

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

4 MARCH 2020

Chair:	* Councillor Adam Swersky	
Councillors:	* Camilla Bath	* Angella Murphy-Strachan
	* Philip Benjamin	† Mina Parmar
	* Pamela Fitzpatrick	* Varsha Parmar (2)
Teacher	* Ms L Crimmins	- NUT
	Ms A Lyons	- NAHT
Unison Representatives:	* Mr G Martin	* Mr J Royle
GMB Representative:	* Ms P Belgrave	

- * Denotes Member present
- (2) Denotes category of Reserve Member
- † Denotes apologies received

37. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Graham Henson

Reserve Member

Councillor Varsha Parmar

38. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

39. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

40. Matter Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2020

Minute 24 – Petition to Stop Any Act of Trade Union Discrimination by Association

A representative of Unison reported that the lead petitioner had not received a response following its submission at the last meeting of the Forum.

The Chair requested that this matter be followed up with the Corporate Director of Community.

41. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

42. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting.

43. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

RECOMMENDED AND RESOLVED ITEMS

44. Joint UNISON and Management Submission Relating to Single Status Compliance, Hay Evaluation Scheme and Differing Treatment

The Forum received a report of the Director of Human Resources, which set out issues recently discussed by UNISON and the Human Resources Department in relation to Single Status Compliance, Hay Evaluation Scheme and Differing Treatment.

Prior to the consideration of the report, a representative of Unison commented that the full submissions from Unison had been abridged in the report and he asked if Members had had sight of the full submissions. In response, the HR Consultant stated that the format of the report had been agreed with a representative of Unison but that he would ensure that, in the future, the full submissions were circulated. He would also ensure that the full submissions from Unison on Single Status Compliance, Hay Evaluation Scheme and Differing Treatment under consideration that evening were made available to Members after the meeting.

Another representative of Unison asked what action would be taken where officers had ignored the recommendations of the Forum. The Chair stated

that it was important that the recommendations from the Forum, once approved by the relevant Portfolio Holder, were actioned by officers and he asked the representative to provide him with information where this had not happened.

Following the receipt of these general comments, the Forum considered the report set out on the supplemental agenda to allow them to be availed of the ongoing discussions between Unison and officers regarding the issues raised in respect of the following:

Single Status Compliance

Both Unison and Management outlined their position, including the suggested outcome, details of which were set out in the report. The Management outlined the process that would be put in train in order to resolve the payment of contractual overtime in the Community Directorate.

A representative of Unison explained that the purpose of the Single Status Agreement had been to bridge the pay gap between blue and white collar workers. This national agreement aimed to avoid unfairness in pay and reward arrangements for employees and to ensure harmonisation of conditions in comparable posts. However, the Council was not complying with the Agreement. As a result, some white collar employees were benefitting from additional payments, such as overtime, whilst the role profiles of operational staff had not been evaluated since 2004.

The same Unison representative added that some Directors had been proactive and had addressed the issue but the situation in the Community Directorate needed resolving. Some staff on MG Grades had also received contractual overtime which they were not entitled to. The situation was having a detrimental impact on front line staff.

The HR Consultant stated that the issue needed addressing and a process had been agreed with Unison to expedite the cessation of the contractual overtime where it was not warranted.

Another representative of Unison outlined the issues within the organisation and lack of any action taken against managers for non-compliance. He was of the view that there was a lack of corporate governance and accountability within the organisation.

Members noted that the intention was to resolve the issue by 1 April 2020 but Unison accepted that due to Covid-19, a short delay was possible.

RESOLVED: That the ongoing discussions between Unison and Officers regarding Single Status Compliance be noted.

Hay Evaluation Scheme

Both Unison and Management outlined their position, including the suggested outcome, details of which were set out in the report.

A representative of Unison referred to the two methods of job evaluation schemes operated by the Council and questioned the checks and balances in place, particularly in relation to managers' salaries. He was of the view that there was no transparency in respect of the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme and requested an explanation for the regrading of some of the MG roles without any justification or the meeting of the basic principles of an evaluation process.

The HR Consultant agreed with these sentiments which represented a fair perspective in respect of the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme. He agreed that some regrading of MG roles had failed to show any rationale. He suggested that the way forward was for all MG job evaluation requests to be signed off by the relevant Corporate Director and that no job was to be re-evaluated less than 12 months since the last request unless the change related to a restructure.

In response to questions from Members, the HR Consultant reported that:

- the suggested outcome would be applied from 1 April 2020;
- the two methods of evaluation were historical. In local government, the GLPC Job Evaluation system was applied to 'G' grades and was operated jointly with the Trades' Unions, whilst the Hay Job Evaluation system was operated for MG grades (senior roles) and was not operated with Trades' Unions.

Another representative of Unison requested the need for the Council to demonstrate that it was meeting all of its equality objectives and suggested that the Council's HR Department keep records of all evaluations so that they could be tracked when necessary. The Council's staff were a valuable resource and such data would ensure that checks and balances were in place. Unison also requested that the Unions be notified of all re-grading of MG posts and the process applied.

The HR Consultant agreed for the need to be open, transparent and maintain a database. He was confident of the current operation of the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme.

The Chair, with the agreement of other Members of the Forum, suggested that additional measures be put in place and it was

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

That

- (1) Trades' Unions and relevant Officers be requested to discuss the procedures in respect of the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme applied to MG Grades;

- (2) subject to the agreement of the Chief Executive, including its review, Trades' Unions be notified of all job evaluations carried out under the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme.

Differing Treatment

Both Unison and Management outlined their position, including the suggested outcome, details of which were set out in the report. The Management regretted that a response to allow a Youth Officer to attend training for accreditation to ERA (Employment Relations Act 1999) standards had been delayed and that no discourtesy had been intended.

A Unison representative reported that the lack of response had resulted in delay in the individual being trained for accreditation to ERA standards as training sessions were only available during certain times of the year. He added that the failure to engage with Unison was also delaying its succession planning. Unison was extremely disappointed with the delay, particularly as the Council's Recognition and Procedural Agreement set out agreed procedures to be followed, including on requests for time-off arrangements for Trades' Unions duties and participation. The Council needed to ensure that responses were submitted in a timely fashion.

The HR Consultant stated that the Corporate Director of People had undertaken to personally intervene in such situations and that this message, including the 'open door' policy he operated, had been conveyed to a Unison representative. He explained that, on the occasion in question, there had been an oversight within the Directorate. A representative of Unison disagreed in that he had personally intervened and made representations to the Corporate Director. The Chair stated that, in similar situations, the Unions should contact him personally in order to expedite a response.

Members asked if the individual had subsequently received the training and were informed that s/he would now need to wait until June 2020 and would not be able to engage with the employer until then. In response to additional questions from Member, the same representative added that no alternative training was available from another provider and it would entail checking if the training was available elsewhere in the country.

The Chair apologised for the delay and hoped to see the individual at a future meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the ongoing discussions between Unison and Officers regarding Differing Treatment be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.34 pm, closed at 8.05 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ADAM SWERSKY
Chair