

# Local Joint Consultative Panel

A meeting of Local Joint Consultative Panel was held on Monday, 4th December, 2006.

**Present:** Mr J Stockill (Chairman) (UNISON), Cllr M Cherrett, Cllr D Coleman, Cllr K Dixon, Cllr T Laing (vice Cllr Mrs J Beaumont), Cllr K Lupton, Cllr R Rix; Mr A Christon (GMB), Ms B Campbell, Mr P Johnson (UNISON), Mr P Surtees (UCU)

**Officers:** Mrs J Danks, Mrs D McGuire (RES); Mr N Hart (LD)

**Also in attendance:** No other persons present

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs J Beaumont, Cllr D T Brown, Mr D Ross (UNISON), Mr D Kitching (TGWU), Mr P Weston (AMICUS)(UCAAT), Mr J Cosgrove (UCAAT)

## 1 Minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

## 2 Matters Arising

Agency, Casual, Sub Contractor Workers within Stockton Borough Council

Concern was expressed that the minutes of the last meeting did not include details of the number of agency, casual and sub contract workers employed within the Council. It was requested that details should be provided indicating these numbers; how this figure compared to permanent staff; how long those persons had been employed, and the number of temporary staff in each service group/department.

It was reported that this advice would be provided by Human Resources and provided for consideration at the next meeting.

AGREED that Human Resources provide details of any management information available that would indicate the number of agency, casual and sub contract workers employed within the Council; and if possible, how this figure compared to permanent staff; how long those persons had been employed, and the number of temporary staff in each service group/department; and that the advice be provided for consideration at the next meeting.

## 3 Early Retirement Issues

Clarification was requested as to the number of employees within the Council who had taken early retirement/voluntary redundancy; and then had returned to the Council on a consultancy basis.

The Panel was advised that of 72 ERVR decisions made in the last year, only 2 employees had returned on a casual basis; with 2 further employees engaged elsewhere as consultants. Social Care had previously been an area where this practice had been employed.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

#### **4 Health and Safety Statistics**

The Panel was provided with Accident and Assault statistics which had been reported to the Health and Safety Unit for the periods 1st July 2006 to 30th September 2006. Details of the Health and Safety Training Courses were provided for the same periods. These figures included details of agency staff, however, a further 4 incidents generally had been reported since the data was compiled.

It was noted that 13 employees had undertaken Health & Safety training on Avoiding Violence. However, there had been 20 reported incidents of physical assault. Clarification was requested as to whether training was directed towards those employees that were likely to be most at risk. It was reported that training was usually undertaken as a direct result of the need being identified via a training assessment; and that as well as the training, regular refresher sessions were given.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

#### **5 Single Status Update**

The Officer provided an update to the Panel on the position of Single Status and summarised the implications of a recent tribunal judgement which effectively ruled that any historic discrimination carried out by an authority (such as the protection of a previous bonus scheme) could not continue to be protected if it was unjustified; and that all such schemes must be 'fair and not discriminatory'. The authority involved in the tribunal had the right of appeal to this decision.

Information was provided on the current position of Job Evaluation, with most jobs in Phase 1 complete, and jobs within the schools group currently progressing.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

#### **6 Work Programme**

The Panel requested that future meetings be scheduled within the Democracy Diary.

AGREED that meetings of the Local Joint Consultative Panel be scheduled within the Democracy Diary.

#### **7 Additional Items**

##### **(i) Facility Time**

Clarification was requested as to the procedures to be deployed in departments throughout the Council when allowing officers facility time for trade union duties. It had been practice for some officers to request timesheets to record time taken, and for officers to 'forecast' how long they would be engaged in meetings regarding trade union matters.

It was noted that there was little management information available to assist in clarifying how such procedures worked however, it was not considered unreasonable for managers to be aware of facility time taken; and the cumulative amount each year. In the instance of managers requiring clarification of how long officers would be engaged in trade union meetings, it was suggested that it would be advisable for the manager to enquire personally with the meeting organiser, rather than request the officer to do so.

(ii) Sickness Absence Reporting Procedures

Reference was made to the Council's sickness absence reporting procedures, which officers within the authority had been requested to read and sign as confirmation that they were familiar with the policy and practices. It was considered important that evidence should be recorded that all officers were aware of such documentation, so as to ensure that no employee could be vulnerable to being excluded from receiving vital information regarding their work practices.

Should an employee not understand; or have any issues with how the policy worked in practice, they were advised to raise this matter with their union.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

**8 Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Panel was to be held on 20th March 2007.