

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM

2 FEBRUARY 2005

Chair:	* Shankar Sivashankar	
Councillors:	* Mrs Bath	* Marie-Louise Nolan
	* Janet Cowan	* N Shah
	* Currie	* Toms
	* Mrs Joyce Nickolay	
Representatives of HTCC:	(Currently no appointees)	
Representatives of UNISON:	* Ms M Cawley	* Mr K McDonald
	* Ms A Jackson	* Ms D Prasad
	* Mr G Martin	

* Denotes Member present/Employee Representative present

[Note: Mr Eddie Coulson, UNISON Regional Officer, also attended this meeting].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**110. **Appointment of Chair:**

RESOLVED: That Shankar Sivashankar, an employee side representative, be appointed as Chair of the Forum for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2004/2005.

111. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

112. **Declarations of Interest:**

Ms Debbie Prasad, an employee side representative, declared that she had a relationship with a Chief Officer at the Council.

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
Councillor Currie	Declared a personal interest in that he was a Member of UNISON.
Councillor Toms	Declared a personal interest in that he was a Member of NUT.

113. **Appointment of Vice Chair:**

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan as Vice Chair of the Forum for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2004/2005.

114. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

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

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
11. 2005/06 Budget Consultation	The report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider the item in order to comply with the Council's requirement to consult with the Trade Unions on budget proposals that have a direct impact on employees.

(2) item 14 be considered before item 11; and

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

115. **Minutes:**
RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2004, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.
116. **Matters Arising from the Minutes:**
Health and Safety Strategic Board
A Member from UNISON expressed disappointment that no Directors had attended the launch of the Health and Safety Strategic Board. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Effectiveness stressed that Health and Safety was an area that the Council considered of utmost importance. It was added that in future a designated deputy would attend if the appropriate Directors were unavailable.
RESOLVED: That the matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting be noted.
117. **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 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).
118. **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).
119. **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).
120. **Industrial Action - Pensions:**
A Member from UNISON reinforced the commitment to working with the Council in joint partnership and thus avoiding industrial action wherever possible. However the Forum was advised of a potential national dispute over pensions that may lead to strike action on 23 March 2005. UNISON added that in the event of industrial action every effort would be made to minimise the impact on Harrow's residents. It was noted that the Council had not arrived at its formal position on the issue.

The Forum was also advised of an issue that had arisen in the Waste Management division. A UNISON Member read out a statement detailing employees' concerns. Members were referred to a memorandum dated 2 February 2005 from the Area Director (Urban Living), which set out the Council's position on the issues raised by employees. Both the Council and employee representatives reiterated their commitment to avoid industrial action over this issue.
RESOLVED: That the above be noted.
121. **2005/06 Budget Consultation:**
The Forum received a report of the Executive Director (Business Connections), which included the report submitted to Cabinet on 16 December 2004. It was explained that the settlement announced by central government was considered to represent a slight improvement on the provisional settlement for 2005/06.

The Director of Financial and Business Strategy detailed the budget consultation process, which included a random survey of 4,000 households in the Borough. It was reported that 32% of these households had responded. The Forum was also reminded that meetings had been held between officers and UNISON to consult on the budget proposals.
RESOLVED: That the report be noted.
122. **Equality Monitoring Report for 01 April 2004 to 30 September 2004:**
The Forum considered a report of the Executive Director (Organisational Development), which detailed the Council's equality performance from April – September 2004. An officer advised that a Member from UNISON had raised a number of points in relation to the report, and tabled a response to those queries. The Forum was referred to page 25 of the agenda, which provided an account of the Council's performance against targets set for 2004/05. Members were also reminded that Directorates had been working on key areas of the Race Equality Scheme. It was

added that the Council had been accredited with Level 2 of the Equality Standard and would be undertaking further work to achieve Level 3 in the forthcoming year.

A Member from UNISON queried how the Council intended to monitor its equality performance without a designated Equalities Officer. It was explained that under the new Human Resources structure, HR consultants would undertake various work, including equalities work. The Senior Professional position would be responsible for overseeing such work and collating the information from across the organisation.

Discussion turned to the Council's Recruitment and Selection Procedure. A Member from UNISON raised concerns over the procedures at the Central Depot, particularly in light of the recommendation arising from the Asian Applicants Review Group (AARG) that all Recruitment Panels should be ethnically balanced. The Member from UNISON also reported concerns that a CD-Rom on Recruitment and Selection had been used to train panel members. Whilst recognising that the CD-Rom was not sufficient in terms of training, officers reiterated their commitment to implementing the recommendations from the Asian Applicants Review Group and reported that there was general adherence to this procedure.

The Forum discussed the statistics relating to the success rate for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) applicants. The Forum recognised that significant steps had been made in addressing the disproportionate percentage of BME employees. It was suggested that during the recruitment process, the Council should endeavour to highlight its support structure for all employees. Following the work of the AARG, it was not possible to identify any specific factors that were responsible for the disproportionate number of BME applicants and employees. Discussions with other London Boroughs had indicated that it was a widespread problem. The Forum also discussed the likely perception, by some applicants, that declaring a disability would disadvantage an application.

RESOLVED: That the monitoring information for 1 April 2004 to 30 September 2004 be noted.

123. **Recruitment and Selection - Middle Management Review:**
Referring to a tabled document outlining UNISON's concerns about the ongoing middle management interviews and the alleged departure from the Council's policies and practices, the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Effectiveness stated that it would be inappropriate for the issues to be discussed as the information formed part of an ongoing investigation. An officer added that there were procedures in place for complaints and grievances to be heard by Members. Anything outside of that procedure would be inappropriate. It was therefore agreed that the tabled document would be withdrawn. A Member from UNISON apologised for presenting this information to the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

124. **Occupational Health:**
A Member from UNISON reported that officers had agreed to review the position of the Occupational Health Service in the forthcoming year and consider transferring management of the Service to Business Connections.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

125. **Grievances:**
The Forum was advised that the report relating to the grievance had been released from Legal Services on the morning of 2 February 2005.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

126. **Joint Consultation/Negotiating Machinery:**
The Forum received a verbal report from UNISON, requesting a new consultation mechanism whereby Members could be engaged on a more regular basis. It was noted that a number of Forum meetings had been cancelled in the past. Members reiterated the need to hold meetings of the Forum every quarter. It was also suggested that regular meetings should be held between the Portfolio Holder and UNISON.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.33 pm, closed at 9.55 pm)

(Signed) SHANKAR SIVASHANKAR
Chair