

JOINT COUNCIL FOR WALES

ANNUAL MEETING OF JOINT COUNCIL
METROPOLE HOTEL LLANDRINDOD WELLS
FRIDAY 22nd OCTOBER 2010

Minutes

In Attendance:

Employers Side:

Name	Authority
Gareth Hardacre	Caerphilly
Councillor Lyn Ackerman	Caerphilly
Dawn Parker	Cardiff
Councillor Mary Jones	Swansea
Steve Rees	Swansea
Councillor Graham Thomas	Swansea
Helen Stapleton	Flintshire
Councillor Neville Phillips	Flintshire
Mark Tuson	Merthyr Tydfil
Councillor Peter Fox	Monmouthshire
Councillor Andrea Davies	Neath Port Talbot
Graham Jones	Neath Port Talbot
Debra Wood-Lawson	Newport
Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe	Powys
Karen Williams	Powys
Councillor Clayton Willis	Rhondda-Cynon-Taff
Councillor Glynne Holmes	Rhondda-Cynon-Taff
Tony Wilkins	Rhondda-Cynon-Taff
Councillor Huw P Hughes	Snowdonia National Park
Councillor Peter Cathcart	Torfaen
Tracy Harris	Torfaen
Adrian Unsworth	Vale of Glamorgan
Councillor Gordon Kemp	Vale of Glamorgan
Councillor Janice Charles	Vale of Glamorgan
Councillor Mike Edwards	Wrexham
Councillor Ted George	Wrexham

Also in attendance were Anna Freeman and Jonathan Lloyd of the WLGA.

Trade Union Side:

Name	Union	Authority
Margaret A Thomas	Unison	Anglesey
Paddy McNaught	Unite	Anglesey
Bob Axe	Unite	Blaenau Gwent
Rob Evans	Unison	Blaenau Gwent
Jane Iles	Unison	Bridgend

Name	Union	Authority
Jill Shelton	Unison	Caerphilly
Neil Funnell	GMB	Caerphilly
Angie Shiels	Unison	Cardiff
Ken Daniels	GMB	Cardiff
Althea Phillips	GMB	Carmarthenshire
Ted Evans	Unison	Carmarthenshire
Catherine Graham	Unison	Ceredigion
David Hawkins	Unison	Conwy
Karen A Evans	Unison	Denbighshire
Barry Bracegirdle	GMB	Gwynedd
Dennis Parry	Unite	Gwynedd
Kevin R Jones	GMB	Merthyr Tydfil
Pat Morgan	Unison	Neath Port Talbot
Jon Holmstrom	Unison	Newport
Jim Stobbart	Unison	Pembrokeshire
Tommy Bowler	Unite	Pembrokeshire
Gareth Jones	Unison	Powys
Craig Jones	GMB	Rhondda-Cynon-Taff
Colin Calder	Unite	Swansea
Dominic MacAskill	Unison	Swansea
Jacqueline Ann Griffiths	GMB	Swansea
Malcolm Harrington	Unison	Swansea
Mike Payne	GMB	Swansea
Gordon Francis	GMB	Torfaen
Steve Hibbert	Unison	Wrexham

1. Apologies for Absence:

Name	Authority
Carys Edwards	Anglesey
David MacGregor	Bridgend
Councillor Huw David	Bridgend
Councillor Allan J Pritchard	Caerphilly
Councillor Mark Stephens	Cardiff
Philip Lenz	Cardiff
Cllr. Wyn Evans	Carmarthenshire
Cllr. Kevin Madge	Carmarthenshire
Councillor Keith Evans	Ceredigion
Councillor Ena Wynne	Conwy
Councillor Linda Groom	Conwy
Councillor Simon Glyn	Gwynedd
Councillor R J Higginson	Monmouthshire
Councillor Peter H C Davies	Newport
Councillor David Wildman	Pembrokeshire
Ceri Davies	Pembrokeshire
Councillor Keith Hyde	South Wales F&R
Patrick Arran	Swansea
Lucy Crumplin	Wrexham

Name	Union	Authority
Ieuan Williams	GMB	Powys
Gary Enright	Unison	Caerphilly
Liam Perry	Unison	Monmouthshire
Paddy McNaught	Unite	Regional Officer
John Burston	Unite	Carmarthen

2. MINUTES OF THE JOINT COUNCIL MEETING – 19TH MARCH 2010

The minutes of the Joint Council meeting held on Friday 19th March 2010 were agreed as a true record subject to minor amendments.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5. Review of the Joint Council

It was reported that some Unite lay officials had experienced issues with time off to attend the Joint Council. They were advised to contact Paddy McNaught who would discuss with the relevant authority

4. STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES

The meeting noted the amendments to the statement of representatives appointed to serve on the Council for the period to the next Annual Meeting.

5. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE –CHAIR

The meeting appointed the following to serve as Chair and Vice chair for the period until the next Annual Meeting:-

Councillor Gordon Kemp (Vale of Glamorgan) - Chair
Paddy McNaught (Unite the Union) - Vice-Chair

6. APPOINTMENT OF JOINT SECRETARIES

The meeting voted the following to serve as Joint Secretaries for the period until the next Annual Meeting:-

Anna Freeman (WLGA) – Employer’s Side Secretary
Dominic Macaskill (Unison) – Trades Union Side Secretary

7. REVIEW OF THE JOINT COUNCIL FOR WALES

Councillor Kemp provided the background to why the review was being

undertaken which in principle was to make it more cost effective and fit for purpose in the current financial climate. He reported on the results of the Employer's Side survey and the proposal of the Employer's side that the meeting should move to 1 day.

There was general acceptance of the proposal although it was acknowledged that the informal/ social interaction between employers and trades unions was very beneficial and would be lost by moving to a 1 day meeting.

Others comments made related to the trades unions concern that there should be no reduction in facilities time allowed for the meeting or the time allocated to the Joint meeting.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to promote more meaningful interaction, and more focussed discussion during the meeting similar to that which had occurred earlier (discussion and debate on agency workers).

Finally the issues of logistics and location were raised and these matters were referred to the Joint Council Executive to determine structure, dates and venue for meetings in the forthcoming period to the Annual Meeting.

8. JOINT COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEETING 5/10/10

Councillor Kemp advised the meeting that he was disappointed that there was no progress made at the last Joint Council Executive (Executive) meeting held on 5th October. He accepted that a TUC Conference was planned for 26th October but stated that decisions could not be put on hold, and there was a lack of understanding of the need to make decisions quickly in order to reduce costs and safeguard jobs and services as far as possible.

Mike Payne (GMB) responded regarding the issue of workforce cost reduction stating that the purpose of the Wales TUC conference was to determine the Trades Unions position on the cuts agenda. He hoped that the position would be clearer in a few weeks time following the TUC conference.

Councillor Kemp advised that authorities needed to set budgets and that time was a factor with authorities bound to follow statutory procedures with S188 notices if it seemed possible that agreement would not be reached in time.

Dominic Macaskill (Unison) advised the meeting that it was difficult to reach agreement on actual issues at the present time, but the trades unions had a clear intention on getting some form of Memorandum of Understanding moving forward and didn't want S.188 notices and wanted to be engaged. He continued that it was appreciated that a large part of

the budget related to workforce costs and the trade unions were not saying they won't engage. However, it was not just about the immediate issues but also into the future as many local government employees were not well paid and if terms and conditions are eroded there would be an issue of sustainability. The trade union approach would be to seek to agree time limited reductions and longer term reductions through natural wastage and retirement. He stressed there was a fundamental issue for the trade unions in that the 'Green Book' was a national policy and although it does allow for local determination under Part 3 any attempts to change Part 2 would be met with resistance.

Mark Tuson (Merthyr Tydfil) reinforced comments made by Councillor Kemp in that the budgeting process will take place between November and February and that timescale was a key factor. He believed that if there is no engagement and agreement before then it came down to a simple equation for authorities –reduction in budgets equalled a reduction in workforce numbers.

A number of trade union representatives stated that they are involved and want to be engaged locally in the budgeting process and they will negotiate on Part 3 terms and conditions but not Part 2.

Mike Payne echoed comments of trade union colleagues and advised the meeting that the trade unions are actively engaged in discussions with a number of authorities including Neath Port Talbot. He emphasised that the trade unions are not abrogating their responsibility as they needed to defend the trade union position but would continue to discuss issues with the Employers, which included the next Executive meeting on 30th November.

Graham Jones (Neath Port Talbot) advised the meeting that he was present at the last Executive meeting and was disappointed that no progress had been made. He stated that timescale is a key issue and thought it be helpful to ask the Executive to commit to make decisions as partners at that meeting on 30th November or agree to move forward one way or another otherwise we will run out of time as authorities have budget decisions to make.

Dominic Macaskill accepted the need for the Executive to reach decisions when it met on 30th November. He stated that a Memorandum of Understanding would not be binding on any authority as they were 22 separate employers. However, it would be useful in getting broad statements agreed which gave certain permissions and boundaries for local determination. He reminded the meeting that those Part 3 terms and conditions which had been agreed under Single Status negotiations had been Equality Impact Assessed (EIA). There was a danger that if terms and conditions are looked at again then it could distort this and there would need to be further EIAs.

Councillor Kemp concluded this item by saying that the Employers need the engagement of the trades unions at the Executive meeting. The Employers had raised 13 issues where the views of the trade unions were needed to make progress. He endorsed the suggestion that the next Executive meeting should seek agreement on the way forward or agree that the matters cannot be taken forward together at all.

The notes of the previous meeting on 5th October were noted.

9. TRADE UNION ITEMS

Councillor Kemp advised the meeting that the Trades Union Side had raised these issues very late and the Employer's Side had therefore had little time to consider them in advance. They were prepared to take the items although it was unlikely that any progress could be made on the matters.

i. Procurement Agreements

Dominic Macaskill provided the background to the proposal for a model procurement agreement. He explained that this extended beyond purely procurement issues and provided a model that encouraged discussion and supports some of the issues previously raised about new ways of working such as a 'Systems Thinking' approach.

Anna Freeman (WLGA) advised that the Employers were concerned that the model agreement read as a list of TU demands and things that the Employer would be obligated to do, but contained nothing about what the trade unions would do in return such as cost saving negotiations around terms and conditions. They could not consider it in such circumstances.

Graham Jones echoed these issues stating that there were 20-25 things in the model agreement for the employers, but nothing listed for what the trades unions would do. He referred to issues within Neath Port Talbot where the trades unions have not engaged in the discussions. He felt there must be obligation for the trades unions to engage and deliver, not delay. He suggested that the trades unions give some thought about what they can offer as part of an agreement.

Steve Hibbert (Unison) stated that regarding the issue of engagement and good relationships, trades unions are often pushed into a corner where their only option is to take opposition. The trades unions often have no confidence that decisions have been properly scrutinised and perhaps authorities have not considered all options in their decision making. He continued that trades unions are not just interested in the HR issues, and they can be the oil in the machine and not the spanner in the works.

Patrick Morgan (Unison) responded to the issues at Neath Port Talbot by

saying that the trades unions were committed to look at terms and conditions but can't agree to write off 'a blank cheque' without knowing more detail around costs and the corporate position.

ii. Protecting Public Service

Dominic Macaskill explained that this proposal was designed to put pressure on central government as decisions are not always set in stone and can be affected by action. It followed the line that the devolved administrations took in making a joint statement about looking at alternatives. He continued that not many knew that the Joint Council for Wales exists and that we needed to express our concerns about the cuts. The trades unions felt that in a context of pay freezes and removing enhancements it is harder for employees if councils are not sent to be campaigning against the cuts. He encouraged Councillors to campaign against the cuts as champions of their communities.

Councillor Kemp felt that this was something more political for the WLGA Council but was unsure if it would get agreement

Both Councillor Mary Jones (Swansea) and Councillor Peter Fox (Monmouthshire) felt that this was better considered by the WLGA Council.

Dominic Macaskill advised that he was not expecting any form of sign up at the meeting and any statement would not go beyond expressing concern at the cuts being proposed. From a trades unions perspective there are alternatives and this approach would help put pressure on government to consider these.

iii. Maintaining NJC Conditions

In the light of previous discussions it was accepted that this was part of the discussion that would take place at the Executive meeting on 30th November.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The day and date of the next meetings would be determined by the Executive when they looked at issues that had been referred to them under item 7.