

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM

31 JANUARY 2007

- Chairman: * Councillor Mrs Camilla Bath
- Councillors: * Bob Currie * Joyce Nickolay (1)
 * Graham Henson * Paul Osborn (2)
 * Chris Mote * Navin Shah
- Representatives of HTCC: (Currently no appointees)
- Representatives of UNISON: * Ms L Ahmad * Mr G Martin
 Mr S Compton Ms K McDonald
 Ms S Duffell Mr M Nolan
- Representative of GMB: * Mr S Karia

* Denotes Member present/Employee Representative present
 (1) and (2) Denote category of Reserve Member

[Note: Other Attendance: Mr R Thomas, UNISON, also attended.]

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL

PART II - MINUTES

29. **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 David Ashton Councillor Don Billson	Councillor Joyce Nickolay Councillor Paul Osborn

30. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
Councillor Bob Currie	Declared a personal interest in that he was a retired, lifelong member of UNISON. Accordingly he remained in the room and took part in the discussion and decision-making on all items.
Councillor Graham Henson	Declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the Communications Workers Union. Accordingly he remained in the room and took part in the discussion and decision-making on all items.
Councillor Navin Shah	Declared a personal interest in that he was a member of AMICUA and a patron of Harrow Anti-Racist Trust. Accordingly he remained in the room and took part in the discussion and decision-making on all items.

31. **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>
10. Consultation on the Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2007/08 to 2009/10 – GMB-Harrow Public Services Branch response to the Draft Budget 2007/08 to 2009/10	A response to the report on the main agenda was tabled by the GMB representative. Members were asked to consider the response when considering Agenda Item 10.
11. Equality Monitoring Report for 1 April 2006 to 30 September 2006	There were omissions from pages 5 and 9 of the main report that was circulated on the main agenda. By circulating the revised report, ECF Members would have complete information prior to the meeting.

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

32. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2006 be deferred until printed in the Council Bound Minute Volume.

33. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

34. **Petitions:**

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

35. **Deputations:**

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

36. **Follow-Up Progress Report following recommendation of the HSE Inspection - January 2005:**

The Forum received a report of the Director of Financial and Business Strategy, which provided an update on activities undertaken to meet the recommendations in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspection report of January 2005.

In response to Trade Union representatives' concerns about the cost of proposals and the suggestion that the remit of the Health and Safety Partnership Board (HSPB) might change to become strategic, an officer explained that existing budgets would be used and that the HSPB had always intended to be strategic.

A Member suggested that a sub-group of the HSPB could be set up to work at an operational level. An officer responded that this would be put to the next meeting of the HSPB for consideration. A Member queried whether the Board had cross-party membership.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the minutes of the HSPB meetings and the terms of reference be circulated to Members of ECF;

(3) the Leader reconsider the membership of the HSPB;

(4) any changes to HSPB be discussed with the unions.

37. **Progress on consulting the Unions on Revised Attendance and Grievance Policies and Procedures:**

The Forum received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which provided information on the consultation that had taken place between officers and unions on the revised Grievance and Attendance policies and procedures. Members

had requested this report at the ECF Meeting in November 2006. It was reported that progress had been made and officers hoped to have reached an agreement by the ECF meeting in April 2007.

Trade unions expressed the view that it would be optimistic to expect agreement to be reached by April 2007 and that more time might be required.

RESOLVED: That (1) the progress made with the unions on the revised Grievance and Attendance Policies and Procedures be noted;

(2) Members of the Forum be provided with hard copies of the revised Grievance and Attendance policies and procedures;

(3) reference to the review process be made in the Annual Equality Report;

(4) if agreement has been reached, a report be submitted to the next ECF meeting, and if not, a report detailing the areas which had not been agreed be provided.

38. **Consultation on the Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2007/08 to 2009/10:**

The Forum received a report of the Director of Financial and Business Strategy to enable consultation with the Trade Unions on the proposals in the Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2007/08 to 2009/10 agreed by the 14 December 2006 Cabinet.

An officer outlined the budget and the pressures facing the Council and asked the Trade Unions to comment on the report.

The Trade Unions:-

- raised concern at the impact of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) deficit on the Council;
- queried Members' allowances;
- expressed the view that services should remain in-house;
- asked for clarification on whether the Civic Centre would be sold and if so, why refurbishment was taking place and whether it was necessary;
- queried why there would be no Council Tax increase in 2009/10;
- queried whether there would be further reductions in the union budgets;
- expressed the view that officers should not decide that there should be a Joint Secretary for UNISON and the GMB as the unions should manage themselves;
- queried the level of compulsory redundancies in the Organisational Review and how redundancies would be funded;
- raised concern at the cost incurred by using consultants.

The Forum discussed the points raised and the Leader of the Council stated that:

- the PCT deficit was approximately £20 million and that in order to recover this position, pressure to fund services was being transferred to the Council;
- Members' allowances had not increased in 2006/07, they were the lowest of any London Borough and would increase by the same percentage as employees' pay in 2007/08;
- there were no plans to sell the Civic Centre and that work was required to comply with health and safety and disability legislation. Open plan offices would mean employees in other buildings could be moved to the Civic Centre, thus reducing rent currently being paid on other buildings;
- although there were no plans for a Council Tax increase in 2009/10, this could change depending on the level of grant received from the government;
- it was hoped that any redundancies could be accommodated through voluntary means but there might be a need for compulsory redundancies. The numbers

of redundancies was not yet known as there was a need to determine the revised structures;

- the use of consultants had been minimised and they were only used where their expertise was necessary.

In addition, officers advised that:-

- the budget cut of £60,000 in relation to the Unions had been implemented in the August 2006 savings plan and there would be no further reductions in 2007/08;
- in the past there had been a Joint Secretary and this facilitated consultation and effective use of the budget. The unions could decide how the position of Joint Secretary was filled;
- the Council could apply to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to have the statutory element of redundancy costs capitalised.

RESOLVED: That (1) the comments made by the Trade Unions be reported to the Cabinet and the Council for consideration;

(2) the Leader of the Council provide a breakdown of the costs of the refurbishment works to the Civic Centre, to the GMB representative, as requested.

39. **Equality Monitoring Report for 1 April 2006 to 30 September 2006:**

The Panel received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which updated Members on the progress made by the Council (excluding school based staff) in the first half of the year, from 1 April 2006 to 30 September 2006, in achieving its equality performance targets for 2006 and progress on other equality work.

It was explained that this report focused primarily on recruitment and that the figures outlined in the report would not change significantly by the end of 2006/07 due to the recruitment freeze that was in place. An officer reported that the percentage of appointments from internal and external black and minority ethnic (BME) applicants was 40%, which was of slight concern as it was lower than the figure for 2005/06 and the Council's target of 42.7%. There had also been a reduction in the number of BME applicants that had applied internally, however the proportion appointed had not decreased. Positively, there had been an increase in the percentage of senior management posts (based on the top 5% of earners) filled by both women and BME staff.

An officer reported that there had been an improvement in the number of applicants that had declared having a disability and that a Disability Equality Scheme was being drafted. The Council had successfully achieved Level 3 in the Equality Standard for Local Government in 2005/06 and was committed to achieving Level 4 by the end of 2006/07. Work would also be done to address the issue of more women than men being appointed at the lower pay bands and more men than women being appointed at higher pay bands.

Members and officers entered into discussions on the figures in the report and the systems in place to ensure a fair and equitable recruitment and selection was in place. It was reported that representatives of the Harrow Council Black Workers Group (HCBWG) and Disability Awareness and Information Support Group (DAIS) would be invited to attend ECF meetings where reports on equalities issues were being discussed.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) officers provide Members of the Forum with copies of the Disability Equality Scheme.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.00 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CAMILLA BATH
Chairman