

Motherwell, 23 May 2002 at 10 am.

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

PRESENT

Councillor McElroy, Convener; Councillors Gordon, Morris, and Valentine, and R. Power, Vice-Convener, P. Cairns and S. Ross, GMB; G. Devine, T & G; and K. Campbell and C. Llewellyn, UNISON.

CHAIR

Councillor McElroy (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Committee Services Officer, Head of Personnel Services and Employee Payments Manager.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Chadha, Grant, McCallum, Ross and Saunders

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (MANUAL/CRAFT) - MINUTE

1. There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (Manual/Craft) held on 14 March 2002.

The Committee noted and approved the terms of the Minute.

MATTERS ARISING

(1) PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP) - EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

2. With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when, *inter alia*, the Committee agreed that any comments on the Minute of meeting held on 19 February 2002 at Summerlee Heritage Conference Centre, Coatbridge on Education 2010 PPP be forwarded to the Director of Education, the trade union representatives requested the current position with the Council's bid for PPP funding. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee that a bid had been made to the Scottish Executive and a decision on that bid was awaited. The trade union representatives indicated that once the outcome of the bid was known they would appreciate early discussions on the matter.

The Committee noted that the trade union representatives had requested early discussions on the outcome of the bid on PPP in the Education Department.

(2) MANUAL/CRAFT CORE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

3. With reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when it was noted that the Manual/Craft Core Conditions of Service were under active consideration, the trade union representatives requested an update thereon. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that feedback had been received on the core conditions from both the trade union and management side, and (2) that information would be issued to the trade unions in the

near future with a response requested by the end of June 2002 to allow finalisation of the Manual/Craft Core Conditions of Service.

The Committee noted that information would be issued to the trade unions with a response date of end of June 2002.

(3) EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE - DEATH IN SERVICE/PRE-RETIREMENT ARRANGEMENTS

4. With reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 May 2002 when it was noted, *inter alia*, that finalised guidance on the procedures in relation to circumstances when an employee dies in service and in relation to pre-retirement would be forwarded to the trade union representatives, the trade union representatives asked when the guidance would be available. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that draft guidance on the procedures in relation to circumstances when an employee dies in service and in relation to pre-retirement had been forwarded to departments for comments and would be issued in the near future, and (2) that a Personnel Circular on the matter would be issued thereafter to departments for circulation to all work places and placed on the Council's intranet.

The Committee noted that guidance on the procedures in relation to circumstances when an employee dies in service and in relation to pre-retirement would be issued in the near future.

(4) ANNUAL LEAVE

5. With reference to paragraph 11 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when it was noted that the matter of the annual leave calculation was being actively considered, the trade union representatives requested an update on the issue of employees commencing employment on 3 January and the full year not being included in the calculations for annual leave. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee that options were being submitted to the Corporate Management Team in relation to annual leave and the wider implications considered before producing a common framework.

The Committee noted that the matter of the annual leave calculation was being actively considered.

(5) ARRESTMENT OF WAGES/SALARIES

6. With reference to paragraph 12 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when it had been agreed that the Head of Personnel Services explore with the Director of Finance the possibility of running separate pay runs at the holiday period to alleviate the effect on an arrestment of wages, the Employment Payments Manager advised the Committee (1) that the Scottish Executive were issuing a consultation document on amending the legislation in relation to arrestments, and (2) that discussions would take place with the Head of Legal Services on the consultative document prior to a response being made by the Council.

The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee that if amended legislation was not in place by December 2002 the issue of advance payments of wages/salaries over the holiday period and the effect on an arrestment of wages would be further pursued.

The Committee noted (1) that a Consultation Document would be produced by the Scottish Executive on amendments to legislation in relation to arrestments, and (2) the possibility that the effect of pay runs at the holiday period on an arrestment of wages be revisited prior to the Christmas holidays.

(6) EMPLOYEE COUNSELLING SERVICE

7. With reference to paragraph 13 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when it had been agreed that the Head of Personnel Services raise the issue of the Employee Counselling Service at the Personnel Practitioners Forum to discuss any problems encountered with the service, the trade union representatives requested feedback on the discussions at the Personnel Practitioners Forum. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that the issue of the Employee Counselling Service had been discussed at the Personnel Practitioners Forum; (2) that there had been no indication of the problems described by the trade union representatives on the Service; (3) that the Employee Counselling Service had requested views from the Council on the service provided, and (4) that there were, therefore, two options to deal with the matter (a) to give the Employee Counselling Service general comments on the service, and (b) to provide the Employee Counselling Service with names of those in receipt of the service to allow the situation to be investigated.

The trade union representatives (1) indicated that employees would not want to revisit the situation in relation to their involvement with the Employee Counselling Service; (2) advised that there was the possibility of utilising other services within North Lanarkshire rather than referring employees to the Employee Counselling Service, and (3) requested that the Employee Counselling Service be asked to provide details of the specialists they employ and that information be compared with other services within North Lanarkshire.

The Committee (1) noted that the trade union representatives would prefer not to provide names to the Employee Counselling Service, and (2) agreed that general comments would be given to the Employee Counselling Service on the service provided with a view to obtaining as much feedback as possible.

DRAFT REVISED CONSTITUTION

8. With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when the Committee agreed that the trade union representatives consider the content of the reply by the Head of Personnel Services on the terms of the proposed draft Constitution for a merged Joint Consultative Committee and submit any comments to the Head of Personnel Services, there was submitted an amended Constitution for a merged Joint Consultative Committee. The Head of Personnel Services (1) advised the Committee that item 3 of the draft Constitution should read "The Joint Consultative Committee for Local Government Employees shall consist of 24 members, of whom 12 shall be appointed by the Council and 12 by organisations representing employees", and (2) reminded the Committee that the Constitution could not be finalised until the trade union representatives agreed a breakdown in the trade union membership of the merged Committee. The trade union representatives advised that this information would be provided prior to the next meeting of this Committee.

The Committee noted that the trade union representatives would provide information on the breakdown of the trade union membership of the merged Joint Consultative Committee prior to the next meeting of this Committee.

PROVISION OF A POLICY ON WHISTLE BLOWING

9. With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when the Head of Personnel Services agreed to consult with the Director of Administration regarding the availability of a proposed policy on whistle blowing, the Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that a policy on whistle blowing was not yet available for consultation with the trade unions, and (2) that a report on the proposed procedure would be available prior to the next meeting of this Committee.

The Committee noted that a report on the proposed policy on whistle blowing would be available prior to the next meeting of this Committee.

FACILITIES FOR TRADE UNIONS

10. With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 March 2002 when it was agreed that the trade union representatives consider the content of the draft policy on facilities for trade unions and submit any comments to the Head of Personnel Services, the Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that comments had been received from the Trade Union representatives on the proposed policy for facilities for trade unions, and (2) that separate meetings would be held to discuss the comments.

The Committee noted (1) that comments had been received from the trade union representatives on facilities for trade unions, and (2) that separate meetings would be held to discuss the comments made.

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

11. The trade union representatives asked if discussions would take place with the trade union side following a review of the Council's Parental Leave Policy in the light of issues currently being considered by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that changes to legislative provision had impacted on the Policy; (2) that the Council's Parental Leave Policy went beyond the legislative provision in some areas; (3) that the Council was looking at the discretionary parts of the Policy with a view to obtaining comments from Departments, and (4) that a report would be placed in front of a future meeting of the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee on the matter which would be the subject of consultation with the trade unions in the normal way.

The Committee noted the progress made in reviewing the Council's Parental Leave Policy in the light of issues currently being considered by the DTI.

COUNCIL POLICIES

12. The trade union representatives asked how employees would be advised of new and current Council policies. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that Council policies were published on the Council's Intranet; (2) that Personnel Circulars were issued to all Departments to distribute to every work location; (3) that it was acknowledged that each Department would have different systems of distribution, and (4) that all Personnel Circulars would be available within the Personnel Section dealing with the Department. The trade union representatives identified problems in distributing circulars particularly within Education establishments.

The Head of Personnel Services (1) agreed (a) to utilise the North Lanarkshire News Magazine to advertise any Personnel Circulars issued, and (b) to advertise new policies within wage slips where possible, and (2) advised the trade union representatives to raise the matter at the Departmental Joint Consultative Committees if there were problems distributing Personnel Circulars in departments.

The Committee noted the efforts made to bring the existence of Council policies to the attention of employees.

INCENTIVE SCHEME

13. The trade union representatives referred to incentive schemes being offered within local authorities and asked if North Lanarkshire Council would provide incentive schemes to employees. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that individual Departments had introduced schemes to recruit and retain employees where difficulties existed in recruiting and retaining staff either locally or nationally; (2) that the turnover of categories of staff would be reported under the performance indicators, and (3) that otherwise no standard incentive scheme was in place in the Council. The Committee were advised that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities were investigating the recruitment and retention of staff in particular areas.

The Committee noted (1) the efforts being made by the Council to recruit and retain staff in certain areas; (2) that COSLA were investigating the standard recruitment and retention of staff in particular areas, and (3) that no standard incentive scheme was in place in the Council.

INDUSTRIAL INJURY BENEFIT AND SICKNESS ABSENCE

14. The trade union representatives requested clarification of the relationship between Industrial Injury Benefit and Sickness Absence particularly in relation to new employees. The Head of Personnel Services advised the Committee (1) that the Red Book Agreement had introduced new arrangements for the payment of sick pay with the effect that new employees would require 26 weeks service before qualifying for sick pay, and (2) that the Industrial Injuries Board had indicated that for industrial accidents employees would be entitled to payments only if they were entitled to sick pay.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed (1) that the trade union representatives could pursue the matter of industrial injury payment through the Scottish Joint Council, and (2) that the Council could investigate amending the industrial injury provision when discussing the harmonisation agenda.

NEW EMPLOYEES

15. The trade union representatives requested that new employees be advised (1) of facilities available within North Lanarkshire to have their rent and Council Tax deducted from wages, and (2) of their eligibility for extended payments of Housing and Council Tax Benefits and particularly referred to the entitlement of the unemployed to four free weeks' Council Tax and Housing Benefit. The Head of Personnel Services advised (1) that the matter could be discussed with the Director of Housing and Property Services to find out if it would be possible to advise new employees of their entitlement to claim a further four weeks Council Tax and Housing Benefit rebate, and (2) that the facilities available to have rent and Council Tax deducted from wages could be added to New Start packs. The Employment Payments Manager (1) advised that a message was inserted annually into payslips on the availability of the facility to pay rent and Council Tax through deductions from wages; (2) indicated that the Director of Finance had been discussing the possibility of more frequent messages on payslips, and (3) intimated that discussions had taken place with the Director of Housing and Property Services on the wording of messages on the availability of housing benefit.

The Committee noted (1) that wage slips and new start packs would be utilised to advertise the facility to have rent and Council Tax deducted from wages, and (2) that discussions would take place with the Housing Benefits Section to produce information on eligibility for extended payments of Housing and Council Tax benefits.

SUBSISTENCE AND REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

16. The trade union representatives requested information on the new subsistence and reimbursement guidelines. The Head of Personnel Services tabled a Personnel Services Circular No. PERS 02/02 on the introduction of a corporate framework for reimbursement of subsistence expenditure.

The Committee noted the terms of the Personnel Circular.