

# Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation & Safety Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 31 August 2017, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30pm.

## **Present:**

Employers' representatives: Councillors Coker and Heath.

Trades Unions' representatives: Mr Crump and Mr Foster.

**Also Present:** Mrs Barnes (Senior Committee Services Officer), Mrs Dolphin (HR Manager), Mr Hunt (Deputy Chief Executive) and Mrs Priestley (Senior HR 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 Lynch & Mr Day; and
- (b) There were no substitutes.

## **8. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **9. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February and 1 June 2017 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **Part One** **Health & Safety Matters**

There were no Part One items.

Mr Crump explained to the Panel that there would be a report coming forward to the next meeting.

### **Part Two** **Joint Consultative Matters**

## **10. Progress on the new Council headquarters and arrangements for the ongoing maintenance of Riverside House**

The Panel received a verbal update from the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) who gave an overview of the current progress on the new Council headquarters move. He advised that exhibitions had been held for both the public and staff showing the plans for the new building.

There had been communications between officers and local residents regarding the future plans for the Riverside House site which had highlighted concerns from residents of Portland Place West, Somers Place, Church Hill and Wilhemina Close. The LLP and officers had worked through these concerns and responses had been provided along with a four page brochure to all residents.

It was anticipated that the planning applications for both the Riverside House and Covent Garden sites would be submitted in the next few days. The Riverside House application would be an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access and landscaping. A Masterplan would be submitted to Planning Committee in December. After this, the LLP would market the Riverside House site with the relevant permissions and officers would be able to begin a procurement exercise to build at the Covent Garden site, by which time they would have a better idea of true value and cost.

It was hoped that occupation of the new headquarters would be able to commence in January 2020.

With reference to the ongoing maintenance of Riverside House, Mr Hunt advised that the building would be maintained but no improvements would be made. Any repairs would be addressed, for example if there were any concerns with the fire alarm panel, this would have to be addressed because it posed a risk to health and safety. However, the agreement would be to secure windows rather than replace window latches. In addition, any leaks would be fixed.

In response to a question from Councillor Heath, Mr Hunt stated that staff had seemed interested and supportive. A range of concerns were shared and answers provided. A group had been set up, 'Transforming our Workplace' who were assisting with addressing concerns and a dedicated website had been established which provided answers. In addition, an exhibition was due to be held in the Space at Riverside House, in the near future.

Mr Crump agreed that the exhibition had been held at the right time and had empowered staff to ask questions and many fears had been allayed. It was agreed that this was a better approach than concerns being aired on 'Rumour Mill' and the Joint Community Forum meetings were working well.

The Panel thanked Mr Hunt for attending and providing an update.

#### **11. Motion on NJC Pay to Councils**

Trades Union representative, Mr Foster advised the Panel of the "Motion on NJC Pay to Councils" as detailed on the agenda.

He explained that the Unison, GMB and Unite had asked nationally for support from Local Authorities for a 5% increase on all NJC pay points for 2018/19.

The paper provided advised that NJC basic pay had fallen by 21% since 2010 in real terms and workers had endured a three year pay freeze from

2010 to 2012. In addition, local term and conditions had been cut, NJC was the lowest in the public sector and pay structures were being squeezed and distorted.

The motion therefore asked Warwick District Council to note the facts stated above and call upon the LGA to make urgent representations to Government to fund the claim; to write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor supporting the NJC pay claim and seeking additional funding to fund a decent pay rise; to meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and the pay spine review; and to agree to a 5% increase on all NJC pay points and the deletion of JNC points SCP6-9.

In response, Councillor Coker stated that he could see the strength in the proposal but the difficulty was local authorities being able to afford it. He felt that both figures in the motion would be difficult to afford and potentially, the only way to achieve it would be by losing staff. He reminded those present that formally the NJC and the Employer's side would be debating this at a higher level and the Council would abide by the decision made.

The trade Unions representatives advised that overall pay had fallen by 21% since 2010 and the Council needed to recognise that its workforce was starting to age. WDC needed to attract people into employment with local government but this would not be achieved if they were the lowest paid.

The HR Manager referred those present to the appendix to the report which provided a summary of the Remuneration Review report that had been discussed with SMT and the Unions and was due to be presented to Employment Committee in September. The document summarised the main points from the review together with other considerations. One of the recommendations going to Employment Committee was that the Council would look to freeze the Living Wage Foundation rate of pay at the current level. The frozen rate would be increased in line with a 1% pay award on 1 April each year until it was exceeded by National Living Wage.

The Panel therefore

**Resolved** that the motion be noted.

## 12. **People Strategy Steering Group Update**

The Panel received a verbal report from the Head of Human Resources who advised that the Workforce Steering Group was due to meet the following week. The update would be discussed at the meeting prior to its submission at Employment Committee to ensure it was fit for purpose in the actions being put forward.

In addition, the Remuneration Review had been completed with coordination from SMT and the Unions.

The Panel were also informed that data had been collected over a period of six months in relation to advertising, recruitment and branding. The number of vacancies filled had increased from 69% to 89% in January 2017. There were only five agency staff currently employed by the Council

and these were generally used for temporary cover such as maternity leave. In addition, the Council had been put forward for an award in recognition of its branding and marketing of vacancies.

With regard to apprenticeships, a brief had been discussed with SMT and a corporate scheme was due to be put forward as of September 2018. The Council were looking to bring in a cohort of apprentices on an ongoing scheme. Managers would be asked to look at the resources in their teams with a view to supporting and mentoring apprentices.

The Works Perks scheme had proven very successful and had been rolled out to Members via 'Members Update'.

Finally, the Head of Human Resources advised that the Chief Executive's talk had taken place in June and July 2017 with 80% of staff attending. One of the highlights of the talk had been the recognition of staff by the Chief Executive, with the offer of two additional days leave to be taken at Christmas 2017.

The Panel thanked officers for the update and therefore

**Resolved** that the update be noted.

(The meeting ended at 5.10 pm)