

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

20 April 2010
5.00 - 6.30 pm

Present: Councillors Smart (Chair), Bick (Vice-Chair), Dryden and Todd-Jones

In attendance: Toni Ainley (Director of City Services), Liz Brennan (Unison), Vicki Davidson (Organisational Development Manager), Kevin Roberts (GMB), Deborah Simpson (Head of Human Resources) and James Goddard (Committee Manager)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

10/9/JSEF Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9 February 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

10/10/JSEF Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

10/11/JSEF Apologies for Absence

Councillors Cantrill, Rosenstiel and Shah.

10/12/JSEF Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared personal interests:

- Councillor Dryden as member of Unite
- Councillor Smart as a member of ATL.
- Councillor Todd-Jones as a member of Unison.

10/13/JSEF Public Question Time

None.

10/14/JSEF Terms of Reference for Essential User Review

The Head of Human Resources gave an oral update on the proposed Essential Users Review.

The proposed terms of reference for the next essential user review are:

- To review two years worth of data from 2008/9 and 2009/10.
- To assess the one hundred and twenty five staff currently Essential Users.
- Once the data has been reviewed and analysed, meetings will be held with staff and managers, which may lead to changes in car user status, subject to the usual six months notice.
- In line with the last review, staff affected will be given the opportunity for a review.

The Essential Users Review is expected to start in May 2010, complete in October and notification of results given in October.

The trade unions asked for additional criteria (carrying tools and equipment, frequency of journey, and out of hours) to be considered in addition to the one thousand miles.

JSEF discussed the Essential Users Review. The Head of Human Resources has undertaken a survey of essential users criteria with neighbouring authorities. Based on feedback from eleven authorities, a number of other local authorities have moved to the HMRC 40p/mile mileage rate, or use higher criteria than the one thousand miles cut off used by Cambridge City Council.

JSEF agreed to recommend to Cllr Cantrill concerning the proposed Essential Users Review:

- To use travelling over one thousand miles as the criteria. This is moderated to ensure that people affected consistently have high mileage over two years, as opposed to making rare/irregular high mileage journeys.
- To undertake a two way review of people at the criteria threshold with a view to moving essential users to casual status and vice versa. This is to ensure equality between the two types of users.
- To review mileage rates (specifically HMRC 40p/mile) and car allowances as part of the future review of terms and conditions.

10/15/JSEF Outcome From Investors in People Assessment December 2009

The City Council has held Investors in People status since 1995. An assessment is held every three years against the ten standards that cover three main areas 'developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation', 'evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation' and 'taking action to improve the performance of the organisation.'

The Assessor met eighty three members of staff and Councillors in December 2009. It was confirmed in February 2010 that the Council had successfully retained Investor in People (IiP) status, which will be held for three years.

The assessment report highlighted that Cambridge City Council had great strengths. The Assessor highlighted two indicators where improvements could be made ('recognising staff contribution' and 'continuous improvements'). These are key to successful change management and culture change, both of which the City Council is undergoing.

JSEF acknowledged the hard work and commitment of staff to keep the organisation operating efficiently during a period of change. The Organisational Development Manager is liaising with managers and the Corporate Management Team to ascertain tangible good practice examples where staff efforts are recognised and acknowledged.

The Organisational Development Manager will provide feedback to JSEF in November on the strategic plan to address the culture change.

10/16/JSEF Staff Sickness Absence

The Head of Human Resources circulated a confidential report to the Forum setting out the position concerning Cambridge City Council sickness absence levels.

Figures covered the period January to December 2009, and compared the Council to similar organisations where possible.

The Head of Human Resources set out actions being taken to address sickness absence levels. Human Resources and Trade Union representatives felt that policy triggers for action were reasonable, but there were some areas for possible improvement:

- The key factor in addressing sickness absence levels is a strong lead by senior management, and action by line management. It is important that managers maintain a focus on managing sickness absence by knowing their staff and identifying issues early on. It was agreed that stress management guidance would be beneficial for staff and managers.
- Following the sickness absence management process in a timely fashion.
- Ensuring all managers signpost welfare services.
- Managing long term absences and return to work
- Ensuring the Council makes adjustments for conditions covered by the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Unison representative suggested on-site clinics/screenings as part of general health promotion.

The Council is currently piloting the use of HSE Management Standards on stress in three service areas. The intention is to move to a corporate roll out to other services.

JSEF felt it important to recognise when staff do not take sick leave ie have an exemplary attendance record.

Human Resources, Trade Unions and the Corporate Management Team recognise that managing sickness absence levels is a priority issue to be addressed over the long term.

Councillors were invited to review the confidential staff sickness absence report and email any questions to Head of Human Resources post meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

CHAIR