

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

29 June 2004
(4.30-5.20pm)

PRESENT: Councillors: Taylor (Chair), C Rosenstiel, Smart
Graham Cuffley (Unison), Richard O'Leary and Kevin Roberts
(GMB).

Councillor Liddle, Executive Councillor (Commercial & Human Resources)

Chief Executive, Employee Relations Manager, Senior Personnel Advisor,
Head of Customer Support, City Services.

1. MINUTES – 6 April 2004

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

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Adigun-Harris, Bradnack and Hughes.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests: Councillor Smart as a member of ATL, Councillors C Rosenstiel and Taylor as members of Amicus.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

6. ORAL UPDATE ON SINGLE STATUS

The Employee Relations Manager tabled a short summary of progress since the last meeting of the Forum on 6 April. She highlighted the following:

- There were 58 job evaluations outstanding (for many different reasons)
- That the Council was unlikely to be vulnerable to claims for unequal pay because of the implementation of single status though this needed to be continually monitored
- While there were pockets of resignations that had been difficult for those service areas, the overall impact had not increased turnover levels for the full year
- That market pay policy had been agreed in principle and applied to accountants and Environmental Health Officers so far
- The policy on Career Grades had been agreed in principle with the trades unions and used for Environmental Health Officers.
- The Steering Group chaired by the Chief Executive would reconvene in July to assess progress and address emerging issues

The Chair congratulated those involved on the progress made.

Richard O'Leary (GMB) indicated that the issues that concerned the unions had moved on from the local to the national level. He agreed that the City Council was not vulnerable to equal pay claims but that there was still a need to keep this possibility in mind.

Graham Cuffley (Unison) agreed and emphasised that on-going evaluation was essential. He commented that the turnover of staff was higher in the professional groups and that the local Unison branch had seen a downturn in membership as a consequence of single status. This trend was just beginning to reverse. He would be concerned if the drop in membership was used to influence the next facilities agreement. He acknowledged that the Human Resources section had also been massively over-stretched.

The Chair acknowledged these points and said they would be taken on board.

Members affirmed that job evaluation was never finished and that the process so far had gone remarkably smoothly.

7 ORAL UPDATE ON NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL 2004 PAY NEGOTIATIONS

The Employee Relations Manager spoke to the information paper circulated with the agenda. At the April meeting the Head of Human Resources had reported that negotiations were at stalemate. Recently, the employers had been asked to comment on a proposed 3-year pay deal (2.75% from 1 April 2004, 2.95% from 1 April 2005 and 2.95% at 1 April 2006 (or the rate of RPI at October 2005, whichever is the higher). The City Council had voted to accept this. Linked to this pay deal was a focus on workforce development.

Richard O'Leary (GMB) said that the unions had been consulted and that the Cambridge City Council members were in favour of the deal and the local GMB representative would be voting in favour at their national conference later that week.

The Forum expressed its satisfaction with this development.

8A RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE MONITORING REPORT 2003/04

8B ANALYSIS OF RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT MONITORING DATA 2003/04

The Senior Personnel Advisor spoke to both reports as both taken together gave the full picture. This was an annual report which showed how the Council was performing against various performance indicators. She asked the Forum to note the recommendations in the reports which asked for issues/recommendations to be raised which would then be reviewed at the meeting of Commercial & Human Resources Scrutiny Committee on 6 July.

She highlighted the achievements made in the past year especially in relation to equal opportunity issues and acknowledged that there was still considerable work

to be done to achieve a diverse workforce and plans were in place to take this forward.

The Executive Councillor asked that more information be provided about the number of staff who left within the first year after appointment.

Graham Cuffley (Unison) made the following points:

- 1 feedback from the BME group indicated that there was still a perception that the Council was predominantly a white organisation which was not supported by the statistics
- 2 He thought it would be helpful to provide that group with the statistics in the report. (The Senior Personnel Advisor agreed to do that as she was to have a meeting with the BME group in the near future).
- 3 He also emphasised that the Council would have to address as a matter of urgency the fact that it had an ageing workforce. This meant also finding ways to engage young people.
- 4 Workforce development was crucial and this should include staff who wanted to remain staff and not be focused solely on managers or would-be managers.
- 5 There was a good working relationship between the unions and Human Resources section.
- 6 Referring to the Action Plan he said that “encourage use of minority/alternative press.....” should be “use minority/alternative press....”
- 7 Job Evaluation had shown that there was variable quality in job descriptions across the Council and this should be addressed
- 8 All job descriptions did have complying with the Equal Opportunities policy and there was great variation in how that was practised. He asked that that paragraph in the job description be made more challenging and that it should be part of every employee’s appraisal to be asked how they had contributed to that policy in their work during the year.

The Forum endorsed the Action Plan. The comments made would be summarised and presented at the meeting of the Commercial & Human Resources Scrutiny Committee on 6 July.

The Forum also agreed that the two-report format be kept.

9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted that because of Area Committees and other Council meetings/briefings that the dates to May 2005 needed to be changed. In principle it was agreed to hold the meetings on the Tuesday before the Commercial & Human Resources Scrutiny Committee subject to consultation with the members who were not able to be present.

The meeting ended at 5.20 p.m.

Chair