

Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation & Safety Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 December 2016, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30pm.

Present:

Employers' representatives: Councillors Coker, Heath and Parkins.

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

Also Present: Mrs Darke (Head of Development Services), Mrs Priestley (Senior HR Officer) and Mr Leach (Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer).

It was the Trades Unions' representative's turn to Chair the meeting so Mr Crump took the Chair.

7. Apologies and Substitutes

(a) Apologies for absence were received from Mr Chapleo.

(b) There were no substitutes.

8. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Parkin highlighted to the forum that she was a member of Unison and a branch Executive member at her place of work.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

10. Staffing Matters - Terms & Conditions Phase 2:

The Panel was informed of the Terms and Conditions Phase 2 proposals that were to be considered by the Employment Committee on 14 December 2016.

It had been recognised that through improved budget management the allocated budgets for Overtime payments could be reduced by £21,000, thus delivering the required saving.

There was a general view that Subsistence allowances needed to be equal with that for Councillors. An external independent review of Members Allowances which encompassed this, was due to take place in January 2017. However, from 1 January 2017 it was intended that Subsistence would change from an allowance, that was taxable when claimed, to a receipt based expense claim with maximum values that could be claimed.

When reviewing standby allowances it was noted that there were significant discrepancies in payments across the Council. Additionally, there was an opportunity to explore using current out of hours' service, Warwick Response provided. The areas mostly affected were Housing Repairs and Building Control. Warwick Response would be able to provide the filter for many of the emergency calls and use the current contractors to carry out any necessary repairs or emergency works as and when required. Through consultation with staff, there had been concern about the level of expertise that was occasionally required to deal with some of the out of hours calls.

However, from the information to date, it appeared that these occasions were infrequent, and Warwick Response would ensure that adequate training was provided. Therefore, in response to the concerns, it was proposed that a trial was commenced for a period of three months for two reasons. Firstly, to ensure that the service provided was not detrimentally affected by the change, particularly for customers, and secondly to enable Warwick Response to assess the increase in calls to identify whether they could be absorbed within existing resources, or whether there would be an additional cost, which as a result reduced any savings. During the proposed trial, officers currently on standby would continue to be paid standby rates and would be available to deal with any complex calls, so that it could be recorded how many times they were needed to attend call outs.

Unison accepted the proposal but asked that this phase 2 review be replaced with a review of the top tier management of the Council. This was set out in a paper circulated to Members of the Panel.

In response, Councillor Coker explained that he always welcomed the views of the Unions and sought a good working relationship with them. He reminded them that a review of the Senior Management Team was scheduled for 2018/19, once a number of major projects had been completed. That was a decision that had been taken by the Executive and that decision was unlikely to change. He recognised that work was ongoing to review salaries and benefits and this would be reported in due course.

(The meeting ended at 5.45 pm)