

MEMBERS/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5 June 2013, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30pm.

PRESENT:

Employers representatives: Councillors Barrott and Kinson.

Trades Unions' representatives: Mr Chapleo, Mr Crump and Mr Foster.

Also present: Peter Dixon (Civic and Committee Services Officer), Andy Jones (Deputy Chief Executive) and Alan Richardson (Health and Safety Advisor).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Copping.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS

RESOLVED that Councillor Kinson be appointed as the Chair for the Employer's side.

RESOLVED that Mr Foster be appointed as the Chair for the Trades Unions' representatives.

It was the Trades Unions' turn to Chair the meeting, but as Mr Foster was presenting the main item of business (minute 5), he suggested that the Employer's side Chair the meeting. Councillor Kinson agreed and took the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2012 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. HEALTH & SAFETY MATTERS - UPDATE

The Health & Safety Advisor gave a brief update on accidents, advising the Panel that two incidents had occurred, in November 2012 and January 2013 respectively, which were reported to the Joint Communication Forum in February. Both accidents involved staff members falling over, the first resulting in a fractured finger and injured face, the second a bumped head. In both instances there were no clear causes and no corrective actions were required.

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5. NATIONAL PAY AWARD & FIT FOR THE FUTURE ACHIEVEMENT PAYMENT

At the request of Mr Foster, the Panel considered the proposed national pay award and Fit for the Future Achievement Award.

In 2012, following a two year pay freeze, the Trade Union Side of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services submitted a claim for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 as follows: "A substantial flat rate increase on all scale points as a step towards the longer term objective of restoring pay levels and achieving the living wage as a bottom NJC spinal column point." A final pay offer of 1% was made to the unions. Unison HQ requested that its branch secretaries hold meetings to see whether its members were willing to accept or reject the award. A meeting of the Warwick District branch took place on 4 June, with a significantly higher turnout than expected; 70 people, or approximately 40% of the local membership. Of those present, around 95% agreed they supported acceptance of the 1% offer.

Also discussed at the branch meeting was the Fit for the Future Achievement Award. On 3 June the Chief Executive had confirmed that, as the necessary financial savings and service measures for 2012/2013 had been achieved, an Achievement Award of 1% or £250 (whichever is the larger) would be paid to staff in July salaries. This was in accordance with the scheme agreed with Unison and GMB. A further award of 2% or £500 (whichever is the larger) was proposed to be made in 2013/14, subject to further required savings and service measures being achieved.

Some confusion had arisen at the meeting, as Unison members were unsure of the implications of accepting the Achievement Award on the national award and vice versa, and also on the implications for future awards. Ultimately, the meeting agreed to request that a member of CMT attend a reconvened meeting and respond to a number of questions, including:

- Who was responsible for carrying out the formal review of the Achievement Award and when would this take place?
- Were there any conditions relating to the achievement of targets in order to receive the Award and what were those conditions?
- Was the Achievement Award subject to a three year deal and how did that work?
- If targets for the Achievement Award were not met, what would happen then? What were the alternatives, if any?
- If a 1% pay deal was agreed nationally, would it apply to Warwick District Council staff?

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he had discussed these points with Mr Foster and that he had agreed to attend a branch meeting to

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respond to union members' concerns. Mr Foster was aiming to arrange another meeting as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Deputy Chief Executive gave the Panel a brief explanation of the situation:

Warwick District Council and the Unions had entered into a 3 year agreement in respect of the Achievement Award. Each April, CMT and the unions would review the Award to see whether it was still fit for purpose. For 2012/13, Council staff had achieved the set targets and so would receive a payment of £250 or 1% in July. As it happened, it was agreed nationally that there would be no pay award for 2012/13, so staff had ultimately benefitted.

The national pay offer of 1% which Unison had consulted its members on was in respect of 2013/14. Regardless of whether or not the unions decided to accept that offer at a national level, Warwick District Council could again opt either to accept that offer locally, or instead to proceed with the second year of the Achievement Award, if the Award was still considered to be fit for purpose when it was reviewed. The Award payment would again be subject to staff having achieved certain financial savings and performance measures. However, the unions would have to choose either the Achievement Award or the national offer, and could not have both. If they chose the Achievement Award, but did not achieve the necessary targets, they could not then choose to switch to the national offer. If on the other hand the unions chose to accept the national offer from the outset, this would effectively terminate the three year Achievement Award agreement and the Award option would unlikely be available again in the third year, 2014/15.

While accepting the national offer was ultimately better from a pension point of view, it would have budgetary implications in that the Council would be forced to find that money from somewhere on an ongoing basis. This would be an additional saving which the Council would have to achieve on top of those already identified. The Achievement Award, on the other hand, would be taken from the Council's reserves.

The Panel felt that there was a need for a statement to clarify for staff exactly what the situation was and it was therefore agreed that CMT should endeavour to produce this.

(The meeting ended at 5.05 pm)