

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

27th June 2002
(4.30-5.00pm)

PRESENT: Councillors: Smart (Chair), Dryden, White (Vice Chair), Liddle, Bridget Barclay-Munro (Unison), Richard O'Leary (GMB). Councillor Knowles attended as the alternate member.

1. MINUTES – 23 MARCH 2002

The minutes of the meeting were confirmed by the Forum and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Smith and Stebbings.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Trade Union membership was declared by the following members.

Councillor Dryden, AEWU, now known as Amicus
Councillor Smart, Retired member of ATL

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed that the Chief Executive would consider and report back whether the Forum should make recommendations to the Civic Affairs Committee or the Commercial and Human Resources Scrutiny Committee.

7. RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE MONITORING

The report by the Head of Personnel was presented and the following points were highlighted:

- An increase in disabled employees was noted, which the Head of Personnel believed was probably due to self assessment by employees updating personnel records. Although it was recognised that a large number of jobs within the Council require physical fitness, it was agreed to look more closely at recruitment advertising in the disabled press. This would try to reduce the gap between the percentage of the Council's workforce who are disabled compared to the community figure.

- It was noted that the percentage of senior management posts filled by women appeared to have declined. It was agreed that proposals setting targets to reflect the new definition based on top 5% of earners be brought forward to a future Forum meeting for comment, prior to consideration by the Commercial and Human Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- Richard O'Leary for GMB said that the trade unions would welcome input into how to attract younger recruits. It was agreed that it would be useful if greater emphasis was placed on offering training packages and linking the Employment Foundation Scheme's service with employment opportunities in the City Council.
- An increase in the number of posts above SCP11 was noted.
- The Head of Personnel said that the increase in recruitment in 2001/02 against the previous year was largely due to vacant posts held during two major departmental restructures being filled.
- Although fewer responses were being received to advertisements, appointments have successfully been made. Richard O'Leary for GMB felt that the housing costs in the area were a deterrent to recruits and pointed out that the GMB national office were seeking a regional weighting allowance for Cambridge. However, members felt that financial resources would be likely to restrict the implementation of this unless an Area Cost Adjustment was given as part of the Government settlement. The Head of Personnel pointed out that this was not a problem specific to lower paid posts, but became more of an issue when recruiting candidates from outside the local area. In response to a question by Councillor White, the Head of Personnel confirmed that information about house prices is included in recruitment packs to encourage applicants from outside the area to research housing costs. This has resulted in fewer successful appointments rejecting offer.
- Staff turnover has increased from 11-15% which is above average for this area. Bridget Barclay Munro supported the greater use of exit questionnaires which the Head of Personnel reported. This could help to identify the reason that staff, particularly new recruits, were leaving the Council's employ.
- The Forum was pleased to note an increase of staff in ethnic minority groups and that these were well represented through the salary levels.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that members will be contacted by correspondence to arrange future meetings of the Forum. It was also agreed that the Head of Personnel would ask the Head of Committee Services to try to avoid clashing with the trade union conferences when setting the June meeting

The meeting ended at 5.00 p.m

Chair