

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

PRESENT: Councillors: Ward (Chair), Bradnack, C Rosenstiel, Shah and Smart
Liz Brennan (Unison), Kevin Roberts (GMB).
Executive Councillor Rod Cantrill.

Jackie Foglietta, Head of Human Resources.

1. MINUTES – 11 January 2007

The minutes of the meeting of 11 January 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Head of Human Resources tabled a document titled 'Investors in People Business Improvement Action Plan following assessment in December 2006' as agreed under Item 7 of the previous meeting.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Downham, and Graham Watts, Head of City Services.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests:
Councillor Bradnack as a member of NUT
Councillor C. Rosenstiel as a member of Amicus
Councillor Ward as his wife is a member of Amicus
Councillor Smart as a member of ATL.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

6. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report as the Director of Central Services was away. The strategy had been agreed at the Customer Services & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 16th January. The officer wanted to draw attention to the points at 2.2.4–2.2.6 and 3. £20,000 a year for improvement to buildings post-CAS.

Members, officers and trade union representatives made the following comments and asked questions to which others responded (A):

- How was the review of Hobson House going?
A: The review was ongoing; Cambridge United Charities had stated its position and the Council's legal team was looking into it.

- With regards to home-working becoming increasingly common, the health and safety aspects of a home working environment needed to be considered. There would also need to be arrangements for adequate childcare, and the ability to monitor the stress of home-workers. It would be necessary to consider a worker returning to office-based working if home-working didn't work out. Analysis of the costs and benefits and risks of home-working was required. Home-workers might miss out on team building.
 - A: The Council was not at this stage considering making full-time home-working an option. Ad-hoc home-working currently took place and there was a need to formalise arrangements to take account of, for example, health and safety issues. Stress, team building and performance management were all issues to consider.
- Remote access to IT systems would need to be secure. The theft of laptops was also a threat to security.
 - A: The Head of Human Resources and the IT Contract Manager would be meeting with Serco to discuss technological implications, including security arrangements.
- Risk assessments would need to be carried out on work stations at home. Desk layout was an issue and also the clear desk policy needed to be enforced.
 - A: Workstation assessments were being dealt with as part of the policy development.

7. GREEN TRAVEL

The Head of Human Resources tabled a briefing paper summarising the current position regarding green travel incentives for staff, and outlining various options to take the Green Travel Plan forward within existing budgets.

Members, officers and trade union representatives made the following comments and asked questions to which others responded (A):

- The sum mentioned at para 3.2 seemed unrealistic, what was the real cost?
 - A: The Head of Human Resources agreed to look into this. The figures did seem conservative.
- 21% of staff used bicycles, why couldn't the Council encourage more use by, say, people who lived within a 5-mile radius, and have better cycle parking at the Guildhall. Other ideas could be considered, such as purchasing less expensive pool bikes, having a council bus service for staff, or promoting the lift-sharing scheme.
 - A: A working group was looking at target groups and a travel-to-work survey had been carried out. Stagecoach offered interesting subsidies.
 - A: The car usage at Mill Road, which was c.60% – compared to 35% for the rest of the council – was concerning. This might be due to availability of public transport in terms of timetables and routes. Park & Ride did not service the Mill Road Depot area. Pump-priming of certain areas of the Council should be considered.
 - A: 'Carrots' were better than threats to existing incentives, especially in terms of using public transport which was expensive.
 - A: The 13% of staff who use buses probably includes those who use Park & Ride, though the Transport Planning Manager would be able to give accurate figures.

- It might be helpful to distinguish between 'normal' buses and Park & Ride for statistical purposes.
- It might be a good idea to concentrate on Hobson and Mandela Houses.
- The Council could see what schemes other employers had. Cambridge University pump-primed certain locations in order to have a green travel policy, and Addenbrookes Hospital had experience of workers travelling at all hours.

The scope of the Green Travel Plan did depend on the resources available in terms of funding and human resources. It was agreed that the Executive Councillor for Customer Services & Resources would meet with the Head of Human Resources and the Transport Planning Manager to discuss a realistic and timely way forward.

8 THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITY DUTY

Information regarding the Council's Equality policies was tabled. The Head of Human Resources explained that she had spoken to Cllr Downham (who had requested this item be put on the agenda) the previous week, and said that she had seemed reassured by the discussion.

9 CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY NEGOTIATIONS

The Head of Human Resources tabled a document on the Key Staffing and Employment Issues. A signed Collective Agreement was attached. The initial 'ring-fence' list of 60 jobs from across the Council had been agreed and this list was currently being revised. Affected staff would be notified by letter next week and meetings had been arranged between all affected staff and representatives from Human Resources to discuss their future employment options. Skills gap-identifying workshops, supported by development centres, were being held between May and July and assessment centres would follow. Appointments would be made in September. Unsuccessful staff would receive counselling for redeployment. If staff were not successful in securing a position in the Customer Service Centre, or an alternative position in the Council through redeployment, it was probable they would become redundant. Five specialist posts would be advertised internally this week to the whole City Council. The Head of Customer Services would continue to work with the Unions.

Members, officers and trade union representatives made the following comments and asked questions to which others responded (A):

- The process had gone well and had been transparent.
- What were the five specialist posts?
A: These were outlined on the structure chart attached to the report.
- It would be more conducive to staff morale to exchange terms such as 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' with something neutral.
- The Customer Service Centre (CSC) would not be opened until January 2008. In the preceding period, staff who did not want to move into the CSC might notice positions arising elsewhere in the Council that they might want to apply for, so it would be important not to lose those people.
- Dual-role staff who would be subject to the ring-fencing might find that they lose the half of their job that they enjoy the most.

- A: The management of this issue was critical to staff retention.
- Managers should analyse and be aware of the remaining structure of their team/department after the process. Development for Heads of Service to help them effectively manage change was currently in process.

The meeting ended at 6.22p.m.