

The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum – Elected Members/Staff Side Group

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 20 November, 2015 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mrs M Davidson
Mr B Fernie
Mrs I Campbell

Mr A Rhind
Mr M Reiss
Mr R Laird

Staff Side Representatives:

Ms L MacKay (UNISON)
Mr M Haymer (GMB)
Mr R Selkirk (GMB)

Mr M Murphy (UCATT)
Ms M Macrae (RCN)

In attendance:

Mr S Barron, Chief Executive
Ms M Morris, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development Service
Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning Service
Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Mr D Yule, Director of Finance
Mr J Batchelor, Head of People and Performance, Corporate Development Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Mrs M Davidson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Henderson, Mr D Millar, Dr A Sinclair and Mrs M Smith from the Employer's Side and Mr A Wemyss (UNITE), and Mr J Gibson (UNISON) from the Staff Side.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated the Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 14 August, 2015, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes

Arising from the minutes the following matter was raised:-

Contracts and Procurement – it was noted that there was draft legislation which would make it a requirement for all Employers to pay the National Living Wage from April, 2016.

5. Budget Update

The Staff Partnership Forum were advised on the briefing process for the current budget process and thereafter, the Director of Finance provided a verbal update on the current budget position for the Council. Reference was made to the forecast budget deficit over the next three financial years and the uncertainty around the level of grant cut. The focus was to get a balanced budget position for 2016/17 as this was the most challenging year. All Services had submitted savings proposals and the Forum were provided with a range of savings proposals currently being considered. Once the Staff Side had an opportunity to consider the budget proposals, it was intended that a further meeting would be arranged in order for them to provide comments and discuss the proposals further.

A point was made that when looking at the effects of savings proposals on staff, this was normally done on the basis of numbers of Full time equivalent (FTE) staff affected. Given the significant numbers of part-time employees in the Council, it was requested that an analysis be carried out on the number of 'individuals' affected by Services savings proposals, in addition to the numbers of FTE employees affected.

The Staff Partnership Forum **NOTED** the budget position and that a further meeting would be arranged to discuss the budget proposals.

6. Conditions of Service

There was tabled Report No/18/15 by the Head of People and Performance on possible options for savings for employee conditions of service.

The report advised that employees' terms and conditions of service were governed by a combination of national and local conditions of service which had been established by national and local collective agreements with the relevant trade unions. Any changes or modifications to conditions of service would need to be negotiated and agreed locally with the trade unions.

The report detailed possible savings across all conditions of service for consideration. The Staff Side advised that while they could discuss the proposals with the Employer's Side, any final proposals would require trade union members to be balloted. A point was also made that given that some of the proposals were covered by national terms and conditions, the Staff Side considered that there was no room for local negotiation.

The Staff Side were invited to consider the possible changes to employees conditions of service, which would be discussed further at the next meeting.

Thereafter, the Staff Partnership Forum **NOTED** the report and the Staff Side's views on it.

7. Employee Survey 2015 - Commitments

There was circulated Report No. SPF/17/15 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided the corporate commitments which address the key messages and areas for improvement from the 2015 Employee Survey. The impact of these commitments would be measured in the next Employee Survey.

In particular there was a commitment to communicate with employees in the way that they prefer and interpret and present information to meet their needs. This reflected comments received in the survey to provide other means of communication to employees not on the Council's Corporate IT system. It was queried how the Council would communicate with employees who did not have or did not want to use their personal e-mail address to receive Council communications. In response, it was advised that employees would continue to receive written briefings, which would be displayed on staff notice boards and Managers would continue to meet regularly with their employees and provide briefings. A point was made that employees could set up a separate e-mail address for receiving Council communications, if they did not want to use their personal e-mail address.

The Staff Partnership Forum **AGREED** the corporate commitments in response to the 2015 Employee Survey.

8. Dates for Meetings in 2016

The Staff Partnership Forum **APPROVED** the undernoted meetings of the Forum in 2016:-

Friday, 5 February - 10.30a.m.
Friday, 22 April – 2.30p.m.
Friday, 12 August – 10.30a.m.
Friday, 4 November – 10.30a.m.

The meeting concluded at 3.40 p.m.