appropriate mileage rates on the middle band. They were not prepared to accept the proposals that there would be a further review of essential car user allowances for those employees who had travelled between 500 and 1000 miles and that all current employees within the Council, both casual and essential would move to the middle band of car allowances.

Overtime and Other Enhancements - the unions stated that they were not prepared to negotiate on these proposals.

Sickness/Absence Scheme - the unions stated that they were not prepared to negotiate on these proposals

Annual Leave - the unions stated that they were prepared to negotiate in respect of the proposals for annual leave but that they felt that further clarification would be needed in respect of the proposal to grant an extra three days annual leave as entitlement for the three extra statutory holidays referred to earlier.

Stage 3 - Grading Review - the unions stated that they were prepared to negotiate on these proposals.

The Chair thanked Cabinet Members and the trade union representatives for their contributions and it was agreed that the deadline for agreement on the negotiations would be 31st December 2000.

914 **TRADE UNION FACILITIES**

Consideration was given to the officer's report which set out proposals to allocate a number of hours to each trade union Branch Secretary, to be funded by the Council to allow them to undertake their trade union duties.

The report set out details of the current position, details of trade union activities and an allocation of hours for trade union activities, and Mr. Powell reported in more detail thereon.

The Chair thanked Mr. Powell and Mr. J. Wakley for the work they had undertaken in preparing the report and then invited comments from Members and trade union representatives.

Discussion ensued on the level of funding allocated by the Council to fund time off for trade union duties and how this funding was then allocated to individual unions, the number of hours allocated to each trade union to cover corporate meetings/activities and travelling and cleaning up time.

Several union representatives expressed their concern that the level of funding for trade union duties and the number of hours allocated for corporate duties were inadequate.

In view of the comments expressed at the meeting, the union representatives were asked to submit their views and suggestions for the allocation of funding and time for corporate duties, in writing, to the Head of Personnel by the end of November so that the issue could be further considered by Cabinet.

915 **ISSUES RAISED BY TRADE UNIONS**

Consideration was given to the following items raised by the Trade Union representatives.

(i) **Pensions/VERs**

Clarification was sought on the current position in relation to those who had applied for VERs under the previous policy and the new approved policy.

The reasons for the proposed changes were outlined and it was noted that Cabinet had considered the matter in May and Officers had been authorised to consult with Trade Unions on the proposals. Following those consultations and in noting the responses received from the Unions, it was subsequently agreed that no amendments would be made to the proposed scheme, the Council should proceed with the implementation of the revised scheme, there would be no advance notice given of the change of discretion and that it be implemented with immediate effect. It was also noted that possible exceptions would be made.

Discussion ensued on the implications for those who had applied under the previous scheme and those who had or would apply under the revised scheme in relation to the change in discretion allowed. The need to ensure that the policy was fair and equitable was stressed, particularly when differentiating between voluntary and compulsory VERs.

A request was made that in view of the foregoing, Cabinet should re-consider its decision. It was reported that Cabinet had already considered the matter in May and again in July and, having received and considered the views of the Unions had approved the scheme as outlined above.

(ii) **Local Government Act**

This item was deferred at the request of the trade union representatives to the next meeting.

(iii) **Training Issues**

Reference was made to what appeared to be anomalies in the training schemes for certain areas of the workforce. It was noted that the single status agreement flagged up training and development issues harmonisation and that a corporate training policy had previously been agreed. The representatives were requested to provide details of the specific instances in order that they could be investigated further.

(iv) **Grievance Procedure**

It was reported that several grievances had been instigated but had not yet been dealt with. It was suggested that the Union representatives should progress the matter with the relevant Director.

(v) **Corporate Safety Committee Meetings**

Reference was made to various discussions at a previous meeting of the Corporate Safety Committee in relation to a means of ensuring that items raised by the unions are included on the agenda of future meetings.

The representatives were requested to detail the items that they wish to raise in writing, to the Committee Services Officer, in order that they could be incorporated on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled for early December.

(vii) **Brainstorming Seminars**

A request was made for a seminar with the workforce to discuss the reasons for the losses within DLO and to outline the specific details of the client/contractor merger. The representatives indicated that they had already written to B. Hamilton requesting that he progress the matter.

916 **SAVINGS FROM UNFILLED POSTS**

It was not known who had requested that the item be placed the item on the agenda and as such, the matter was not discussed.

917 **JOB EVALUATION**

The current situation in respect of job evaluation was reported. It was noted that the local grading review would be undertaken via job evaluation but that the scheme which would eventually be adopted had not yet been determined.

It was reported that Corporate Management Team had met recently to consider the way forward and that the Chief Executive would be discussing the implications with Union representatives prior to submitting a report to Cabinet with proposals.

The representatives requested that this matter be progressed as soon as possible.

918 **EMERGENCY ITEM - NEWSPAPER ARTICLE**

The Chair accepted a request from Mr. P. Short (UNISON) that an emergency item be placed on the agenda.

Reference was made to an article that had appeared in the press in respect of DLO related issues and to the fact that names of the persons concerned were mentioned. Concern was also expressed that those who work at Bedwas Depot, had had to learn of proposals to close the depot

from the article that had appeared as there had been no prior warning to the staff of the proposals and implications for them.

The representatives sought an assurance that this would not occur again. It was indicated that it was not possible to give such an assurance as it was not known who had given the detailed information to the press.

919 **NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held early in January 2001

CHAIRMAN