

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM**6 JULY 2004**

Chair: (To be appointed) (See Minute 94)

Councillors:	* Mrs Bath	* Lavingia (3)
	* Billson (1)	* Mrs Joyce Nickolay
	* Currie	* Toms
	* Dighé (Vice-Chair) (in the Chair)	

Representatives of HTCC: (Currently no appointees)

Representatives of UNISON:	* Ms M Cawley	* Mr M Nolan
	* Ms A Jackson	* Ms D Prasad
	* Mr K McDonald #	* Mr C Sumner

* Denotes Member present/Employee Representative present
 (1) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Member
 # Attending as a reserve for Ms K La Frenais

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1: Annual Equality Monitoring Report - 01 April 2003 - 31 March 2004 and Asian Applicants Review Group**

The Forum received two reports from the Executive Director (Organisational Development). The Annual Equality Monitoring Report detailed the Council's equality performance from April 2003 to March 2004. The Interim Head of Personnel referred the Forum to the table on page 3 of the agenda, which summarised the issues related to the recruitment and development of black and minority ethnic applicants. Whilst the majority of performance indicators had either improved or maintained their previous level, it was noted that there had been a downward trend in the success ratio of black and minority ethnic appointments. In response, the report proposed the adoption of a number of recommendations, as set out in paragraphs 8.38 to 8.44.

In conjunction with the Annual Equality Monitoring Report, the Forum also considered a report on the Asian Applicants Review Group. It was explained that the work undertaken in the recruitment and selection questionnaire and workshop for unsuccessful black and minority ethnic applicants, helped to form the proposed action plan. Having completed its work and produced the action plan, the Asian Applicants Review Group had been disbanded.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder)

That (1) the measures set out in paragraphs 8.38 to 8.44 of the Annual Equality Monitoring Report, be adopted;

(2) the Council's performance targets for 2004/05, as set out in Appendix 5 to the Annual Equality Monitoring Report, be adopted; and

(3) the proposed recruitment and selection action plan, as set out in Appendix 3 to the officer report on the Asian Applicants Review Group, be adopted.

(See also Minutes 106 and 107).

PART II - MINUTES

94.

Appointment of Chair:

(The Vice-Chair, Councillor Dighé, previously appointed to that office by the Cabinet (See Minute 98 below) took the Chair for this item).

The Forum was advised that for the Municipal Year 2004/2005 an Employee side representative should hold the Chair and the Council side the office of Vice-Chair, which was the adopted alternating annual arrangement. A UNISON representative advised the Forum that the employees' side nomination of Chair would be deferred to the next meeting. In the absence of a nomination from the employees' side at this meeting, it was

RESOLVED: That the Vice-Chair, Councillor Dighé be appointed to the Chair for this meeting.

95. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Janet Cowan	Councillor Billson
Councillor N Shah	Councillor Lavingia

96. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Councillor Currie	Lifelong Member of UNISON
Councillor Toms	Lifelong Member of the NUT

97. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda items be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
12. Full Year Health and Safety Performance Report for the period 1st April 2003 - 31 March 2004	The report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. It was proposed that the item be admitted on the agenda to allow the Forum to note the progress of the previous reporting year and note the actions planned for the forthcoming reporting year.
14. Asian Applicants Review Group Report	The report was only endorsed by the Asian Applicants Review Group at its meeting on 29 June 2004. The report required referral to the Portfolio Holder to allow for the implementation of the proposed recruitment and selection action plan.
15. Joint Single Status Agreement	The item was not on the agenda at the time it was circulated. The item was added to the agenda to provide the Forum with an update on recent developments.

(2) items 13 and 14 be considered together; and

(3) all items be considered with the press and public present.

98. **Appointment of Vice-Chair:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment at the meeting of Cabinet on 20 May 2004, under the provisions of Advisory Panel/Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 5 (Part 4E of the Constitution) of Councillor Dighé as Vice Chair of the Forum for the Municipal Year 2004/2005.

99. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2004, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

100. **Matters Arising:**

The Forum received a paper from the Interim Head of Personnel, which provided Members with an update on issues discussed at the last meeting.

RESOLVED: That the matters arising from the meeting of the Forum held on 4 February 2004 be noted.

101. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

102. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

103. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

104. **Presentation on the Staff Survey:**

The Chair introduced Members to Ms Ceri Diffley of The Work Foundation, who was in attendance at the meeting to provide Members with a presentation on the Staff Survey. It was anticipated that the survey would help to inform future human resources strategy, as well as providing an opportunity to compare results to other local authorities and allow future progress to be measured against previous findings.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the survey process. The Forum was reminded that the survey was carried out at a time of considerable organisational change. However the results of the survey were felt to represent typical findings from an organisation that had experienced recent change.

The most positive findings of the survey included:

- a response rate of 52% (generally representative of the Council's workforce)
- individual teams were found to be well informed on local issues
- the majority of the workforce were found to be satisfied in their jobs
- a high standard of line management
- 7 out of 10 staff said that their working environment was free from bullying or harassment

The negative findings of the survey included:

- the low image of the Council
- senior management were viewed less well than line managers
- recent changes within the Council had not been well received
- staff felt that they did not have any opportunity to influence the decision-making process
- an over reliance on informal information sources and a lack of face-to-face communication

A UNISON representative conveyed some members' concerns that their identity could be deduced from the way in which the questions were worded. It was noted that sealed envelopes were provided, which were sent directly to The Work Foundation. It was The Work Foundation's intention to provide an objective and anonymous framework for the survey to be undertaken.

In response to a query, the Interim Head of Personnel advised the Forum that the CPA and IDeA had identified the lack of a Staff Survey as an area of concern. Whilst recognising that it was not an ideal time to carry out such a survey, it was added that a similar survey in a year's time would prove to be extremely valuable. It was agreed that the Forum would receive annual updates on progress made against the action plan.

RESOLVED: That (1) the above be noted; and

(2) an interim progress report be received at the next meeting on 3 November 2004.

105. **Full Year Health and Safety Performance Report for the period 1st April 2003 - 31 March 2004:**

The Forum received a report of the Executive Director (Organisational Development), which outlined the Council's health and safety performance from April 2003 to March 2004. The Forum was advised that the report had been seen by the Corporate Safety Group and would be sent back to all safety groups within the Council in order for the

individual action plans to be implemented. The Forum heard that the number of accidents and incidents had fallen from the previous year although the number of serious accidents, which required referral to the Health and Safety Executive, had increased. Road traffic accidents and incidents were noted as an area of concern that would require regular monitoring.

A UNISON representative advised the Forum that no directorate had received fire safety training. In addition, those officers responsible for carrying out fire safety risk assessments had also received no training. It was anticipated that this would be an issue that the Corporate Safety Group would examine. The Chair asked that the Forum receive an update at the next meeting as to the action taken by the Corporate Safety Group to address this issue. A UNISON representative reported that a company who had a major contract with Harrow Council were found to have no disciplinary procedures or health and safety regulations. Following three letters to the Council, UNISON had not received any response. The officer presenting the report agreed to pursue the matter.

In response to a query, the Forum was advised that the report did include provisions to improve road safety and reduce the number of road traffic accidents. In addition HGV and class license holders had been required to undertake a new training programme, which had already seen a reduction in driver accidents.

RESOLVED: That (1) the health and safety performance report and progress on actions planned for the reporting year from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004 be noted; and

(2) the actions planned for the next reporting year (1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005), be noted.

106. **Annual Equality Monitoring Report - 01 April 2003 - 31 March 2004:**
Further to Recommendation 1 above, it was

RESOLVED: That the Annual Equality Monitoring information for 2003/2004 be noted.

107. **Asian Applicants Review Group Report:**
Further to Recommendation 1 above, it was noted that the Forum had established the Asian Applicants Review Group in January 2003 to examine the adverse impact experienced by black and minority ethnic applicants. The Group had concluded that there was no obvious reason why Asian applicants experienced an adverse impact during the recruitment and selection process, although research did indicate that the appointment stage was where the impact was most noticeable.

On reflection the Chair felt that the third recommendation of the report on the Asian Applicants Review Group should be amended to pass responsibility of this function to the Corporate Equality Group (CEG). It was explained that the CEG was a more appropriate body to oversee the implementation of the action plan. It was agreed that the Forum would receive updates on the implementation of the action plan.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report and work of the Asian Applicants Review Group be noted;

(2) regular updates on the implementation of the action plan set out in Appendix 3 of the officer report be submitted to the Forum; and

(3) the Corporate Equality Group be asked to monitor and oversee the implementation of the action plan.

108. **Joint Single Status Agreement:**
The Forum received a report of the Executive Director (Organisational Development), which provided Members with an update on developments since the meeting of Cabinet on 24 June 2004. The Interim Head of Personnel advised that the Council had undertaken a consultation process with the workforce. The process entailed a number of consultation meetings and a ballot of UNISON members, which saw 60% vote in favour of the agreement. The Chair thanked both sides for their hard work in negotiating a complex agreement, which he hoped would make Harrow Council a fairer place to work for all employees.

RESOLVED: That (1) the outcome of the 'Single Status' negotiations and the results of the consultation with the workforce and the ballot of UNISON members be noted; and

(2) the implementation of the Joint Single Status Agreement in accordance with the

Cabinet decision of 24 June 2004, be endorsed.

109. **Extension to the Termination of the Meeting:**
In accordance with the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 12 (Part 4E of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At 10.00pm to continue until 10.05pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.43 pm, closed at 10.03 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SANJAY DIGHE
Vice-Chair (in the Chair)