

EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM

MINUTES

26 JANUARY 2010

- Chairman:** * Councillor Paul Osborn
- Councillors:** * David Ashton * Tony Ferrari (4)
 * Mrs Camilla Bath * B E Gate (1)
 * Bob Currie * Graham Henson
- Representatives of HTCC:** Ms L Snowdon
- Representatives of UNISON:** * Ms L Ahmad * Mr G Martin
 * Mr D Butterfield * Mr A Shola-Gbade
 * Mr S Compton * Mr R Thomas
- Representatives of GMB:** † Mr S Brooks * Ms K McDonald

* Denotes Member present
 (1) and (4) Denote category of Reserve Members
 † Denotes apologies received

186. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Susan Hall
 Councillor Phillip O'Dell

Reserve Member

Councillor Tony Ferrari
 Councillor B E Gate

187. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Items 7 – 12 Consultation on the Draft Revenue Budget for 2010 and MTFS for 2010-11 to 2012-13 and Draft Capital Programme for 2010-11 to 2012-13, Housing Peer Review, Information Report – Equality in Employment Monitoring from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 and 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, UNISON report on Agreement to Early Consultation, . Information Report – Response to the Employees’ Side Report on Agreement to Early Consultation, Examination of the Minutes of the Employees Consultative Forum.

Councillor David Ashton - Personal interest in that his daughter-in-law was a Council employee. He would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on these items.

Councillor Bob-Currie - Personal interest in that he was a retired member of UNISON and his son was a Council employee. He would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on these items.

Councillor Graham Henson - Personal interest in that he was a member of the Telecommunication Workers’ Union and his cousin was a Council employee. He would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on these items.

Councillor B E Gate - Personal interest in that he had two good friends who were Council employees. He would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on these items.

188. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the deletion of ‘2009’ in the first paragraph of minute 183 and the insertion of ‘2010’.

189. Petitions, Deputations and Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received, at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively.

RESOLVED ITEMS

190. Consultation on the Draft Revenue Budget for 2010-11 and MTFS for 2010-11 to 2012-13 and Draft Capital Programme for 2010-11 to 2012-13

The Forum received a report and presentation from the Corporate Director Finance to enable consultation with the Trade Unions on the proposals in the Draft Revenue Budget for 2010-11 and MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) for 2010-11 to 2012-13 and Draft Capital Programme for 2010-11 to

2012-13, agreed by Cabinet on 17 December 2009. It was noted that the Leader of the Council would be meeting with the Trade Unions to discuss the budget the following week.

In response to questions from the Trade Unions, it was noted that:

- the costs of consultation cross-council were not quantified and would be difficult to identify. The Corporate Director Finance undertook to determine whether a broad estimate could be captured;
- the Council Tax freeze for 2010-11 was as a result of the challenging situation faced by residents;
- the Council was investigating the optimisation of revenue where appropriate. Items considered by Cabinet as a response to a study on revenue raising opportunities two years previously, which had included looking at other authorities, were outlined. It was proposed to revisit this framework and to explore other avenues. This would include a future operating model to ascertain whether services could be offered to other authorities as part of a business case;
- the appointment of consultants took place where they added value to the organisation and provided costs were justified. Any clawback of monies on performance would depend on the contractual arrangements. The measure of delivery of individual consultants varied and was dependent on the outcome of a business case or the work they were expected to undertake. Any concerns regarding consultants could be pursued through other established channels;
- with regard to investment in services, the composition of the £4.5m was detailed in the main report. It was noted that the investment in services did not relate to the Transformation Programme (known publicly as the Better Deal for Residents), the results of which would not impact until 2011/12.

An Employee Representative suggested that the Council consider becoming a waste disposal authority. The Corporate Director Finance stated that the Council could not opt out of the West London Waste Authority (WLWA). However the WLWA was identifying the availability of disposal sites in the region. In addition, the Council was working with the six Local Authorities in West Waste in bidding for new refuse disposal facilities.

It was suggested that consideration be given to renting surplus Council land to local businesses. The Chairman stated that revenue implications would need to be considered in any business case.

The Chairman stated that any ideas regarding revenue raising opportunities would be welcomed.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the comments of the Trades Unions be reported to Cabinet.

191. Housing Peer Review

The Forum received a report from the Interim Divisional Director of Housing which set out the main findings from the recent housing peer review and formed the basis for future working arrangements between housing services and the unions. The officer thanked union colleagues for their contribution to the peer review.

It was agreed that issues the GMB considered to be unresolved, which were not a consequence of the Peer Review, would be dealt with by other channels.

It was noted that, although the GMB representative had been involved in the recent recruitment process for new members of the management team, she had not been involved in the decision-making process.

Representatives from Unison welcomed the support plan for cultural change and the proposed review in six months of any issues arising.

The Chairman requested that an update on the implementation of the service improvement plan be submitted to the Forum in six months.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) a report on the implementation of the service improvement plan be submitted in six months.

192. INFORMATION REPORT - Equality in Employment Monitoring from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 and 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

The Forum received the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which set out the annual workforce statistics and equalities monitoring data of Harrow Council's employment practices for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 and for 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009. It also set out progress made against employment equality targets and reviewed progress made in other equality and diversity work. It was noted that the report for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 would be submitted to the Forum in Autumn 2010.

The proposal to establish a sub-group of the Corporate Equalities Group, to identify areas where further examination around equalities in employment might be necessary and to present an action plan to address this to the Corporate Equalities Group in March 2010 and to the Employees' Consultative Forum in April 2010, was noted.

In response to questions, the Forum was advised that:

- the policy regarding medical redeployment would be reviewed in consultation with the Trade Unions through the Corporate Joint Committee process;
- the present low recruitment level reflected the current economic pressures;
- Counsel's opinion was awaited regarding the 'Fair Treatment Suite' and the proposal to make some policies and procedures non-contractual;
- the GMB comments on the report would be discussed at the Corporate Equality Sub Group and reported back to the Forum in April 2010;
- information regarding performance on equalities in employment for 2006/07 was available in the report presented to the Forum in 2007;
- further work was required to ascertain why the distribution of women in the workforce was concentrated in the lower paybands;
- 22% of recruitment audits had been undertaken in 2008/09. An officer was asked to check the success ratios noted in the report;
- it was noted that recruitment audits did not extend to school appointments;
- consideration would be given to the inclusion of length of service in the statistics for dismissals by the Corporate Equalities Sub-Group;
- discussion on what was permissible in positive action would take place at the Corporate Equalities Sub-group;
- the economically active age of 18-65 was defined in the census;

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

193. UNISON report on Agreement to Early Consultation and Management Response

The Forum considered a request from Unison that the Council confirm its commitment to consultation with the Trade Union. This would involve the signing of a procurement agreement which had previously been submitted to the Council. The submission of the agreement had been in response to the decision of the Portfolio Holder Decision meeting on 3 September 2009 that 'mechanisms be put in place to allow options on future projects to be explored more widely at an earlier stage.' Unison expressed the opinion that in the past the trade unions had been invited after the bulk of the work was done. Consultation with Unison on a separate basis from other unions was sought.

The Divisional Director Human Resources and Development provided information on the Council's Recognition and Procedural Agreement with Unison and the terms of reference of the Better Deal for Residents Trade Union Forum.

The Council acknowledged that the draft Agreement had been received and apologised for the delay which had arisen due to the absence of an officer.

The Forum noted that the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development would compare the proposed Agreement with present practice to enable discussion to take place at the Corporate Joint Committee. The Council was committed to ensuring that the Trade Unions were invited to participate at the Outline Business Case stage, the point in the process Members became involved. The Chairman gave an assurance that Trade Unions would as a result be involved as the Outline Business Case was developed prior to conclusions being reached.

Unison expressed its reluctance to provide further documentation as responses had not been received from management in relation to proposals submitted in connection with health and safety and training agreements. In addition, no further information had been received regarding Counsel's opinion in relation to non-contractual policies and procedures. The Chairman undertook to defer consideration of any additional non-contractual procedures until Counsel's opinion had been received and he had had an opportunity to consider this. Unison requested that a special meeting of the Forum be convened once Counsel's opinion was received.

In response to a request by GMB, the Chairman gave an assurance that participation as the Outline Business Case was being developed would also apply to GMB.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

194. Examination of the Minutes of the Employees Consultative Forum

The Forum was informed that, the two issues which remained outstanding from the examination of the minutes of the Forum for the previous two years were expected to be resolved prior to the next meeting. These involved copies of the safety audit reports referred to in the Annual Health and Safety Report 2007/08 and the Arrangements for Monitoring and Managing Legionella being provided to the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.53 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR PAUL OSBORN
Chairman

APPENDIX 1

Officers in attendance:

Tom Whiting	-	Assistant Chief Executive
Myfanwy Barrett	-	Corporate Director Finance
Lesley Clarke	-	HRD Strategy Manager
Lynne Pennington	-	Interim Divisional Director of Housing Services