

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

PRESENT: Councillors: Taylor (Chair), Adigun-Harris, Adey, Dryden, Hughes, C Rosenstiel and Smart.

Liz Brennan (Unison), Kevin Roberts (GMB).

Head of Human Resources, Head of Customer Support, Dtor. City Services, Chief Executive.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2005 were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Louise Harrington, Head of HR, announced her leaving and was thanked for all her hard work.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Liddle presented her apologies to the Forum.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

6. SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2005/06

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report and raised the following points:

- Increased focus on diversity e.g. established Diversity Working Group (Sept 2005).
- There was also a new HR Diversity Adviser, temporary to May 2006 to deliver actions against the plan.
- Significant operational support to managers e.g. restructuring and employee cases (ie. disciplinary, capability, grievance)

- Implementation of new NJC performance review and pay progression scheme succeeding in delivering 94% coverage of the workforce, probably the highest level ever.
- Validation of Resourcelink HR / Payroll System data and output reports for line managers as part of the improvements to workforce management information.
- Joint procurement and award of recruitment advertising contract with the County Council, South Cambs and East Cambs District Council to secure a cost reduction and more effective branding for Cambridge City Council as an employer e.g. new house style wef Oct 2005
- Establishment of the Corporate Learning & Development Group and the launch of new programmes like "Return to Learn"
- Completion of the remaining Single Status actions e.g. review of casual staff, development of a standardised standby and callout payments.
- Senior manager pay and performance arrangements introduced wef 1/11/2005
- City Leadership and management framework developed for use from January 2006.

To a question from Councillor Hughes, the Head of Human Resources advised that the actual number of **women in the top 5% earners** within the Council's workforce was 17 out of 57. She added that the group is relatively small and any starters/leavers within the group made a big difference to the gender ratio or percentage of women.

Councillor Hughes was reassured that City Services was **employing people over 55**. Councillor Dryden commented on the problems of employing people over 55 because of the difficulty of getting insurance. He was answered that Cambridge City Council had a proper policy in place, based on case-by-case assessment.

Councillor Taylor proposed **flexible working possibilities** instead of benefit review. The Head of Human Resources replied that Cambridge City Council was looking into the possibility of introducing working from home and its implications for customer services.

A report was requested by the Forum for a 2006 meeting.

In relation to **diversity policies**, it was advised that minority groups were already being targeted by focusing advertising towards them. The Head of Human Resources mentioned raising awareness of this issue by workshops as a way to meet targets, as advertising was very expensive. At the moment, advertising is carried out through an agency.

Councillor Hughes also highlighted the low percentage of black minority groups and disabled staff.

Regarding **health and safety**, the Head of HR said that the occupational health service cost around £25,000 per year and it was provided by an external supplier working in partnership with the County Council.

7 ORAL UPDATE ON PENSION SCHEMES

The Head of Human Resources gave an oral presentation

She advised that a decision was awaited from the Government and then the Council would need to review the implications and decision required at local level. The Trades Unions had asked to meet with the Leader of the Council to explain their perspective on the pension changes – this was being set up. The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Head of HR would also join the meeting. Unison had circulated a paper to JSEF for information, outlining their views.

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date was agreed as 10 January 2006 at 5.00pm. It was noted that Councillor Liddle had requested that a different start time be explored – 5.00p.m rather than 4.30p.m.

The Forum recognised that, whenever the meeting started, it could still not be convenient for all the members.

The meeting ended at 5.57p.m.

Chair