

# **MEMBERS/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 18 April 2007 at Riverside House, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 p.m.

## **PRESENT:**

**Employers' side:** Councillors Ashford, Copping and Hammon.

**Trades Unions' side:** Mr A Crump and Mr A E Foster.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Short, Mr J Lynch and Mrs J Webb.

It was the Union's turn to Chair the meeting so Mr A E Foster took the Chair for the meeting.

## **18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

## **19. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 4 October 2006 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **20. ACCIDENT REPORT (ACCIDENTS SINCE START OF AUGUST 2006 TO THE END OF FEBRUARY 2007)**

The Panel considered a report from the Council's Health & Safety Advisor which provided them with an overview of the accidents/incidents that had occurred and that had been reported to him between August 2006 and February 2007.

Councillor Copping raised concern about action being taken at Abbey Fields Pool with installation of Danger, Wet Floor signs and the application of a non-slip floor product. The Head of Environmental Health agreed to follow this up and report back to the next meeting of the Panel on 4 July 2007.

Councillor Copping also raised concern with the use of the saunas at the Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre. Although regular thirty minute inspections of the sauna were being carried out, it was noted that there should also be guidelines displayed for clientele using the sauna. The Panel asked the Council's Health and Safety Advisor to investigate this and report back to the next meeting on 4 July 2007.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the content of the report be noted;
- (2) the Head of Environmental Health to investigate installation of safety precautions at Abbey Fields Pool and report back to the meeting on 4 July 2007; and
- (3) the Council's Health and Safety Advisor to investigate displayed guidelines of use of the sauna for clientele at the Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre.

**21. SMOKE FREE POLICY REVIEW**

The Panel received a report from the Head of Environmental Health which updated them on the proposals in relation to the Warwick District Council No Smoking Policy and with the impending introduction of the new Smoke Free legislation it was a good opportunity to review this at a time when the topic had high profile.

The existing policy prohibited smoking in Council offices but excluded the Royal Spa Centre, Pump Rooms and Sheltered Homes. As with the new legislation the old policy was introduced from the perspective of protecting employees from passive smoking.

The Health Act 2006 introduced the concept of Smokefree Workplaces and Public Enclosed Spaces and would apply much more extensively than the existing policy; therefore a revision of the policy was needed.

With increasing emphasis on the health agenda and the need to meet Local Area Agreement outcomes related to smoking and health there was also an opportunity to make a clear statement about the position of Warwick District Council on the issue.

A report had been considered by the Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation and Safety Panel in October 2006, when a review of the policy and the goal of achieving the Gold 'Clean Air Standard' were supported. The Gold award required both internal and external areas of workplaces to be smoke free.

Subsequent to this an officer working party had met, with the Smokefree Warwickshire Tobacco Control Coordinator, to re-draft the policy. The proposed new policy was presented.

The Corporate Management Team had commented on the draft policy, accepted it in principle and asked for some amendments.

The Panel agreed to omit 4.3 of the Smoke Free Policy in relation to employees using flexi time for unpaid breaks because they felt that it would have detrimental impact on the use of the flexi time system.

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The Panel also expressed that certain areas of the Policy would be difficult to enforce and suggested that section 4 (Smoking Breaks) of the Policy be changed to 'Smoking Whilst at Work' and re-worded to incorporate Section 3 - Car Travel/Use of Official Vehicles and Section 5 - Open Spaces, into Section 4.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the content of the report, with the amendments from the Corporate Management Team be agreed; and
- (2) the policy be recommend to Employment Committee for approval.

**22. RIVERSIDE HOUSE RECEPTION CASH HANDLING PROCEDURES**

The Panel considered a report from Revenues and Customer Services advising of the outcome of the independent assessment of the cash handling procedures at Riverside House.

Following the closure of the Cashiers Service in January 2005, there was considerable discussion regarding the security arrangements which were in place at Riverside House reception. The discussions resulted in a bid for extra resources to employ a security guard. Although the bid was rejected, the Council requested that an independent assessment of the cash handling procedures be undertaken which would build on the work undertaken by the authority's own internal audit team.

The Panel addressed that under 2.3 of the independent assessment of the report, the response to more obvious security cameras and enhancing the affect of the panic alarms was, 'This will be considered'. The Panel felt that this was extremely vague and asked what the considerations were, when were they going to take place and what would be the financial implications? The Acting Strategic Director (Customer Information and Advice) agreed to investigate this and report back to the Panel via email.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) the Acting Strategic Director (Customer Information and Advice) investigate what the considerations are relating to obvious security cameras and enhancing the affect of the panic alarms, when they were going to take place and the financial implications and report back to the Panel via email.

**23. DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS FOR REDUNDANCY AND EFFICIENCY TERMINATIONS AND RETIREMENTS AND FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT**

The Panel considered a report from the Acting Strategic Director for Customer Information and Advice advising them on the implementation of revisions to the Discretionary Payments for Redundancy and Efficiency Terminations and Retirements and the proposals for Flexible Retirement.

Mrs J Webb as MPO/GMB branch Secretary had circulated a letter regarding the revisions of the policy and sent it to Councillor Crowther as Chair of the Employment Committee. She had also emailed it to Heather Wakefield as the Union National Officer of Pensions and to the Warwickshire County Council Union branch, to which she was still awaiting responses.

The Panel felt that the 1 April 2007 scheme was not generous enough and was detrimental to the scheme.

**RESOLVED** that the

- (1) content of the report be noted;
- (2) feedback from the recognised Trade Unions in relation to 'flexible retirement' be submitted by June 2007 and a report be submitted to the June Employment Committee; and
- (3) feedback from the recognised Trade Unions in relation to the 'Discretionary Payments for Redundancy and Efficiency Termination and Retirements' be submitted by June 2007 and a report be submitted to a future Employment Committee.

**24. WORKING WITHOUT STRESS ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

The Panel considered a report from the Acting Strategic Director for Customer Information and Advice, advising them on the progress in relation to the 'Working Without Stress' Action Plan.

The 'Working Without Stress' Action Plan resulted from the Council's participation in the HSE Willing 100 program to trail the HSE Stress Standards and the HSE Stress Indicator tool. The plan was endorsed by the Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation and Safety Panel in 2006 at its April meeting. The Panel also agreed to undertake a monitoring role for the Action Plan.

The Stress Management Steering Group met to review progress and compile the report in March 2007. Whilst it was felt that significant progress had been made in many areas it was acknowledged that the resignation of the Council's Learning and Development Officer in May 2006 and other resource shortages within Corporate Personnel Services had led to a lack of resource in implementing some aspects of the plan.

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Of the initial Wiling 100 organisation, 63 were still involved and willing. Twenty two Local Authorities were still involved and Warwick was within the top 10% in terms of progress made within the program.

The Council aimed to survey staff using the HSE Stress Indicator Tool again in June 2007. It was also noted that extra dates had been arranged for the stress course for Managers, due to popular demand.

**RESOLVED** that the content of the report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 5.30pm)