

Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation & Safety Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 June 2014, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30pm.

Present:

Employers representatives: Councillors Barrott and Kinson.

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

Also present: Amy Carnall (Civic and Committee Services Officer), Alan Richardson (Health and Safety Adviser) and Clare Morgan (HR Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Copping and Kirton, Mr Chapleo, Chris Elliott (Chief Executive) and Tracy Dolphin (HR Manager).

1. Appointment Of Chairs

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

Resolved that Mr Crump be appointed as the Chair for the Trades Unions' representatives.

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

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2013 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Panel noted that the implications of Minutes 15 and 16 would be dealt with under the current agenda.

In relation to Minute 18, Member Behaviour and the Effect on Staff, Councillor Barrott questioned the Trades Unions' representatives as to the current situation. Mr Crump advised that a number of the issues raised in December 2013 had been resolved and there appeared to be no problems with Member/Officer relations at the present time.

4. Corporate Health and Safety

The Panel received a report from the Health and Safety Adviser which summarised the lost working time accidents that had occurred from the end of December 2013 to the end of April 2014.

The report included a table showing comparative accident data tracked over the same period and updated on actions taken following a previously reported incident.

In addition, the report updated on the status of the recent Fire Risk Assessment Audit recommendations and the functionality of the newly installed panic alarm system at Riverside House.

The meeting discussed the circumstances surrounding an accident which occurred within the Warwick Response team in March 2014. The Panel asked questions of the Health and Safety Adviser about the condition of the furniture and whether this had been a factor in the accident. The Panel was happy that the correct procedures had been followed and no further action was required.

However, it was requested that Service Area Managers be asked to include an item on their next team meeting agendas to remind staff about the importance of sitting on chairs properly and not tipping or overextending on them.

Sections 8.2 and 8.3 of the report outlined the steps taken to improve the Council's fire risk management arrangements and to address a number of issues raised in December 2013's audit on the subject.

The Health and Safety Adviser explained that the Assessnet system would be used to track review dates and would alert the individuals tasked to complete the reviews. In addition, it was agreed that a policy should be produced and a draft document had been circulated to the relevant individuals.

Mr Crump asked if this was to be highlighted as a regular item on the Senior Management Team agenda and was assured that SMT were fully aware of the policy and the new system being introduced to control reviews.

The Health and Safety Adviser answered questions from the Panel about the frequency of fire drills and fire reviews and advised that each building should be undergoing a weekly inspection. The recent changes to staffing structure in Housing and Property Services were discussed and the impact these had had on reviews not being carried out.

The Panel was pleased that the Corporate Asset Compliance Group had been established to help push these works through but Mr Foster stated that it was important to avoid complacency now. The Panel thanked the Health and Safety Adviser for highlighting the issues and appreciated that this was a difficult job under difficult circumstances.

The Panel agreed that due to the concerns it had with this item it would like to invite the Deputy Chief Executive, Mr Hunt, and the lead officer, Mr Jones, to attend the next meeting of the Panel to provide an update on any outstanding actions.

Sections 8.4 onwards outlined the new panic alarm system which had been installed in Riverside House in February 2014. The system was installed to ensure the safety of the Council's Frontline, Reception and Housing Advice teams should they feel threatened by a member of the public.

The alarm system and call list was fully explained and the Panel was pleased to hear that the system had been thoroughly tested and worked well.

Councillor Barrott was very pleased about this project, especially with its installation in the PACE room and he hoped that the same system would be installed at any new Council offices in the future.

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the Deputy Chief Executive, Mr Hunt, and the lead officer, Mr Jones be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to update it on any outstanding actions regarding the Fire Risk Assessments.

5. National Pay Award 2014/15

The Panel received a letter circulated by Mr Foster on behalf of Unison regarding the 2014-15 NJC pay claim. The letter asked branches to consult widely with their Members on the two options for the proposed pay claim.

Mr Foster reminded the Panel that there was support from elected Members and the general feeling was that a 1% pay award was not acceptable. He reminded the Panel that the country was coming out of a recession and local government officers had endured a four year pay freeze. Compared to workers in the private sector, local government staff pay was much lower.

Ballot papers had now been dispatched to consult on potential strike action.

Mr Crump advised that the ballot could be close because although the proposed pay increase was not considered good enough, staff would not want to lose money by striking either.

Resolved that the report be noted.

6. Pay and Working Conditions – Contractual Companies Working For Warwick District Council

Mr Foster updated the Panel on the discussions that Unison had with the Council's three contractors regarding the pay and conditions for their employees.

Two of the companies Sita and Veolia had a high number of employees who were members of Unison. Mr Foster advised that these employees had secured a 2% pay award back dated to April last year.

However, employees of Ocean CC, who won the Council's cleaning contract, had encountered a number of difficulties since the TUPE transfer of contracts. Many of the staff were on the minimum wage and had no pay awards in the past two years, often working 7 days a week. Mr Foster had concerns that the relationship between Unison and Ocean CC was poor and despite many invitations to attend meetings and open discussions, Ocean CC had failed to respond.

Councillor Kinson enquired as to who monitored this contract and was advised that it would probably be Neighbourhood Services, although there was some confusion as to whether it was the role of the Contracts Manager. Officers agreed to clarify who was the appropriate individual to raise the Panel's issues with.

Members were aware that although this was a Council contract, it was difficult to enforce rules on the company regarding their employees.

The Panel agreed that it would like a meeting with the Head of Service and/or the Contract Manager for the cleaning contract and a letter would be sent from the Panel, inviting them to attend the next meeting.

Mr Foster assured the Panel that relations between the other companies working for the Council were good.

Resolved that

- (1) the update be noted; and
- (2) the officer responsible for monitoring the Ocean CC contract be invited to the next MTU/JCSP meeting to discuss the Panel's concerns.

(The meeting ended at 5.35 pm)