

Motherwell, 19 June 2001 at 10 am.

A Meeting of the JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (MANUAL/CRAFT)

PRESENT

Councillor McElroy, Convener; Councillors Gordon and McCallum, and R. Power, Vice-Convener, P. Cairns and S. Ross, GMB; G. Devine, TGWU; and K. Campbell and E. O'Brien, UNISON.

CHAIR

Councillor McElroy (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Committee Services Officer, Head of Personnel Services and Chief Personnel Officer, Department of Administration; Human Resources Manager, Department of Community Services and Assistant Benefits Manager, Department of Housing and Property Services.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Chadha, Grant, Morris, Saunders and Valentine, and A. Duncan GMB.

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (MANUAL/CRAFT)

1. There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (Manual/Craft) held on 8 February 2001.

The Committee noted and approved the terms of the Minute.

MATTERS ARISING - JOB EVALUATION

2. With reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 8 February 2001, the trade union representatives (1) expressed concern that information on the job evaluation process had not been passed to all manual and craft employees, and (2) sought an update on the progress of the scheme.

The Head of Personnel Services (1) advised that two newsletters containing articles on the scheme had been circulated through each of the Council's departments, and (2) indicated that she would take the matter up with the relevant Directors if the trade unions supplied specific details on locations which had not received the newsletters.

DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR A JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

3. With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 8 February 2001 when the Committee had decided to continue consideration of a report dated 1 September 2000 by the Head of Personnel Services which set out (1) proposals for the merger of the Joint Consultative Committees (APT & C) and (Manual/Craft) in light of the single status agreement, and (2) the draft Constitution for a Joint Consultative Committee for Local Government Employees, there was submitted the said report by the Head of Personnel Services.

The Head of Personnel Services (1) advised that, at the last meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee for APT & C staff, the trade union representatives had indicated that they would consider the proposals for the merger of the Joint Consultative Committees, and (2) urged the trade union representatives for the Manual and Craft employees to approve the proposals set out in the report.

The Committee noted that the Head of Personnel Services would liaise with the Vice-Convenor with a view to progressing the matter.

LONG SERVICE POLICY, PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY AND SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY

4. With reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 8 February 2001 when the Committee had noted the position regarding consultation with the trade unions on the Council's draft policies on "Long Service", "Parental Leave" and "Special Leave", the trade union representatives sought an update regarding the status of the policies.

The Head of Personnel Services advised that the draft policies would be discussed at a future meeting of the Corporate Management Team in light of the feedback from the trade unions.

The Committee noted the position.

SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS TO OFFICERS

5. The trade union representatives requested an update on the Scheme of Delegations to Officers. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that an amended Scheme of Delegations to Officers had been approved by the Council at its meeting on 3 May 2001, and (2) that with regard to the trade unions' interest in provision being made in the scheme for the payment of compensation to employees for loss or damage to properties through the course of their work, there were no plans to amend the Scheme.

The Committee noted the position.

ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

6. The trade union representatives (1) expressed concern at the Council's lack of consistency in dealing with Teachers and APT and C staff in comparison to Manual and Craft employees during periods when adverse weather conditions had prevailed, and (2) sought assurance that such inconsistencies would not be repeated in the future.

The Head of Personnel Services (1) advised that guidance had been issued to departments which set out a framework and options for dealing with employees during periods of adverse weather conditions, and (2) indicated that, as circumstances vary, she was willing to look at individual cases in consultation with the relevant Directors if the trade unions submitted specific details.

The Committee noted the position.

The Convenor exercised his discretion to vary the Order of Business as hereinafter minuted.

TIME RECORDING SYSTEMS

7. The trade union representatives expressed concern that data gathered from the Council's Time Recording Systems was being used in the employee disciplinary processes, particularly in light of (1) the inaccuracy of some of the Systems, and (2) staff being unaware of the Systems being used for disciplinary purposes.

The Head of Personnel Services (1) advised the Committee that data gathered from Time Recording Systems had not been used as the primary source of information in disciplinary cases, and (2) indicated that the accuracy of the Systems, and types of systems in use in each of the Council's departments would be investigated.

The Committee noted that the Head of Personnel Services would report on the matter to a future meeting of the Committee.

BENEFIT FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

8. The trade union representatives referred to the benefit fraud investigations which had been undertaken by the Director of Housing and Property Services in respect of employees who were in receipt of housing benefit, and expressed concern about the way in which the investigations had been conducted and the timescale for concluding the investigations, particularly in light of possible disciplinary action.

The Assistant Benefits Manager of the Department of Housing and Property Services was heard in relation to the processes involved in investigation for potential fraud where employees might be earning income in excess of the threshold for qualification for housing benefit. The Head of Personnel Services (1) acknowledged the concerns expressed by the trade union representatives in respect of the timescale for the investigations, and (2) commented on the current status of the investigations.

The trade union representatives requested that they be provided with the details of the employees who would be subject to disciplinary actions so that they could provide assistance.

The Committee noted the position.

USE OF INTERNAL MAIL SYSTEM

9. The trade union representatives requested guidelines on the authorised use of the Council's internal mail system by trade unions.

The Committee noted that the Head of Personnel Services would investigate the matter and report thereon to a future meeting of the Committee.

Having regard to a matter of concern raised at the meeting, the Convener authorised consideration of the following item as a matter of urgency in order to ensure timeous consideration.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

10. The trade union representatives referred to the study currently being undertaken on the feasibility of the Council entering into a Public/Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement for the refurbishment of schools and requested that they be involved in the process.

The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee that it was her understanding that no recommendations had as yet been made to the Council regarding PPP projects.

The Committee agreed that the Head of Personnel Services should clarify the situation regarding potential PPP projects and report thereon to a future meeting of the Committee.