

# MEMBERS/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3 October 2007 at Riverside House, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 p.m.

## **PRESENT:**

**Employers' side:** Councillors Barrott and Kirton

**Trades Unions' side:** Mr A E Foster (Chair), Mr A Crump, Mr J Lynch and Mrs J Webb

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Copping and Scarrott.

## **501. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

## **502. REVIEW OF THE EMPLOYERS REPRESENTATIVE'S CHAIR**

At the previous meeting of the Panel Councillor Barrott had been appointed as Chair. Following the Panel the appointment had been discussed between Group Leaders because an informal arrangement existed where the Chair of the Panel from the Employers side should come from the party/parties in control of the Council.

Therefore, Councillor Kirton was duly proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Kirton be appointed as Chair for the Employers' side for the ensuing municipal year.

## **503. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2007 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Under matters arising the Panel asked if the Health and Safety Advisor could report back to them, via email because he was not present, if the broken tile had been replaced in the deep end of the swimming pool at St Nicholas Park?

The Head of Corporate Personnel was asked to report back to the Panel, via email, how the recruitment of the Parking Inspectors was going, how many had been recruited and how long it would be before the Council had all the positions filled.

504. **ACCIDENT REPORT (ACCIDENTS SINCE START OF JUNE 2007 – END OF AUGUST 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 been reported to him between the start of June and end of August 2007.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) the Health and Safety Officer provides the Panel with an update on the implementation of the recommendations, following the accident at Newbold Comyn, Leisure Centre.

505. **RISK ASSESSMENT – TOWN HALL PARKING**

The Panel received a report from the Council's Health & Safety Advisor on a risk assessment of parking facilities for officers and councillors when attending evening meetings at the Town Hall.

Currently on Street Parking restrictions meant that officers and councillors attending meetings, at the Town Hall, had to park in St Peters Car Park and then walk to the Town Hall. The return journey after meetings was the cause of most concern for potential lone working at night in the dark but this was also relevant during the winter months when walking to the Town Hall.

The Senior Committee Services Officer informed the meeting that at present an informal working arrangement had been set up between Committee Services, the Town Hall Staff and Chairman of the Council which ensured that there was always a space for Committee Services to park at the Town Hall. However no provision had been made for Planning and Legal Officers as yet, but this could change with the relocation of services within Riverside House.

Concern was expressed by the Panel whilst recognising that any solutions by the Council needed to be seen as fair and not open to public criticism. It was recognised that walking to St Peters Car Park in groups provided a solution, however, it would be nearly impossible to walk in groups from St Peters to the Town Hall due to the variable arrival times ahead of meetings.

It was recognised that there were other town centre workers who worked late at night and the same issues would apply to them. However, the Council's responsibility was for its staff and not all Town Centre workers.

There was a general acceptance that the fear of an incident occurring was greater than the actual likelihood of an incident occurring.

It was acknowledged that there was a health and safety issue with regard to the equipment that officers took to meetings and this would increase the risk of an incident. However it was recognised that the dropping off and collection suggestion was a way to avoid this.

The Panel were reminded that from early next year all meetings, excluding Planning Committee and Council would be held at Riverside House and this would significantly reduce the number of meetings held and therefore the instances of officers leaving the Town Hall with equipment/and or alone.

Taking all the aspects into consideration the Panel felt that the County Council should be asked to consider reducing the finishing time of on street parking regulations in Regent Grove and Hamilton Terrace.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) all staff and Councillors who attend evening meetings at the Town Hall be informed of the recommendations by the Health & Safety Advisor of this Council, that when returning to St Peters car park from the Town Hall after meetings they should walk in groups and/or make use of the mobile phone alarm system; and
- (2) this Panel writes to Warwickshire County Council and asks them to consider, as part of the review of on street parking, that the restrictions on parking along Regent Grove and Hamilton Terrace finish at 6.00pm.

**506. HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE STRESS PILOT REVIEW**

The Panel considered a report from the Acting Strategic Director Customer Information and Advice summarising the outcomes of the participation in the Health and Safety Executives (HSE) stress management pilot “the willing 100”.

From the original 100 participating authorities 63, were still involved with the project and Warwick District Council had been ranked in the top 10. Subsequently the HSE had approached the Council to be a Champion of the stress management project.

The steering group would meet in six months to ensure that the stress management action plan had been embedded into the work of the Council and at this stage would sign off the project.

The Unions did raise concern that while the Council did help to reduce and manage stress on a day to day basis there was still a need to improve the communication and support offered to staff when undergoing significant changes to structure and working practices. This was acknowledged by the Chief Executive but highlighted that communication over significant changes

had improved and he would continue to try to improve communication on these matters.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) the Unions and officers be thanked for all their efforts in making this pilot successful.

**507. DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS MULTIPLIER**

Mr Crump addressed the Panel, on behalf of the recognised Trades Unions, about their disappointment in the decision of the Employment Committee of 18 September 2007, not to increase the discretionary payments multiplier from 2.0% to 2.3% which was more in keeping with other authorities within Warwickshire.

Councillor Kirton, explained that the report did not clearly state the disparity between Warwick District Council and other authorities within Warwickshire. He suggested that the Unions produced a paper on the discretionary payments multiplier for consideration and if this panel was so minded it could be passed to Employment Committee for reconsideration.

It was suggested that an additional meeting of the Panel be held to discuss the matter as soon as possible and to allow a report, if necessary, to be submitted to the next Employment Committee.

The Senior Committee Services Officer highlighted that for a Committee to amend its decision within six months of the decision being made a Notice of Motion, which is sponsored by at least ten members of the Council, would have to be submitted. It was suggested to hold the additional panel meeting on 28 November at 4.30pm which would then allow the members of the panel time to canvas Councillors, if they were minded to do so, to seek their sponsorship ahead of the notice of motion to be submitted to Employment Committee on 17 December 2007.

**RESOLVED** that an additional meeting of the Panel, at 4.30pm on 28 November 2007 at the Town Hall, be held to discuss a paper from the recognised Trades Unions on this matter.

(The meeting ended at 6.05pm)