

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM**31 JULY 2008**

Chairman: * Ms L Ahmad

Councillors: * David Ashton * Graham Henson
 * Mrs Camilla Bath * Phillip O'Dell
 * Bob Currie * Paul Osborn
 * Susan Hall

Representatives of HTCC: (Currently no appointees)

Representatives of UNISON: * Ms M Cawley * Mr G Martin
 * Mr D ButterfieldRepresentatives of GMB: * Mr J Dunbar
 * Ms K McDonald

* Denotes Member present/Employee Representative present

[See Appendix 1 for list of officers in attendance.]

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**112. **Appointment of Chairman:****RESOLVED:** To appoint Ms L Ahmad, representing the trade unions, as Chairman of the Forum for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.113. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.114. **Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note the following declarations of interest made by Members present relating to the business to be transacted at this meeting:

- (i) Councillor Graham Henson declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the Communication Workers' Union and his cousin was a Council employee. Accordingly, he would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on all items of the agenda.
- (ii) Councillor Bob Currie declared a personal interest in that he was a retired member of UNISON and his son was a Council employee. Accordingly, he would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on all items of the agenda.
- (iii) Councillor David Ashton declared a personal interest in that his daughter-in-law was a Council employee. Accordingly, he would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on all items of the agenda.

115. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following item 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>
13. Facility Time – Emergency Motion from UNISON	This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated because it was written in response to an announcement made two days before the meeting. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency, in order to make progress towards resolving the matter as soon as possible.

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

116. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Paul Osborn as Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.

117. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the Chair be given the authority to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2008 as a correct record of that meeting, once printed in the Council Bound Volume.

118. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note the receipt of the following petition, signed by 50 residents, presented by Councillor Phillip O'Dell, and referred to the Portfolio Holder, Adults and Housing, for consideration:

- Health & Safety of Durrant Court Tenants.

119. **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).

120. **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).

121. **Annual Health and Safety Report 2007/08:**

The Forum received a report of the Corporate Director, Finance, setting out a summary of the Council's health and safety performance in 2007/08, providing an update on activities undertaken, including action taken as part of the response to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) post-inspection, and looking ahead to work planned to support the Council in its change agenda and in response to new legislation. An officer gave a presentation on the report and answered questions from members of the Forum.

In response to a comment by a representative of GMB, the officer agreed in future to include a comparison with the previous year's performance. In response to questions from representatives of UNISON, the officer stated that policies and procedures for monitoring asbestos were adequate, but that asbestos plans could not include every detail and staff carrying them out took a precautionary approach to dealing with asbestos. During discussion of an incident involving the management of asbestos by Kier, a Council partner, the Portfolio Holder for Environment Services, stated that Kier had accepted full responsibility. She also invited representatives of the trade unions to attend staff training that Kier would be organising on asbestos management.

Representatives of UNISON expressed concern at the low figures recorded in the tables in the report relating to accidents at work, especially those in the area of Children's Services. UNISON representatives also asked for a breakdown of the 150 health and safety visits referred to in the report and wanted to know whether these were inspections, training or responses to intervention.

In response to a request from a Member, the officer agreed to provide a report-back in three months' time on the arrangements for managing and monitoring Legionella. It was also agreed to provide the trade unions with the report on the effect on the Leisure Centre of a gas problem elsewhere.

During discussion of the role of staff health and safety forums, particularly in education, it was noted that it was difficult for staff to be released from their duties to attend forum meetings, and the Divisional Director, Human Resources and Development, reported that he would raise this with Directorates. Asked about the monitoring of stress, the Director informed the Forum that regular reports from Occupational Health, including monitoring information on stress, were provided to the Health at Work Group.

In response to a request from a representative of UNISON, the officer agreed to supply the trade unions with the safety audit reports referred to in the report.

It was noted that, while the report had already been presented to Cabinet, the Leader, Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services, all members of Cabinet, were present at this meeting and taking comments on board.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

122. **UNISON Report on Asbestos:**

The Forum received a report from UNISON, asking that a written statement be provided on the removal of asbestos during construction work on the Access Harrow project in 2006. Representatives of UNISON were disappointed and concerned that a report on the recommendations from a meeting held between Members, officers and the trade unions on 11 April 2008 had not been prepared by officers from Human Resources for this meeting. UNISON representatives raised their concern that the recommendations were not included in the documentation for this meeting. The Divisional Director, Human Resources and Development, agreed to establish why this had not happened. UNISON tabled the notes of the 11 April 2008 meeting, with six recommendations for the Forum to consider. After discussion, agreement was noted on five (1–4 and 6) of the six recommendations. Nevertheless, the Forum

RESOLVED: That (1) a special meeting of the Forum be convened to discuss this issue as soon as possible;

(2) all six recommendations be the subject of discussion at that meeting.

123. **Culture Change Programme:**

The Forum received a verbal update from an officer on the Culture Change Programme within the Council. The officer reported that the aim of the programme was in line with the Chief Executive's plan of developing for all staff and Members a set of values to enable the Council's objectives to be achieved. In addition to the successful Harrow 2012 staff event on 20 June 2008, other events had taken place, including sessions with Councillors, senior managers and staff unable to attend the event on 20 June. The Council was working with Roffey Park Institute to develop a new set of values for the Council and a programme of future work. A report would be ready soon, and would be discussed by Cabinet and the Council's Corporate Strategic Board with a view to reaching conclusions on the programme.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

124. **Facility Time:**

The Forum received an emergency motion from UNISON, expressing concern and disappointment at the recent announcement of a proposal to cut UNISON's facility time in response to an anticipated overspend against the trade union facilities budget. Representatives of both UNISON and GMB stated that they already worked many more hours in their own time, in addition to the facility time allocation financed by the trade union facilities budget, and the proposed cut would make it very difficult for them to carry out their roles, as well as hampering any work-life balance. Moreover, they had recently brought to the Forum a request to increase the amount of facility time. The Divisional Director stated that it was his duty to monitor expenditure against the budget, and in accordance with the principles of good budget management he was acting to prevent a projected overspend. An officer agreed to provide the trade unions with a breakdown of the current expenditure against the budget.

After discussion, and in response to a proposal by the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services, the Forum noted the difficulty of making changes to the current year's budget and

RESOLVED: That senior officers and UNISON (1) meet to discuss the trade unions' needs for the future;

(2) keep the Forum informed of progress.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.35 pm)

(Signed) MS L AHMAD
Chairman

Appendix 1

Officers in
attendance:

Mike Brown	Service Manager, Asset Management and Facilities
Lesley Clarke	Strategy Manager, Human Resources and Development
Brenda Goring	Service Manager, Health and Safety Services
Jon Turner	Divisional Director, Human Resources and Development
David Ward	Head of Audit and Risk