

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

8 January 2004
(4.30-5.20pm)

PRESENT: Councillors: Smart (Chair), Adigun-Harris, Bradnack, Dryden, Stebbings, White, Graham Cuffley and Maggie Hendrick (Unison), Richard O'Leary and Michael Macdonald (GMB).

Councillor Taylor, Executive Councillor (Commercial & Human Resources) and Councillor Nimmo-Smith, the Leader deputising for Councillor Taylor.

Chief Executive, Head of Human Resources, Director of City Services.

1. **MINUTES – 30 October 2003**

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

2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were none.

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none.

4. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following Councillors declared personal interests: Councillor Smart as a member of ATL, Councillors Adigun-Harris and Bradnack as members of NUT, Councillor Dryden as a member of Amicus (and his wife as a member of Unison) and Councillor Taylor as a member of Unison.

5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

6. **ORAL UPDATE ON SINGLE STATUS**

The Head of Human Resources summarised progress. All staff received letters about their individual situation on 1 December 2003. There had been 256 calls to the helpline as a result of which 144 Intent to Appeal forms had been issued. Of these 126 had been returned. Resources for 121 preliminary meetings had been allocated so that had been about right. She hoped that the number of appeals going ahead would be less than the 70 panels scheduled as it was a considerable commitment for the department.

Work still to be completed included:

- Further consideration of conditions of service for staff working unsocial hours in CCTV, Car Parks, Arts & Entertainments and Ditchburn Place.
- Learning & Development.
- Market supplements – this was an urgent item.

The Chair thanked the negotiating panel, the Human Resources department and the internal and external members of both Unions for the amount of work completed and the good spirit engendered.

7. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Human Resources gave a short presentation to complement the written report. She proposed to set up a Learning & Development Working Group consisting of HR, Trade Union and Management representatives to develop a new framework for the Council and to plan implementation to make the use of available resources to meet priorities across the Council. Funds for skills training were available from a number of external sources.

The Chair asked the union representatives to comment on the report and the presentation. Both unions welcomed the report and said they were solidly behind it. They were at the forefront of this kind of development work and could access both expertise and funds.

Councillor Bradnack asked about how much funding would be available internally and what was meant by matched funding.

The Head of Human Resources confirmed that there would be additional £50,000 per year available on an on-going basis from the Single Status cash envelope. Matched funding would either come from managers' own internal training budgets or from whatever external sources could be accessed.

Councillor Bradnack commented that there was little reference in the report to the problems of recruitment that were particular to Cambridge and the extent to which training and development could address these problems.

The Head of Human Resources said that this would be one of the areas for the proposed Working Group to consider.

The Chief Executive added that he was on a regional group looking at the problems of workforce planning for authorities in the area. The availability of matched funding from external sources was a key element to inform strategy.

The Forum agreed the recommendations in the officer's report.

8 TRADE UNION FACILITIES AGREEMENT

The Head of Human Resources spoke to the report. She was pleased that the Council had a large union membership. Michael Macdonald had been elected as half time branch secretary for GMB alongside Richard O'Leary as he was also working half time as Regional GMB officer. . She asked the Forum to decide on one of the options for future facilities time under section 9.1 of the report.

Richard O'Leary (GMB) said that the two unions worked in partnership and that this worked better here than in other authorities. There were a number of important issues for union members coming up during the year (e.g. possible Arms Length Management Organisation in Housing Department). In addition, accessing funding

for the Learning & Development initiative would be time-consuming. He proposed that the Forum endorse the option to fund 2 full time posts.

Maggie Hendrick (Unison) pointed out that the Unison post had been half time for a number of years and had been full time from April 2003- April 2004 because of the demands of the Single Status work. If this was then reduced to 50% the whole process would be delayed because of the demands of the branch work and other initiatives as well as the Single Status work. Unison was encouraging branch stewards to deal with less complex individual cases while the branch secretary dealt with the more complex and organisational ones. Unison members would be penalised if they only had a half time post. She also urged the Forum to back two full-time posts.

The Chair said that the preferred option was for two half time posts but that this had been increased due to Streetscene and then Single Status work pressures. If there was a convenor, one and a half posts could be considered rather than two half-time posts. There was a good working relationship between the two unions and this helped with greater flexibility.

After considerable discussion, the Executive Councillor for Commercial & Human Resources proposed that discussions between her and the unions take place later in the year once Single Status was nearer completion to determine the best approach for the future.

Graham Cuffley (Unison) welcomed the idea of discussing alternatives, pointing out that if they were behind learning and development and a more flexible organisation, the unions also should be willing to consider different working arrangements. However, whatever the arrangement, the postholder's primary concern was the benefit of the union members.

The Chair proposed that the status quo be retained and that there would be discussions later in the year (once the Single Status appeals process had been completed) about possible alternative arrangements for 2005/6.

The Forum agreed to this proposal.

The meeting ended at 5.20 p.m.

Chair