

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

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

Jackie Foglietta, Head of Human Resources.
Graham Watts, Director of City Services
Jackie Hanson, Community Development
Marian Mair, Organisational Development Manager
John Cowin, Head of Property & Building Services

1. MINUTES – 20 March 2007

The minutes of the meeting of 20 March 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Dryden, Cristina Marsh - Diversity Adviser and Liz Brennan - Unison

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests:

Councillor Bradnack as a member of NUT

Councillor C. Rosenstiel as a member of Unite (formerly Amicus)

Councillor Ward as his wife is a member of Unite (formerly Amicus)

Councillor Smart as a member of ATL.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

6. Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy and Key Safeguarding Employment Standards

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report and handed over to Jackie Hanson – Community Development who had been undertaking the majority of the work to date. Jackie summarised the key points in the report, particularly highlighting the following:

- The legislation and guidance requiring the council to have policies and procedures relating to safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- The need to be able to adapt to changing legislation
- Work and consultation undertaken to date
- The Key Safeguarding Employment Standards endorsed by The Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership implementation programme
- Communication and Training strategies

Questions:

1. Do you expect any significant changes in Officer practice?

In some service areas there are detailed safeguarding practices in place already. For other services this will be an area of responsibility that they have not considered or been aware of before. Hopefully it will enable staff to confidently raise concerns within a structured, efficient process and provide good practice guidelines to keep themselves safe from allegations.

2. Is Jackie the only expertise in the authority? - concern over demands on her time.

At present there are pockets of expertise in service areas and, as the policy is embedded with procedures and training, general experience and awareness will be raised across the authority. A Safeguarding Link Officers Group will also be developed to support services, disseminate information and monitor the policy.

3. How will the monitoring systems be implemented?

Monitoring will be developed at different levels. We are already monitored by the LSCB preparing annual section 11 returns. Other areas will include: training, referrals, concerns, whistle blowing, audits, IPRs etc.

4. Will this be the last time this is brought to committee or will there be a follow up?

We would like to bring a progress report in a year's time.

Agreed it would be interesting to have a follow up report.

5. Concern with how a joint policy will work.

We appreciate the differences need to be taken into consideration – JH plans to work with those providing services for vulnerable adults to maintain

a balanced approach. The differences can be reflected in the service procedures to be developed.

This is going to Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on Monday 3rd September 07.

7. Staff Survey 2007

Marian Mair, Organisational Development Manager, introduced the report, noting that IPSOS MORI would conduct the survey in October, enabling the Council to compare its results with those of other authorities for the first time. The survey would give greater attention to issues of diversity, sustainability and change management than previous surveys.

Members requested amendments to the draft survey including:

- Stronger links with the Travel to Work survey, specifically the distance staff travel to work;
- Additional questions about staff knowledge of Corporate Objectives and staff motivation in respect of public service.

Q: Will members receive the survey results?

A: Yes, these will be taken to committee

8. Actions Taken to Recruit More Disabled Staff

Marian Mair briefed committee in Cristina Marsh's absence. The main project HR is operating to improve the representation of disabled people amongst the workforce is Engaging Employers. This aims to attract more disabled job applicants, offer disabled people work placements and offer advice and support to managers and staff on managing disability issues positively.

Q: Can we develop links to Remploy to strengthen this area of work?

A: GMB have a big membership with Remploy, can offer assistance. HR would follow up this useful lead.

9. Disabled Access for Staff to Council Premises

John Cowin introduced report and apologised that it was incomplete in some areas because he was lacking a building surveyor in post

Questions:

Q. When the post is filled, can there be another briefing to include costs etc.

A. A more detailed report can be prepared when the post is filled and subject to further consultation with the access officer.

Q. Would it be effective to go through all buildings disabled access requirements?

A. This would require prioritising and up to now the practice has been to address legislation or particular staff/member needs as they arise.

Q. It would be interesting to know what the costs are currently.

A. These would come out of identifying shortfalls and appropriate solutions.

Q. Is it not the Landlords responsibility to ensure disabled access in all buildings?

A. Landlords of existing commercial buildings in multiple occupation are responsible for the common parts such as main entrance doors/ lobbies/ /lifts/ toilets and will generally be willing to undertake improvements as part of planned programs of works. Over time premises that don't address disabled access will become less easy to let or tenants will relocate. Our landlord at Lion House is upgrading the lifts in 2007/08 and has agreed to prepare a scheme to improve the main entrance for 2008/09.

Q. Need a list of priority buildings.

A. Agreed priority buildings are:
Guildhall, Lion House, Hobson House, Mandela House and North Housing

Q. When will there be a Building Surveyor appointed?

A. A building surveyor has been appointed and will take up the post in October

Q. Will this person be undertaking the task of the priority building requirements? Could this be done in, say, 6 months?

A. This person would be responsible for this task but cannot be certain of time frame. May need additional resources as an audit needs to be carried out to identify the shortfall and the implications of legislative changes.

10. Employee Travel Plan – Outline Proposals

Jackie Foglietta introduced a briefing paper , which set out progress with the development of a City Council Employee Travel Plan, together with the Plan's key aims and objectives and actions to be taken over the period 2007-2011.

Members welcomed the progress with this project and asked whether the Travel Plan would be brought to Committee. JF explained that consultation over the Plan and accompanying actions had been extensive and the aim now was to proceed with completing the narrative and launching the Plan to all staff.

In response to a question from Members, JF confirmed that potential incentives (i.e. cheaper fares) from local public transport providers was being explored as part of the wider aim to promote the use of public transport.

The meeting ended at 6.05p.m.

Chair