

The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum – Elected Members/Staff Side Group

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 4 May 2018 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr Andrew Baxter (by Video Conference)
Mr Alasdair Christie
Mr Allan Henderson

Mr Richard Laird
Mr M Reiss

Staff Side Representatives:

Ms Liz MacKay (UNISON)
Mr John Gibson (UNISON)
Mr Paul MacPherson (GMB)
Mr Rikki Selkirk (GMB)

Mr Ian Macleman (UNITE/UCATT)
Mr Alister Wemyss (UNITE)
Ms Margaret Macrae (RCN)

In attendance:

Mr S Barron, Chief Executive
Mr D Yule, Depute Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Resources
Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning Service
Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Mr S Walsh, Head of People and ICT, Corporate Resources Service
Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side
Mr D Morrison, UNITE/UCATT (Observer)
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Mr M Reiss in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chief Executive gave an update on work to restore hot water to the Council Headquarters building. There would be a short delay to this work in order that planned work in the boiler room could commence which focussed on the removal of asbestos. The asbestos contract would take priority over the hot water repair, as both works could not be undertaken at the same time. The asbestos contract was confined to the boiler room and the Health and Safety Executive had been informed of the planned works. There was no risk to the users of the building.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Davidson, Mr A MacKinnon and Ms M Smith from the Employer's Side.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated the Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 2 February, 2018, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matters were raised:-

i Pay Award – It was queried if there was any progress at COSLA in terms of the pay award negotiations. It was advised that there was a meeting of HR Managers at COSLA today and the Forum would be informed of any update on the pay negotiations at the next meeting. It was advised that the Council's provision for the pay award remained the same i.e. 3%, 2%, 1% across the various pay bands, as agreed at the Council's budget meeting in February, 2018.

ii Corporate Workforce Plan – It was noted that work was still being undertaken on this year's Corporate Workforce Plan. There had been workshops which focused on four business priorities – transition; development of the future workforce; leadership and management; flexible workforce. Also, a separate Group would look at the vision of the workforce. A key element of the plan would be to work with Partner organisations to develop plans for the future workforce and in particular recruitment. A report would be submitted to the Corporate Resources Committee providing an update on the work done on the workforce plan. The Staff Side were welcome to attend the workforce plan workshops.

5. Trade Union Liaison Meetings

There had been circulated the following Trade Union Liaison Minutes of Meetings for information:- Corporate Resources Service – 5 March 2018; Care and Learning Service – 2 February 2018; Community Services – 16 February 2018; and HR Sub Group – 17 April, 2018.

Arising from the minutes, the following matters were raised:-

i Corporate Resources Service Minute – 5 March, 2018

a) The Staff Side referred to Business Support being part of the Corporate Resources Service but there was no mention of Business Support in the minute. There was a perception that Business Support was being forgotten within the new Service and that there was more emphasis on Revenues and Customer Services teams. There was also a feeling that team meetings were being cancelled and there was a need for these meetings to be held on a formal basis and held regularly.

In response, the Staff Side were advised that Business Support staff were key to the organisation and were not being ignored. However, the Staff Side's views would be forwarded to the Head of Revenues and Customer Services and the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services would be happy to discuss with the Staff Side any specific concerns they had.

- b) Winter Maintenance – it was noted that the Highland Council had received an additional £940k from a Scottish Government Scheme that provided additional funding to cover costs following the adverse winter.

ii Community Services Minute – 16 February, 2018 -

- a) Parking at Diriebught Depot – it was advised that one of the options to provide a solution to the lack of parking space at Diriebught Depot was to look at parking Building Maintenance vans at Lotland Street. This option was currently being costed. Another option was to review the taking home vans policy, but this required a Highland wide approach. The Head of Housing and Building maintenance was the Lead Officer for the latter option. A meeting regarding the parking arrangements and welfare facilities was to be held at Diriebught Depot on Thursday, 10 May, 2018 and trade unions would be invited to attend.
- b) Public Conveniences Restructure – The Staff Side had raised concerns with the team overlooking the restructure of public conveniences regarding some of the treatment of staff being transferred to the Council from the previous contractor. The issue was a lack of information from the previous contractor and there was concern that the Council could be at risk of being taken to an Employment Tribunal as a result. The Director of Community Services undertook to liaise with the Head of People and ICT regarding this matter, but the Council would be fair to staff that had been transferred over.
- c) Facility Time – Trade Unions have encouraged more staff to be involved in trade union activity but there is a reluctance to be involved given it is voluntary, that facility time is an issue with some Managers and workloads would increase for those undertaking trade union activity. There was a need for trade union representatives to have the flexibility to take time off work to attend trade union activities.

The Staff Side were requested to provide an evidenced based report regarding their concern that facility time for trade union activity was not being allowed by some Managers. The report should include the barriers to trade union members being reluctant to take on the role of trade union representatives and whether gender was an issue particularly with regard to the role of safety representative. It was suggested that this matter be considered by the HR Sub Group in the first instance with any recommendations then being submitted to the Staff Partnership Forum.

The trade union role was a valuable one to the organisation and staff and a great example of this was the involvement of trade unions on the Redesign Board.

Thereafter, the Forum **AGREED** that the Staff Side would provide a report, for consideration by the HR Sub Group, regarding their concern that facility time for trade union activity was not being allowed by some Managers, and the report would include the barriers to taking on the role of trade union representative.

iii HR Sub Group minute – 17 April, 2018

- a) Developing a Construction Charter – the trade unions were to provide their unions comments on the Charter and responses were as follows:- EIS were to submit the Charter to an Executive Committee for agreement; NASUWT were content in

principle but felt the charter may need to go to the STUC; AHDS were content with the charter. Further responses were awaited from other teaching unions. UNITE were content with the charter as long as it was adhered to.

It was confirmed that developing the construction charter would continue through the HR Sub Group.

- b) Bullying and Harassment Policy – the Staff Side advised that they were still waiting to see the revised final draft Bullying and Harassment Policy. It was confirmed that the revised draft of the Policy would be circulated to the Staff Side once all comments from the trade unions had been received.

6. Recruitment Health Staff, Recognising Continuous Service

There was circulated Report No. SPF/3/18 by the HR Business Partner in relation to a proposal to recognise previous continuous service from all Health Boards in order to mitigate significant recruitment difficulties. Currently, only employees who worked with Scottish Health Boards get their previous continuous service recognised when they apply for employment with Highland Council and this will count towards their annual leave entitlement and their sick pay entitlement. Service with Health Boards does not get recognised. Health posts were hard to fill and being able to recognise previous service from other Health Boards will help with the recruitment into these hard to fill posts.

The Staff Side indicated their support for the proposal, but advised in some cases that it could be difficult to prove continuous service.

There was a change to the recommendation in that it was agreed to recognise previous continuous service from all 'UK' Health Boards.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to support the proposal to recognise previous continuous service from all UK Health Boards as we currently do with Scottish Health Boards with immediate effect, in order to mitigate significant recruitment difficulties.

7. Redesign of the Highland Council

There was circulated Report No. SPF/4/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform which provided an update for the Forum on redesign and staff engagement since the last meeting in February, 2018.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was acknowledged that the redesign process was a team effort from staff, trade unions and elected members and that the Redesign Board would welcome suggestions for any new areas for review.
- staff who had been involved in the reviews had felt more valued this time, compared to previously when their ideas had not been progressed. This was encouraging and if the Redesign Board was to continue the Staff Side would like to continue to be involved in it.
- Staff involvement in reviews was a great development opportunity for them to learn new skills;

- The redesign process had been a great initiative and staff involved had really benefited from the experience. However, if staff were working on requests from the Redesign Board and if they provided suggestions that the Board did not like, the employees should still be treated with respect by elected members
- There was a need for equity in Managers attitudes when allowing facility time for trade union representatives to undertake activity for the redesign process or other union activity. Both these areas of activity were important and should be given the same status. The Chief Executive undertook to address this with Managers.
- It was intended that Lean reviews would become standard practice in the Council to improve services.

Thereafter, the Forum:-

- i. **NOTED** the up-date of the Board's activities since the last Forum meeting in February. This had focused on:
 - a. Peer reviews – with two concluded in the period, another likely to be concluded on 1st May, a new review commissioned and another continuing. Trade Union representatives are involved in each review team;
 - b. Hearing how staff are leading change through Lean reviews, with even more staff to be trained as Lean facilitators and targeting those making suggestions during the last round of staff forums;
 - c. Ongoing work to develop the Board's Communication Plan; and
 - d. Noting that a savings target of £2.25m had been applied to the Board to achieve in 2018/19.
- ii. **NOTED** that looking ahead the Board will continue to focus on reviews, how to achieve the savings target set, complete its Communications Plan, develop the Council's approach to being more community-minded and how to support staff to lead further change in the organisation.
- iii. **NOTED** that currently the Redesign Board is agreed to run until the end of June although a Council decision on its continuation is expected before then.
- iv. **NOTED** that the Redesign Board welcomed any new areas for review.

8. Any Other Competent Business

There was no further business.

The meeting was concluded at 11.25 a.m.