



CORPORATE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES YSTRAD MYNACH ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2009 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Miss. L. Ackerman, P.J. Bevan, R.W. Gough, C. Hobbs, C.P. Mann, 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. Aspinall (Director of Education and Leisure), 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

J. Poole (UCATT), M.J. Payne (GMB), J. Toner (UNITE), P. Jones (UNITE), B. May (TGWU), L. Horrocks (NASUWT) and J. Shelton (Joint Union)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Davies, D. Bezzina (Unison Regional Organiser), S. Brassinne (UCATT), L. Woodland (UNISON), N. Funnell (GMB) and Mr. S. Howells (Assistant Director - Resourcing and Performance).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES - 21ST OCTOBER 2008

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 21st October 2008 (minute nos. 1 - 13 on page nos. 1 - 4).

MATTERS ARISING

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

Following a query raised on the timescales, Mr. Rosser reported that it had taken longer than anticipated to bring this matter forward but that it is intended that there would be a Members seminar prior to the report being presented to Council. Councillor Whittle reiterated the opposition of the county borough to the proposal and it was noted that the Unions also followed that stance.

4. Budget 2008/2009 (minute no. 10)

It was noted that the report is to be presented to a Special meeting of Council later in the week.

MINUTES OF DIRECTORATE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

5. Minutes of the Directorate of the Environment Joint Consultative Committee

The minutes of the Directorate of the Environment Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 14th July and 24th October 2008 were received and noted.

6. Minutes of the Social Services Directorate Joint Consultative Committee

The minutes of the Social Services Directorate Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 3rd October 2008 were received and noted.

Mr. Heaney pointed out that the minutes attached were of the Level 2 meeting and not of the Level 1 Directorate Joint Consultative Committee.

7. Minutes of the Education and Leisure Directorate Joint Consultative Committee

The minutes of the Education and Leisure Directorate Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 14th October 2008 were received and noted.

8. Minutes of the Chief Executives Directorate Joint Consultative Committee

The minutes of the Chief Executives Directorate Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 9th December 2008 were received and noted.

It was pointed out that the reference in minute 3 (1) should read Sitting Service rather than 'Sit in Service'.

With regards to the report on the shared services project (minute no. 3(ii) refers), it was noted that it had been the intention to report to Council on 27th January 2009, but as further information, including a revised business plan, had been received it had been withdrawn from that meeting in order that the details could be evaluated and a revised report will now be considered by Council on 10th March 2009.

9. JOB EVALUATION

Mr. Barnett gave an update on the current position relating to job evaluation and it was noted that there had been several joint Trade Union and Management staff briefings. It was confirmed that the ballot would be held between 11th - 27th March 2009 inviting members to vote for the introduction of single status (job evaluation, the new pay and grading structure and standard terms and conditions of employment) or against it. Reference was made to ongoing discussions on the practicalities of the agreement and it was noted that joint meetings would continue to be held on a weekly basis.

It was confirmed that the Trade Unions are also arranging separate briefings for staff throughout the county borough. Mr. Payne reported that the Unions have accepted the offer of the use of premises and confirmed that there would be a series of briefings prior to the ballot. He reported that the outcome of the ballot would be notified as soon as it becomes available.

Mr. Hardacre referred to the timelines and indicated that in the event that a yes result is declared on 27th March 2009, it would be possible to include any changes within the pay released in April.

10. CONSULTATION BETWEEN TRADE UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Payne indicated that the consultation between Unison and management is improving but emphasised the requirement to work together in partnership and ensure that consultation is undertaken at the earliest possible stage in order that issues can be resolved more quickly. He referred to instances when the procedures have not been followed but confirmed that on the whole they are dealt with as they arise.

11. MAKING THE CONNECTIONS/SHARED SERVICES

Mr. Rosser referred to recent discussions at the Connecting South East Wales Board when Andrew Davies, Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery, had been present. He highlighted the issues he had raised at that time, particularly in relation to the current financial situation. As well as proposals for shared services within human resources, payroll and training services, reference had also been made to other collaborative arrangements.

As discussed earlier in the meeting, it was noted that report on shared service would be presented to Council in March and that the concerns raised by the Trade Unions in relation to the operation of the governance model and its procurement would be incorporated in its content. Mr. Payne confirmed that while the Trade Unions remain committed to look at efficiencies, they are not convinced that this shared service project would be in the best interest of the Council and ask for detailed consideration of the business case before any commitment is made.

12. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2009/2010

In noting that there is to be a special Council later in the week, Mr. Barnett gave an update on the report that is to be presented to Members at that time. He confirmed that it had been a difficult process set against the background of a poor local government settlement announced by the Welsh Assembly Government. He referred to the service demands and

Inescapable cost pressures and to the funding gap of £8.5m which had to be addressed and the recommendation that council tax be set at 2.7%.

The comprehensive spending review is due to be announced by central government in the Summer of 2009, which will provide indicative allocations for local government for 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14. It is anticipated that due to prevailing economic conditions, settlements could be significantly less than this and previous years, which will place significant pressure on local government.

Mr. Barnett confirmed that given the poor settlement, the context of the budget setting process had to be about reprioritising services with an emphasis on maintaining frontline service provision wherever possible. He highlighted the efficiencies required and referred to the review of all current services, which will take place in order to develop a clear strategy.

It was noted that one of the strategies proposed is to reduce posts and reorganise service areas to drive through vacancy efficiencies and restrict the use of agency staff. Whilst this will require realignment of duties, redeployment of staff and a limited number of voluntary retirements, using the “85 yr rule”, there is currently no anticipated need for compulsory redundancies. Mr. Barnett confirmed that there would be continue to be dialogue with the Unions on this strategy. The representatives sought an assurance that the right message will be given to staff and welcomed the opportunity to engage in the process and be part of meaningful negotiations and discussions in order to safeguard employees and to maintain front line services.

13. INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING AUTHORITY

Mrs. Shelton raised a query in relation to the requirement to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (who have taken over the responsibilities of POVA) and as to whether in view of the disproportionate effect on the lone worker, the county borough would consider paying the fees for those who are required to register.

SR indicated that this would require detailed consideration and would not be a decision that the Joint Consultative Committee would be able to make. He reminded those present that it has previously been agreed that if there are any specific issues which are to be raised during the course of the meeting Officers should be advised in advance in order that the matter can be investigated and a response be made available at that time. An item had been included on the agenda to that effect and a letter had also been sent to the representatives requesting such information.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 28TH APRIL 2009

It was noted that the quarterly meetings for 2009 had been scheduled for 28th April, 28th July and 20th October 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 28th April 2009 they were signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.