

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

PRESENT: Councillors: Bick (Vice Chair), Dryden, Rosenstiel, Shah,
Smart (Chair), Todd-Jones
Liz Brennan (Unison)
Deborah Simpson (Head of Human Resources)
Toni Ainley, Director of City Services
Chris Fagan (Pay and Reward Manager)
Clare Palferman (Climate Change Officer)
Glenn Burgess (Committee Manager)

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 28 April 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Cantrill
Kevin Roberts (GMB)

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests:
Councillors Rosenstiel and Dryden as members of Unite (formerly Amicus)
Councillor Smart as a member of ATL.
Councillor Shah as a member of UCU (University Colleges Union)
Councillor Todd-Jones as a member of Unison

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None

6. CONTRACTORS PENSIONS AND HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

As Kevin Roberts (GMB) had requested this item it was decided to postpone until the next scheduled meeting.

It was agreed that the Procurement Manager would forward a briefing paper to all members of the committee.

7. UPDATE ON ESSENTIAL USER

The Pay and Reward Manager introduced the item and gave the following update to members:

- The decision had been taken to progress with the review and Union representatives had been informed on 30 April
- Letters giving notice of removal of the allowance had been sent to affected staff on 21 May
- A total of 117 staff would be affected by the review
- 39 responses had been received, 11 of which had asked for a review. To date 5 had been approved, 3 declined and 3 were awaiting further information
- Discussions with the union had continued and further meetings were planned
- A working group would be set up to consider alternative travel options for affected members of staff
- A survey had been sent to all affected staff and responses were currently being analysed (response rate of approximately 40%)
- The current headlines indicate:
 - 50% would continue to use their own cars
 - personal bikes, pool bikes and pool cars were popular alternatives for affected staff
- The group would consider the full analysis and draw up a business case and costs at a meeting on 4 September

Liz Brennan (Unison) commented that since 10 June a further meeting had been held with union members. A meeting was currently being organised with HR in order to feedback any further information.

In response to a question from Councillor Bick the Head of HR confirmed that departmental managers had played a part in the process by assessing staff against the set criteria.

The Head of HR confirmed that from November those who had been served notice would lose their essential car user allowance. The review process was designed to be very flexible and those that had been declined had been able to provide more information so that the decision could be looked at again.

The Climate Change Officer commented that some staff had suggested that a phased approach would have been more appropriate. It was also felt that this scheme would discourage staff from reducing their mileage for fear of losing their allowance.

The Head of HR confirmed that the number of staff recording high mileage was very low and that this scheme was scheduled to be reviewed every 2 years. The council was actively encouraging sustainable and green transport and staff doing less than 1000 miles would still be paid at the casual user rate. The problem of some staff still not accurately recording their mileage was also highlighted as a concern.

Liz Brennan (Unison) felt that mileage should not be the only criteria for the essential user allowance. Issues such as out of hour's responsibilities, working in remote locations and the need to carry equipment should also be considered.

Councillor Rosenstiel commented that staff needed a car if they were 'on call' but they did not necessarily do many miles and would therefore not be covered under this policy. The high cost of owning a car was highlighted and it was felt that the council were still relying on the good will of staff.

The Head of HR responded by highlighting that the casual user allowance paid 47.7p per mile and contrasted with the 40p per mile rate deemed by the Inland Revenue to be appropriate to cover the on-going costs of owning and running a car.

In response to a question from Councillor Shah the Head of HR confirmed that the 1000-mile criteria had been in place for a while and was felt to be appropriate for a city location. The Pay and Reward Manager highlighted the following examples of mileage criteria in other areas:

- Chelmsford: 2000 miles
- Leicestershire: 3000 miles
- Brighton and Hove: 2750 miles
- Luton: 650 miles

Members requested that the Pay and Reward Manager look into some more comparable examples and feedback at the next meeting. The following were suggested:

- Oxford
- Norwich
- Lincoln
- Ipswich

8 CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

The Climate Change Officer introduced herself and gave some background to members:

- She had been in post on a part-time basis for 3 months
- The role was shared with Simon Chubb
- She had previously worked for an environmental charity before spending 2 ½ years as an environmental consultant
- Her main role is to reduce CO2 emissions as a result of council activities

She was currently identifying a Climate Change Champion for each service within the council with the aim being to train staff to recognise issues around paper usage, water usage and energy efficiency. The first session would take place on 14 September with a programme of events planned for the year. Managers would be encouraged to put a bid into the climate change fund (£250,000) for improvements to their service.

The Director of City Services confirmed that her team had already identified and addressed some issues and were planning bids to the fund.

In response to a question from Councillor Bick the Climate Change Officer confirmed that staff of any level were encouraged to be champions and that the project had been publicised widely around the council. It was estimated that the role would take around 35 hours per year and champions would be expected to liaise with their teams and feedback examples of good practice. It was estimated that 'low cost' or 'no cost' measures could reduce energy usage by 5% and with the council's annual energy bill being £1million this was very significant.

Members agreed that an additional meeting take place on 14 October 5pm

The meeting ended at 6.15p.m.

Chair