

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM SPECIAL MINUTES

21 DECEMBER 2010

Chairman: † Ms L Ahmad

Councillors: * Mrs Camilla Bath * Graham Henson (In the Chair)
* Bob Currie † Paul Osborn
* Keith Ferry (2) * Bill Stephenson
† Susan Hall

Representatives of HTCC: † Ms L Snowdon

Representatives of UNISON: * Mr D Butterfield * Mr G Martin
* Mr S Compton * Mr R Thomas

Representatives of GMB: † Mr J Dunbar

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

30. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Phillip O'Dell

Reserve Member

Councillor Keith Ferry

31. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 4 – Information Report – Annual Equality in Employment Monitoring from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

Agenda Item 5 – Employees’ Side Report on Trade Waste

Agenda Item 6 – Information Report – Response to Employees’ Side Report on Trade Waste

Councillor Bob Currie declared a personal interest in that he was a paid-up member of Unison and his son worked for the Council. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Keith Ferry declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the GMB Union. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Graham Henson declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the Communication Workers Union and his cousin worked for the Council. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

32. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations had been received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

33. Information Report - Annual Equality in Employment Monitoring From 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

An officer introduced a report which set out information relating to equality aspects of employment by the Council, progress made against equality targets and a review of progress made in other equalities and diversities work.

The officer highlighted the key aspects of the report which included:

- Appendix 8 of the report represented a new reporting format for future reporting of the workforce profile and recruitment monitoring data. It was considered that the new reporting format addressed all issues and had been considered to be acceptable by a sub-group of the Corporate Equalities Group;
- The report provided greater information on aspects such as recruitment, training, development and employees subject to employment procedures;
- The current representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees who were economically active was just over 34%;

- There had been a decrease in the success of external BAME applications, to lower than 43%. This was unexpected given that there had been improvements in this figure from previous years. It was important to examine why this had taken place;
- In relation to training and development, there had been particularly encouraging applications from BAME employees for the Certificate and Diploma in Management Studies course;
- The latest figures in relation to BAME staff who were subject to Employment Procedures had been provided in the report;
- The numbers of employees who officially reported that they had a disability had decreased. However this appeared to contradict staff survey results which had indicated that there was a higher proportion of staff with disabilities;
- The social identify information for the workforce held on one of the Council's main software programmes, SAP, would, subject to funding, be updated in the coming year. Monitoring of course requests and attendance would be more readily available in the future through coursebooker;
- Within the report, actions taken by the Council had been reported as had proposed actions for the future. This included adopting a single equalities scheme, which would involve a programme of Equality Impact Assessments.

During the discussion on this item, Members of the Forum raised a number of issues, which were responded to as follows:

- It was important to have greater ethnic diversity at senior positions within the Council. The workforce profile of partner organisations was approximately equivalent to the position held by the Council. The main focus of the report was on the Council's position as an employer;
- The Corporate Equalities Sub-Group would be meeting on a range of workforce issues including monitoring a development programme to support minority staff into senior positions;
- The Council utilised a separate organisation to deal with the administration relating to the recruitment of staff. As part of this process. Full diversity information was provided for all applicants;
- There was a selection process in place for senior interim managers. This involved making contact with a number of suppliers and undergoing a procurement exercise;
- Officers were happy to provide a clear distinction, in the new proposed reporting format, on figures relating to non-school and school staff;

- Recruitment selection data in relation to applicants was collected at the end of the recruitment process. As recruitment processes could last for a significant period of time, reporting the data could be delayed by a couple of months after any specified period in question;
- Staff exit interviews were offered as a normal practice. However these were rarely taken up. It was accepted that more feedback was required regarding the experiences of staff leaving the organisation would be useful;
- Voluntary Severance Scheme applications were monitored at each stage. This data would be available at the end of the entire process. There was nothing to date in the data for the exercise in September 2010 to cause any concern;
- The Council were firmly committed to equality and had done a significant amount of work in the last 10-15 years. Work conducted included investigating adverse impact on Asian applicants, working with unions, reviewing recruitment processes and interviewing unsuccessful applicants;
- Further investigation was required to look into statistics relating to the numbers of BAME staff and those with disabilities who were currently subject to employment procedures.

The Leader of the Council reported that he would ask officers to prepare an item for a future meeting of the Major Developments Panel relating on issues relating to the employment of people locally and equality monitoring.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

34. Employees' Side Report and Management Response on Trade Waste

The Forum considered a report from Unison which expressed its concern relating to the Trade Waste service. An officer expressed that the report contained information which was highly critical of an officer and was personal in its nature. He expressed his disappointment at the tone of the report.

Members of the Forum supported this view and stated that issues should not be personalised in their nature. A report of this type was not appropriate for the Forum.

Members of Unison explained that the report was not intended to be personal in its nature but was intended to be critical of the department generally. Members of Unison commented that it would have been helpful if they had been informed at an early stage if it was considered that the report was not appropriate. They agreed to submit a revised version of the report.

A Member commented that officers should investigate developing an agreed protocol in relation to the submission of reports to the Forum to prevent this issue arising again.

RESOLVED: That the report be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum on 25 January 2011.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.01 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR GRAHAM HENSON
Chairman