



JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT TY PENALLTA, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 21ST OCTOBER 2008 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

E. Gibbs (UNISON) - Chairman
Councillor A.J. Pritchard - Vice Chairman

Councillors:

Miss. L. Ackerman, P.J. Bevan, R. Davies, C.P. Mann, A.J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard,
L.G. Whittle

Together with:

S. Rosser (Chief Executive), A. O'Sullivan (Director of the Environment), A. Heaney (Director of Social Services), S. Howells (Acting Assistant Director of Resourcing and Performance), D. Hopkins (Director of Education and Leisure), S. Howells (Acting Assistant Director), N. Barnett (Director of Corporate Services), G. Hardacre (Head of People Management and Development), K. Evans (Personnel Manager - Policy and Performance), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Trade Union Representatives

D. Bezzina (Unison Regional Organiser), B. May (TGWU), J. Toner (UNITE), P. Jones (UNITE) and J. Shelton (Joint Union)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.W. Gough and C. Hobbs, L. Woodland (UNISON), N. Blundell (UCATT), M.J. Payne (GMB) and L. Horrocks (NAS/UWT)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES - 22ND JULY 2008

RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of Councillor A.J. Pritchard in the list of members present the following minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:-

Minutes of the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 22nd July (minute nos. 1 - 24 on page nos. 1 - 6).

MATTERS ARISING

3. Housing Stock Transfer (Wales Housing Quality Standard) (minute no. 14)

It was noted that a meeting has been arranged with the Minister on 19th November 2008 to discuss the issue of housing stock transfer and Councillor Whittle reiterated the opposition of the county borough to the proposal. Mr. Bezzina indicated that the Unions also followed that stance and requested feedback from the meeting if possible. Mr. Rosser confirmed that a business plan is in the process of being prepared for submission to Cabinet within the next few months which will incorporate the issues raised at that time.

4. Basic Skills and Trade Union Learning Rep Recruitment (minute no. 20)

Mrs. J. Shelton (Joint Union) wished it recorded that the unions have been and are actively involved with the Training and Development Manager (Jane Haile) to promote this initiative.

5. Home Care (minute no. 22)

Mr. D. Bezzina (Unison Regional Organiser) reported that there are some minor issues which remain outstanding and a further meeting has been arranged in an attempt to resolve them.

6. JOB EVALUATION/EQUAL PAY

Mr. N. Barnett (Director of Corporate Services) reported that Council had approved the principles of a revised pay and gradings proposal to meet the obligations under the Single Status Agreement. The Council made available £12.3m to meet back pay obligations and a maximum of £6.5m to meet the costs of the new pay and gradings arrangements. It was noted that there would be further negotiations with the Trade Unions on the details of the proposals over the coming weeks. All staff had been advised of the decision taken.

Mr. D. Bezzina reported that he had seen the e-mail sent to staff to advise them of the outcome and welcomed the fact that funding will be made available. He confirmed that the Unions would continue to participate in further negotiations. He expressed concern however at the level of information within its content, particularly as the pay modeller has not yet been agreed. He was advised that it reflected the content of the reports which had been presented to Council for consideration and, whilst they had been treated as exempt information, once Council had agreed to proceed to implement a revised pay and grading structure and authorise Officers to initiate negotiations with the relevant trade unions on an equal pay compensation package, it had been felt that staff should be given as much information as possible.

A query was raised as to whether job evaluation and equal pay could be dealt with independently. Mr. Bezzina indicated that whilst it is not a prerequisite that they be signed off at the same time, legal guidance has suggested that both packages should be dealt with simultaneously, although the Unions recognise to deal with the claims that have been submitted.

7. CONSULTATION BETWEEN TRADE UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT

There were no issues raised under this item.

8. MAKING THE CONNECTIONS/SHARED SERVICES

Mr. S. Rosser referred to discussions on the final business case that had been considered at the recent meeting of the South East Wales Board and reported that now it has been agreed in principle, each of the ten authorities would now have the opportunity to consider its content and present details to their respective Councils.

Mr. Bezzina reported that he had just received a copy of that report but had not had the opportunity to view it and in noting that a report would subsequently be presented to Cabinet/Council indicated that he would welcome consultation at a local level at the earliest possible stage.

Mr. Rosser confirmed that once Officers have had an opportunity to consider its detail and form a view, a formal consultation process will be undertaken.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. Investments in Icelandic Banks

Mr. Rosser gave an update on the current position following the collapse of the Icelandic banks and reported that a joint statement had been prepared by the Leaders of the main political groups and had been circulated to staff (to be cascaded down by Heads of Service to those staff who are not on email) and the public. This was to reassure staff that salary payments would not be affected and to reassure the public that there will be no immediate impact on services. He also confirmed that this has no impact on the Local Government pension scheme administered by Torfaen County Borough Council.

He informed the committee that all the council's investments were conducted under the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and were subject to strict guidelines - consistent with government advice. When these investments were made, the ratings of both banks complied with the specialist credit worthiness ratings in accordance with the councils own Treasury Management Strategy and the CIPFA Code of Treasury Management.

Mr. Rosser reported that the council is urgently investigating all avenues to recover this money and that both the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association are strongly lobbying the government on this issue, and following a request from Mr. Bezzina, indicated that the unions would be advised of any progress.

10. Budget Consideration Process 2008/2009

Mr. Rosser referred to the key elements of the provisional government settlement announced by the Welsh Assembly Government and indicated that with a 2.7% uplift, as in previous years the budget would be very tight with little, if any, room for service development. Inescapable growth and increasing expenditure pressures (i.e. energy costs) would need to be considered as part of the budget setting process.

He confirmed that the detailed budget consideration process has commenced and indicated that Members and the Trade Unions would be part of its progression. It was anticipated that the views of the scrutiny committees would be sought in December/January with the final report being presented to Council before the end of February 2009.

11. 2008- 2009 PAY AWARD

Mr. Hardacre reported that further to recent negotiations between the Local Government Employers and the Trade Union Side, it has been agreed that the 2008/2009 pay award will now be implemented, pending the outcome of the binding arbitration process via the Arbitration and Conciliation Service. It was anticipated that the new rate (backdated to 1st April 2008) will be included in Novembers pay and that retrospective back pay will be included in Decembers pay. Any subsequent increases as a result of the arbitration will be implemented accordingly.

12. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Members welcomed Mr. Albert Heaney, to his first meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee as Director of Social Services. It was noted that Mr. Heaney took up his new role on 13th October 2008 and that Mr. Hopkins has now stood down as Interim Director and was due to retire towards the end of the year.

It was also reported that Sandra Aspinall would be taking up her role as Director of Education and Leisure on 3rd November 2008.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 27TH JANUARY 2009

It was noted that next meeting would be held on 27th January 2009. Special meeting 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 27th January 2009 they were signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 2.30 pm.