

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**Joint Consultation Group (Administrative Etc, Manual and Crafts Staffing)**

Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultation Group (Administrative Etc, Manual and Crafts Staffing) held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday, 11 April, 2014 at 11.00 a.m.

**Present**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr D MacKay  
Miss J Campbell

Mr H Morrison  
Mr F Parr

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr R Selkirk, GMB  
Mr M Haymer, GMB  
Mr C Cameron (substitute), UCATT

Mr J Gibson, UNISON  
Mr G Pirie, BDA  
Ms S Arch, CSP

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr D Yule, Director of Finance  
Mr J Batchelor, Head of People and Performance, Corporate Development Service  
Mr M Bailey, Project Manager, Corporate Improvement Programme, Corporate Development Service  
Ms G Falconer, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Mr C Kemp, Area Roads & Community Works Manager, Community Services  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

**Mr J Gibson in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Fallows, Dr D Alston (other Council business), Mr A MacKinnon, Mr R Laird and Dr I Cockburn from the Employer's Side and Mr R Whyte, Unite, Mr J Rosie, Unite, Mr A Wemyss, Unite, Mr M Murphy, Ucatt, Ms L MacKay, Unison, Ms M Nicolson, Unison and Ms M Macrae, RCN from the Staff Side.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Group **NOTED** that there were no declarations of interest expressed.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting**

There had been circulated for confirmation, Minutes of the last meeting of the Group held on 7 February, 2014 the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

Arising from the minutes the following matter was raised:-

- i Item 3 i – Support for Apprentices – The Staff Side advised that their representatives on the Employability Board – Mr A Wemyss, UNITE and Mr C Cameron, UCATT had not yet been contacted about a meeting date for the Board. They also requested a copy of the last minutes of meeting of the Board.

In response, the Head of People and Performance advised that he would contact the Service to ensure that the Staff Side representatives would be informed of the next meeting date of the Employability Board and that they would receive a copy of the last minutes of the Board.

#### **4. Budget Update**

There had been circulated Report No. JCG/5/14 by the Director of Finance which provided an update in relation to the budget process.

It was reported that Highland Council on 19 December, 2013 agreed the revenue budget and council tax for 2014/15. On 13 March, 2014 the Council considered a report updating on budget matters, and in particular financial planning relating to the 4 years 2015/16 to 2018/19. A remaining £3.6m budget gap for 2014/15 required to be addressed and the means of doing this were highlighted in the report, none of the measures would have a direct staffing impact. In total savings of £12.6m were due to be delivered in 2014/15.

In terms of the period 2015/16 – 2018/19 the initial gap over the period was £80m, now reduced to £63m following a review of budget assumptions and reduction in provision for pressures amongst other items. The forecast gap remained sensitive to a number of key underlying assumptions, and risks/uncertainty which could impact on assumptions and the forecast gap. The Council's strategy was focused on taking forward a multi-year and longer-term approach to its financial planning, and looking at transformational change to deliver service improvements and efficiencies.

It was advised that the Council would embark on a wide-ranging consultation exercise as part of its budget strategy. The consultation would look to engage with a broad base of stakeholders, including trade unions. A summary of the budget process timescales was detailed in the report. This would commence in April with Directors assessing the current transformation/savings ideas list as reported to the March, 2014 Council meeting and would end in December with a report to Council.

The Staff Side were concerned about the removal of provision for teachers' pension increase as one of the measures for reducing the budget gap. In response the practice in the past was for the Scottish Government to issue additional funding if there had been an increase. There was also no indication that there was likely to be a change in the teachers' pension and therefore it was felt prudent to remove this provision out of the budget for this current financial year.

The Staff Side sought discussion with the Council on how they intended to consult with communities and also in relation to the saving idea of developing a new role for Community Wardens, as these posts had just been evaluated

and if change was to happen again consultation would have to take place at an early stage.

In response to a query, it was advised that Community Services were working on a waste strategy which would reduce costs, and were considering the provision of landfill sites or incinerators as a means of disposal of waste, and were looking at measures to increase recycling.

In terms of the £12.6m savings due to be delivered in 2014/15, it was requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting on how Services were to achieve these savings and the likely staff impact, if any.

The Group **NOTED** the budget update and that a report on how Services were to achieve savings of £12.6m in 2014/15 and any staffing impact, be submitted to the next meeting of the Group.

## **5. Corporate Improvement Programme**

There was circulated Report No. JCG/6/14 by the Corporate Improvement Programme Manager which provided an update on the Corporate Improvement Programme 2 (CIP2). It was reported that CIP2 projects had started with projects progressing satisfactorily, targets of £5.93m in savings had been set.

Progress was provided on the following projects:- Asset Management; Business Support; Customer Contact Transformation; Income Generation; Integrated Transport Provision; Mobile and Flexible Working, Managing Information and Procurement. An assessment of the projects that would most likely affect staff was also provided. A forum existed for discussing the detailed aspects of the programme with trade unions (the Trade Union Liaison Group).

The Staff Side advised that employees were concerned about the Customer Service Review. They had been informed of a review which would last 15 months. If any changes were made they were concerned about the timescales to look for redeployment opportunities. There was a need to communicate with staff to make them aware of how things were progressing and what the Council could do to support them.

In terms of timescales for implementation of ResourceLink, it was anticipated that Phase 1 would go live by the beginning of July and Phase 2 by September/October, subject to ratification by the Project Board. The Project team were liaising with colleagues in Business Support and Employee Development insofar as training and guidance for use of the new system. It was requested that a demonstration of the new Personnel Admin processes (using SharePoint and ResourceLink) be provided at the next meeting.

In response to a query, it would be clarified for the Staff Side as to whether Sharepoint was available in Schools in order that teachers and support staff could fill in Personnel Admin forms on the new system. It was also advised that there maybe some instances when it would be too onerous on certain staff to be completing forms on SharePoint and it was currently being looked at whether this role could be undertaken by Business Support instead.

The Staff Side requested that for the next meeting progress on each Services' Mobile and Flexible Working Plan be provided and whether they had carried out a Mobile and Flexible Working survey as had been undertaken by the Finance Service.

Thereafter the Group **NOTED**:-

- i progress on the Corporate Improvement Programme 2 and the engagement with staff and trade unions;
- ii that a demonstration of the Personnel Admin processes (using SharePoint and ResourceLink) would be provided at the next meeting;
- iii that confirmation of the position on SharePoint being available in Schools in order that teachers and support staff could fill in Personnel Admin forms on the new system, would be provided at the next meeting;
- iv that progress on each Services' Mobile and Flexible Working Plan would be provided at the next meeting.

## **6. Engagement & Partnership Framework**

There was circulated Report No. JCG/7/14 by the Head of People and Performance which updated the Group on progress towards agreement of an Engagement & Partnership Framework.

The joint working group set up to define and develop a partnership and engagement framework had a number of productive meetings and produced a draft Engagement and Partnership framework. The draft set out the shared vision and objectives, the benefits of working in this way and commitments that we would make as partners. The draft set out the preferred approach of early engagement, options based consultation and joint communication. A number of issues that required further research were highlighted and the next tasks of the working group would include resolving outstanding issues and developing an implementation plan. Overall very good progress had been made to date and any proposals by the joint working group would come to the Joint Consultation Group for consideration. The next meeting date of the working Group would be notified to all trade union representatives.

The view was expressed that one of the critical elements of the new framework was identifying the remit of the new partnership structure and each of the partnership groups. The membership of each of the partnership groups would reflect what the remit was. The prospects for the Joint Consultation Group in the future would require to be considered. If it was to be replaced, what would it be replaced by? It was also suggested that any proposal should have a tripartite membership made up of trade unions, management side and elected members.

The Group **NOTED** progress to date on the draft Engagement and Partnership Framework.

## 7. Maintenance of Community Services Depots

There was circulated Report No. JCG/8/14 by the Director of Community Services which outlined the current priority list for Community Services Depots across Highland.

It was reported that Community Services currently had a capital allocation for depots amounting to £100,000 per year and the current priority list for depot maintenance was as follows: 2014/15 – Carr’s Corner Depot Surfacing; Seater Landfill Site Accommodation; 2015/16 – Lotland Street Ramp Area Surfacing; Vehicle Washing Gantries. Depot maintenance and health and safety issues were to be identified by Area Community Services managers for inclusion in future years of the programme.

The Staff Side were delighted to note that work on Carr’s Corner Depot Surfacing would commence in September, 2014. However they were still concerned that planned maintenance lists included health and safety issues to be addressed. They were of the view that there should be two lists - a planned maintenance list and a health and safety list. Issues to be addressed on the health and safety list could be escalated as a priority for works to be undertaken. They also pointed out that failure to follow health and safety legislation could lead to enforcement action by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which could range from the serving of an Improvement Notice to Court Proceedings. HSE intervention was now charged at a cost of £124 per hour. Therefore if the Council failed to take action on health and safety issues there would be legal and financial implications.

In response it was advised that there was one list for maintenance of depots and these were prioritised on a health and safety basis.

The view was expressed that there should be facilities for washing and drying employees work clothing at landfill sites. Currently employees washed their own work clothing at home which could contaminate other clothing.

The Group **NOTED:**

- i the priority list for maintenance at Community Services depots;
- ii that the provision of laundry facilities at landfill sites would be considered by the Director of Community Services.

### **STAFF SIDE ITEM**

## 8. Review of Violence and Aggression Incident Reporting

The Staff Side were aware that The Highland Council had a system in place that should alert staff to either clients or addresses, where potential threatening or violent behaviour has been shown to Highland Council staff in the past.

The Staff Side wished to know if this system was used by each of the Highland Council Services. The Staff Side also required clarification in there being readily available guidance in place to ensure that staff potentially in this position both know how the system works and are supposed to access it.

In this connection there was circulated Report No. JCG/9/14 by the Head of People and Performance which presented a review of the work undertaken to support and raise awareness of the Policy and Guidance on Preventing Violence in the Workplace. The policy introduced a new process whereby staff could contact the Service Centre to report incidents – these were then recorded on the CRM system Lagan and tracked through manager notification, investigation to Service decision, to place warning markers against perpetrators.

The report detailed the measures taken to bring the policy to the awareness of staff. An analysis of the number of incidents reported in the last 12 months showed that there was awareness of the process. The Occupational Health and Safety and Wellbeing Team would continue to promote the use of the policy through awareness sessions when talking with staff groups, articles in staff newsletters and training.

In terms of only two incidents reported in the last twelve months for Health and Social Care, this suggested that there was still a lack of awareness of reporting violence and aggression incidents within this Service. It was suggested that line managers and supervisors were the employees to target when promoting the policy. In response, a lack of awareness of the policy had been identified in Health and Social Care and to address this a meeting had been arranged in May between the Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager, representatives from Health and Social Care and trade union representatives for that Service.

The analysis of incidents reported did not include violence by children against employees and this information was requested for the next meeting. Further, the process for an employee going to visit a house, was for the employee or line manager to phone the Service Centre to see if a marker had been made against an individual in the house. Managers were responsible for ensuring that employees were not sent to a property where there was a known risk. It was understood that this was not common practice, and awareness raising amongst employees in this situation required to be undertaken. Police Scotland also had information on offenders or potential offenders who may be a risk to employees and there was a need for this information to be shared with the Council.

The Group **NOTED**:

- i the roll out of the Policy and Guidance on the Prevention of Violence at Work and associated work; and
- ii an analysis of incidents of violence by children against employees would be submitted to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 12.10 p.m.

Date of Next meeting - Friday, 8 August, 2014 at 11.00 a.m.