

(5.00pm-5.45pm)

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

PRESENT: Councillors: Cantrill, Dryden, Shah, Smart (Chair),
Todd-Jones
Liz Brennan (Unison)
Kevin Roberts (GMB)
Deborah Simpson (Head of Human Resources)
Chris Fagan (Pay and Reward Manager)
Glenn Burgess (Committee Manager)
James Goddard (Committee Manager)

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 25 August 2009 were confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- Councillor Dryden to be noted as an attendee and his declaration of interest to be added as per previous meetings.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Councillors Bick (Vice Chair) and Rosenstiel
- Toni Ainley, Director of City Services

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests:

- Councillor Dryden as member 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. UPDATE ON ESSENTIAL USER CAR ALLOWANCES

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

- Ipswich
 - Do not operate an essential user allowance (removed it in 1997).
 - Pay casual user rate (bottom 2 categories).
 - Implemented pool cars – currently 7, about to increase to 9 cars.
- Norwich
 - No longer provide Essential User Allowance – was removed in 2004.
 - Operate single casual mileage rate for all staff as part of green travel policy.
- Lincoln
 - Presently have Essential Car User Allowance – but do not have any existing recorded criteria (lost in history).
 - Current review considering allowance and mileage rates.
 - Preferred option to move to HMRC rate for all mileage without allowance and introduce pool cars (other options exist that retain allowance).
 - No mileage criteria as considered will work against green ambitions.
- Oxford
 - Travel, subsistence and car allowances to be reviewed during the course of 2009/10 as part of modernising the employment package. Trade unions given notice.
 - No detailed eligibility criteria “*a bit woolly*”.
- Welwyn-Hatfield
 - Still operate essential user allowance – no guidelines or criteria in place.
 - “Its clear we no longer have a policy or guidelines on ECA. We did in the past. It is now determined by the Manager as to whether the use of a car is essential to the post. If so this is stated on the person spec and the employee will receive this allowance.”
- In summary:
 - Both Ipswich and Norwich removed allowance and operate casual mileage rate.
 - Lincoln, Oxford and Welwyn all currently operate Essential User, but none have agreed criteria in place.
 - Both Lincoln and Oxford indicated that they are in the process of reviewing the allowance.

The Head of Human Resources commented that this meeting had been called to advise delegates of issues prior to the implementation of the essential user car user allowance policy, particularly as Unison were keen to raise some issues.

The Unison representative commented:

- Consultations had been held with Unison members over alternate proposals/criteria.
- Norfolk County Council has a weighting system based on duties undertaken. This could be used as a comparison for the Cambridge system.
- On-call criteria could be built into the Cambridge system, so users built up points for mileage travelled, time on call, equipment transported etc.

The GMB representative recommended an on-going review of vehicle usage and the impact on services post implementation of the essential user car user allowance policy. If users take a council vehicle home because they are on-call and not using their own private vehicle, the Council vehicle (one of a limited number of cars/bicycles) will not be available for others to use. The Pay and Reward Manager advised a review could be possible as Street Car (who provide pool vehicles) can undertake weekly reviews on usage. Street Car provides vehicles on a 24/7 basis, but usage cannot be predicted at present.

The Head of Human Resources will liaise with Heads of Services and ask them to monitor the impact of the essential user car user allowance policy on a weekly basis. Feedback will be shared with Unison and GMB representatives prior to being given at the next JSEF meeting.

The Committee agreed that Equality impact Assessments should be undertaken concerning essential user car user allowance policy. The Head of Human Resources stated that a number of assessments were underway at present. The Chair asked for Equality Impact Assessments to be discussed at the next JSEF meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.45p.m.

Chair