



JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, DUFFRYN HOUSE, DUFFRYN BUSINESS PARK ON TUESDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2006 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

E. Gibbs (UNISON) - Chairman
Councillor G.R. Price - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, D.T. Davies, P.D. Ford, E.K. Griffiths, D.T. Hardacre, G. Jones, R. Woodyatt

Together with:

S. Rosser (Chief Executive), R. Webb (Director of the Environment), J. Howsam (Director of Social Services), N. Barnett (Director of Corporate Services), G. Hardacre (Head of People Management and Development), B. Hopkins (Head of Planning and Strategy), J. Powell (Personnel Manager - Employee Services), K. Evans (Personnel Manager - Policy and Performance), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Trade Union Representatives

B. Barrowman (GMB), Mrs. P. Baldwin (UNISON), D. Bezzina (Unison Regional Organiser), C. Vickers (NAS/UWT), L. Woodland (Unison Assistant Branch Secretary) and M. Jackson (Trade Union Job Evaluation Co-ordinator).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D.V. Poole, D. Hopkins (Director of Education and Leisure), M.J. Payne (GMB), A. Jones (TGWU), P. Jones (AMICUS) and Ms. A. Stevens (ASCL).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

2. MINUTES - 11TH JULY 2006

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman -

Minutes of the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 11th July 2006 (minute nos. 1 - 17 on page nos. 1 - 5).

MATTERS ARISING

3. Minutes of Directorate Joint Consultative Committees (minute no. 5)

It was noted that there had not been a meeting of the Chief Executives Directorate Joint Consultative Committee for a considerable period of time and noted that arrangements would be made as appropriate.

4. Transfer of Staff From Ty Darren (minute no. 9)

A query was raised as to whether any progress had been made with the preferred bidder and the transfer of staff from Ty Darran and Mr. Howsam indicated that he was not aware of the current situation and would seek details from the newly appointed Assistant Director of Adult Services, Ms. A. Elliott.

5. St. Ilan Comprehensive School (minute no. 12)

Mrs. Baldwin referred to the relocation of staff at the school and to the presumption that those who apply for other posts will be given priority consideration. Mr. B. Hopkins (Head of Planning and Strategy) indicated that whilst advice has been given to schools to this effect, it is the Governing Bodies who make the appointment and not the Local Education Authority. He also referred to cross matching arrangements which are in place to assist in the process. Mr. D. Bezzina referred to the potential for redundancy and ultimately a case for unfair dismissal in the event that a suitable alternative vacancy is not found and cited two employment tribunal cases which should be borne in mind.

In taking into account the outcome of those tribunals and the stance taken by the county borough, Mr Rosser indicated that further legal advice will be sought and Mr. Bezzina was requested to supply the details of the cases to Mr. G. Hardacre for information.

6. MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION AND LEISURE DIRECTORATE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Education and Leisure Directorate Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 4th October 2006 were received and noted.

7. FEASIBILITY STUDY ON SHARED SERVICES (SOUTH EAST WALES)

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on progress with the Shared Services Project (ten South East Wales authorities) to evaluate the feasibility of sharing certain back office and professional support services as part of Making the Connections agenda.

Mr. Barnett (Director of Corporate Services) confirmed that the Project Board will meet on a monthly basis and report its findings to the Connecting South East Wales Forum and as such, he intended that reports of this nature will be presented on a regular basis. He confirmed that at the end of the feasibility study the participating authorities will be in a position to take informed decisions on whether to embark on the implementation of Shared Services and within that project, which services to share. In advance of any such decision, extensive consultation with Trade Unions would be required.

Specific reference was made to the commission of the Project Team and the three phases of reporting (feasibility, business case and feasibility framework) were outlined. With regards to managing the arrangements, the Connecting South East Wales Forum has established a cross-authority steering group to oversee this project. A sub-group of the steering group has been established to progress the procurement of consultants and participating authorities are also establishing a project team who will undertake much of the practical development work. It was confirmed that the Welsh Local Government Association are taking the lead on a national level with the recognised trade unions and at a local level it is intended, where appropriate, that consultation will be managed through the Joint Consultative Committee.

Reference was made to the potential human resource implications of this proposal and other collaborative working schemes and the Trade Union representatives asked that they be involved at the earliest possible stage. It was also suggested that representatives should be allowed to sit on the Project Board. Mr. Barnett indicated that this has been raised by the Unison representative at the Welsh Local Government Association and the latter have agreed to consider the matter.

8. CHRISTMAS CLOSEDOWN ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report which detailed proposals for the Christmas/New Year closedown and in noting the standby and call out arrangements and that staff in some services will be working during the period, the following arrangements were noted: -

Friday, 22nd December 2006	-	Normal Working Day
Monday, 25th December 2006	-	Christmas Day
Tuesday, 26th December 2006	-	Boxing Day
Wednesday, 27th December 2006	-	Extra Statutory Day
Thursday, 28th December 2006	-	Closedown
Friday, 29th December 2006	-	Closedown
Monday, 1st January 2007	-	New Year's Day
Tuesday, 2nd January 2007	-	Normal Working Day

9. JOB EVALUATION

Mr. G. Hardacre (Head of People Management and Development) gave a verbal update in relation to job evaluation and confirmed that the vast majority of evaluations (other than the exercise covering craft workers) have now been completed. He then referred to ongoing discussions in relation to the modeling structure and referred to the intention to prepare a joint bulletin with the Trade Unions to update staff on the current position.

He confirmed that a meeting of the Steering Group is to be held early in November in order to allow continued dialogue with the Trade Unions in relation to this and ancillary arrangements. Mr. Bezzina indicated that there is a need to bring the discussions to a conclusion and welcomed the opportunity for further debate at the Steering Group.

10. CONSULTATION BETWEEN TRADE UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Reference was made to issues that had arisen within the Fast Forward Unit following the loss of the 18-24 Jobcentre Plus contract and the Trade Unions, whilst complementing the county borough on its efforts in dealing with the staff, again expressed concern at the process, the limited consultation and lack of timely information.

Mr. Rosser (Chief Executive) indicated that this had been discussed in detail at the last meeting and reiterated that the timescale and changing circumstances meant that meetings were held as events developed, and often at short notice, and as such, it had not been possible to undertake the level of consultation the Trade Unions required.

In noting the foregoing, Mr. Bezzina pointed out that other decisions have been taken without consultation (i.e. closure of bars in leisure centres) and the requirement that consultation be undertaken at the earliest possible stage was re emphasised. He confirmed the wish of the Unions to be part of the process and to their commitment to work with the county borough.

Mr. Rosser indicated that timing will always be a crucial factor and in the significant period of change which lies ahead it is expected that the Unions will be involved at the appropriate stage.

11. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Mr. G. Hardacre referred to arrangements to meet with Trade Union representatives to discuss proposals for the new building and to issues that have been raised at Staff Focus Groups, which are being addressed. He confirmed that as part of the ongoing process it is intended to include an item on the agenda for future meetings (including Directorate meetings) in order that issues can be raised and addressed at that time.

It was noted that there will be ample opportunity for further meetings to discuss a range of issues and any concerns raised by both staff and the Trade Unions in relation to the implications of some of the changes.

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME - RETIREMENT POLICY

Details of the report presented to Cabinet on 3rd October 2006 were noted and it was confirmed that its content had been used as a basis for consultation with the Trade Unions and that the outcome of that consultation will be presented to Cabinet in due course. It was noted that the consultation document had proposed that added years be increased to 'two' and the Trade Unions had suggested 'four' and that consideration would be given to that view when the report is prepared for consideration by Cabinet..

Mr. Bezzina indicated as well as the above, further comments have been submitted and he requested that as the Discretionary Compensation Regulations have not yet been agreed by the Government and their fundamental legal basis is being challenged by UNISON, any scheme should be put on hold until the final regulations are actually published. He maintained that the proposals will erode the level of compensation currently available and are premature, as it is not known what the final regulations will say. He also referred to guidance issued recently from the Department of Work and Pensions in relation to age related benefits.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Mr. Hardacre indicated that he would seek a copy of the guidance issued by the Department of Work and Pensions in relation to age related benefits and take this information into account as appropriate.

13. UPDATE ON SCHOOLS - EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ISSUES

It was confirmed that negotiations via ACAS with NASUWT have been concluded and as a result, the strike action at Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School has been withdrawn.

14. BUDGET SETTLEMENT

A request was made for information in relation to future budgetary proposals and Mr. Rosser indicated that whilst he has received initial information from the Assembly, he has not yet received details of the provisional settlement (expected tomorrow). He indicated that once received, he would need the opportunity to analyse its detail and highlighted the increasing expenditure pressures which would need to be considered as part of the budget setting process.

Mr. Rosser pointed out that alongside budgetary issues continues to run the efficiency agenda and confirmed that all Heads of Service have been requested to take part in the exercise and to challenge existing service delivery arrangements in order to identify efficiencies which make the most of available resources and contribute to the budget setting process

15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS - 2007

It was noted that the quarterly meetings for 2007 had been scheduled for 23rd January, 17th April, 10th July and 9th October. Special meetings would be convened as and when required.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2007 they were signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 3.00 p.m.