

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

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 28 August, 2017 at 12.30 p.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mrs Margaret Davidson
Mr Allan Henderson

Mr Alister Mackinnon
Mr Richard Laird

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr John Gibson (UNISON)
Mr Paul MacPherson (GMB)
Mr Rikki Selkirk (GMB)

Mr Martin Murphy (UCATT)
Mr Iain Hunter (UNITE)
Ms Margaret Macrae (RCN)

In attendance:

Mr S Barron, Chief Executive
Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning Service
Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Mr D Yule, Director of Finance
Mr S Walsh, Head of People and Transformation, Corporate Development Service
Mrs C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office
Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side
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 Christie, Ms M Smith from the Employer's Side and Ms L MacKay, Mr A Wemyss from the Staff Side and Ms M Morris, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development.

2. Declarations of Interest

Mrs M Davidson declared a financial interest as her son was an employee of The Highland Council but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion at the meeting.

3. The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum – Constitution

There had been circulated for information, The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum Constitution, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated the Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 20 January, 2017, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

Arising from the minutes the following matters were raised:-

i Occupational Health Service – it was noted that there had been an improvement with the performance of the new provider for the Council's Occupational Health Service. However, there was concern regarding how up to date the new provider was with occupational health referrals. It was explained that the new provider had key performance indicators that they were contractually obliged to meet and their performance was monitored against these indicators. There had been a significant uplift in referrals and this created extra demand on the provider to cope with. Information on the performance of the Occupational Health provider was presented to the Central Safety Committee. The Staff Side were asked to highlight to the Head of People and Transformation any specific referral cases that they had concerns with.

ii Attendance Management – New Support Activities and Interventions – It was noted that the Attendance Support Officer post was now vacant. The Staff Side requested that the vacancy be filled, as it targeted areas with a high absence level and engaged with relevant managers to provide guidance and support to minimise sickness absence from work.

It was advised that options for this post were currently being explored, and initial feedback from Services and trade unions was that the post provided a valuable service. Once further feedback from trade unions on the options was received a report would be submitted to the Executive Leadership Team for consideration.

iii 2017 Pay Award – it was advised that there was an agreement that staff earning £35,000 or less per annum would receive an increase of £350 per annum under the terms of the 2017 Pay Award. The letter from Cosla to Councils advising of the award, indicated this amounted to an increase of 18 pence per hour. However, when this was applied, it added up to less than the £350 per annum award.

It was confirmed that the Council had applied the pay award in accordance with the letter from Cosla. The Staff Side were invited to send their calculations to the Leader of the Council who would discuss this with the Director of Finance and the Head of People and Transformation.

6. Service Trade Union Liaison Meetings

There had been circulated the following Service Trade Union Liaison Minutes of Meetings for information:-

- i. Corporate Development Service – 28 April and 17 August, 2017;
- ii. Finance Service – 14 March and 15 June, 2017 ;
- iii. Care and Learning Service – 10 May, 2017;
- iv. Community Services – 24 February, 2017; and

- v. Development & Infrastructure – 13 July, 2017.

Arising from the minutes the following matters were raised:-

- (a) Corporate Development Service Minute – 17 August, 2017 – concerns had been raised at the ICT Transformation Board by the Staff Side regarding the original agreement with Wipro and the timescales for completion for various elements of the ICT contract. Some of the projects were behind schedule and it was queried who was monitoring the contract as delays could cost the Council extra money.

It was advised that the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and the Head of Digital Transformation were working with Wipro on delays to projects which would require to be managed and revised timescales produced. Risks would also require to be identified. An update on this work would be provided to Members at the Corporate Resources Committee meeting on 30 August, 2017. An update briefing paper would also be issued to the Staff Side representatives on the Forum. Discussion was also required on the membership of the ICT Transformation Board, as the Board did not have Elected Member representation.

Thereafter, the Forum **AGREED** that an update briefing paper would be sent to the Staff Side on ICT contract delays.

- (b) Finance Service Minute – 15 June, 2017 – it was advised that a report would be submitted to the next Council meeting in September, 2017 with proposals for a 5 year budget. Trade Unions were invited to be involved in this budget process and the Council would welcome their feedback on the proposals. A copy of the budget report would be sent to the trade unions, after it had been issued to Elected Members.

The Staff Side welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the budget process.

- (c) Care and Learning Minute – 10 May, 2017 – it was noted that this was a Draft Minute which had still to be formally approved.
- (d) Community Services Minute – 24 February, 2017 – it was advised that the redeployment policy would be a key aspect of Workforce Planning. The Workforce Planning Strategy was very supportive of this policy and the Staff Side would be consulted on any proposed changes to it.

7. Consultation on Reorganisation Proposals

There had been circulated Report No. SPF/3/17 by the Chief Executive on a consultation on Reorganisation proposals.

The Staff Partnership Forum were advised that the Council at its meeting on 9th March, 2017 agreed the final recommendations of the Redesign Board including “that the Chief Executive is tasked by the Council to develop proposals for the structure and management of Council operations.... This should include the process and timescale for implementing the redesigned structure and be recommended to the new Council”. In this respect, there had been circulated two consultation papers

which had been sent to Directors, Heads of Service, relevant Senior Managers and trade unions inviting their input into the proposals. Some comments had been received from trade unions and these would be reflected in the report on the proposals to Council on 7th September, 2017. Any further comments were required urgently prior to the report being issued this week.

The Forum **NOTED** the report.

8. Redesign of The Highland Council

There was circulated Report No. SPF/4/17 by the Head of Policy and Reform which provided an update on the opportunities for Trade Union and staff engagement in redesign work streams. A copy of the refreshed peer review framework was also tabled at the meeting.

The Leader of the Council commended the exciting work and high level of staff engagement going on in the Lean reviews introduced by Redesign and asked the Staff Side to make full use of the opportunities to give their input into the process. All staff involved to date in the redesign process overall were thanked for their contributions.

Thereafter, the Staff Partnership Forum:-

i **NOTED** the constructive involvement of Trade Unions and staff in Year 1 of Redesign.

ii **NOTED** the opportunities for continued involvement of Trade Unions in Year 2 through: Redesign Board membership, attachment to peer reviews, in attending local staff forums, in agreeing a communication plan, in hearing about the progress and staff achievements from the Lean programme, and in considering a programme of organisational change and support.

iii **NOTED** that Trade Unions and staff can identify areas with potential for peer review, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and

iv **NOTED** that Trade Unions can be involved fully in the new Policy Development Groups.

9. Workforce Planning

There had been circulated for discussion Report No. SPF/5/17 by the Head of People and Transformation which presented the Workforce Planning Strategy for 2017 to 2023. The strategy recognised that the most important resource was our people and its aim was to deliver the work streams required to ensure that the Council can transition from its current position to build and maintain the workforce of the future. The strategy would be reviewed annually to ensure its aims were being delivered.

Reference was made to the excellent work done on the strategy in consultation with the trade unions and there was a need to work more closely with the Council's community planning partners on this.

It was explained that a project had commenced to refine the Council's Resource Link system to support a fully costed Human Resources establishment and provide the reports to support workforce planning. ResourceLink was already very useful and did most things as initially planned, however there was a need to ensure that the data it produced was accurate and this was the aim of the current project.

A point was made that the information to be provided by ResourceLink should have been available for some time, therefore, the timescale for completion of the project was requested. It was agreed that an update on the ResourceLink project be provided at the next meeting and to the Corporate Resources Committee meeting on 30 August, 2017.

In terms of the Council's 5 year budget plan, workforce planning would be a major element of this as there would be less money and staff. It was noted that the Council had recently advertised to fill over 180 vacant posts. This was a large number of posts and a lot of money. It was appreciated that the majority of these posts were teaching posts and required to be filled, but it was still a concern that in a relatively short time the Council had advertised a large number of posts when budgets were under pressure. It was explained that there were not enough applicants to fill teaching posts and workforce planning would look to address this in attracting people into posts that were difficult to fill.

Thereafter, the Forum:-

- i **NOTED** the Workforce Planning Strategy for 2017 – 2023; and
- ii **AGREED** that an update on the ResourceLink project be provided to the next meeting of the Forum and to the Corporate Resources Committee meeting on 30 August, 2017.

10. Pay and Conditions Consultation Group - Constitution

There was circulated Report No. SPF/6/17 by the Head of People and Transformation which detailed the Pay and Conditions Consultation Group Constitution.

The Staff Partnership Forum **NOTED** the report.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Forum **AGREED** that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 2 November, 2017 at 10.30a.m.

12. AOCB

Revenue and Capital Budgets – It was advised that between now and the next meeting there would be significant work done on the Revenue and Capital budgets. The Staff Side would be briefed on this work and their input and feedback on proposals would be welcomed.

Programme for the Council – It was advised the Staff Side would be consulted on the 5 year Programme for the Council. Their feedback on the programme would be welcomed.

The meeting concluded at 1.35 p.m.