

LUTON JOINT NEGOTIATION AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

12th January 2005 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors D. Chapman, Franks, and Harris; Ms. C. Beddows (UNISON) M. Goodall (GMB), K. Haylock (UNISON), C. Kahney (NAHT) B. Hughes (NASUWT), S. Legate (UNISON), M. Malone (GMB), T. Shanahan (UNISON), I Smith (TRADE UNION CO-ORDINATOR) and I. Ward (NAHT).

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF EMPLOYEES' SIDE

Resolved: That Mr. I Smith be elected as Chair of the Employee's Side for this meeting only, and that he take the Chair for this meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Seiderer, Shaw, Mr. M. Alexander (NUT) and Mr. J. Cummings (TGWA).

3 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Luton Joint Negotiation Consultative Committee held on 22nd September, 2004 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME CONSULTATION (REF: 4)

The Exchequer Services Manager reported in regard to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). She informed Members that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), had issued a further draft consultation document "Facing the Future – Propositions & Principles for an Affordable & Sustainable Local Government Pension Scheme" seeking the views of all LGPS stakeholders on the Government's commitment to introducing a new LGPS, which could be implemented by 2008. The Administration Committee would consider whether to respond to the consultation on 19th January 2005.

The reasoning behind the introduction of a new LGPS were the changes of lifestyle and that people were living longer, which put strain on the pension fund.

The Exchequer Services Manager informed the Committee that changes would be made to retirement age, benefits, lump sum, flexible retirement, tiered ill health, death benefits, defince contribution top up scheme, costs and financing and transitional arrangements.

Councillor Harris raised concern that the expected changes could make recruiting new staff difficult.

The Employee side informed the Committee that Trade Unions were looking to take industrial action in response to the proposed Local Government Pension Scheme changes. Concern was also raised that women and part time staff would be affected the most, in that they would receive less pension. Reassurance was also sought that retention bonuses would not be included in the pension scheme.

The Head of Human Resources responded that retention bonuses were not pensionable, but could be used as additional contributions to the individuals pension.

The Employee side requested that a meeting be arranged between Trade Unions and the Exchequer Services Manager be arranged to discuss the Local Government Pension Scheme changes in more detail.

Resolved: (i) That the report on the Local Government Pension Scheme be noted.

(ii) That the Exchequer Services Manager arrange a meeting with Trade Unions to discuss the Local Government Pension Scheme.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, PART VA (REF: 5)

Resolved: That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of this meeting as it is likely that if members of the public were present during consideration of the items to be considered there would be disclosure to them of exempt information falling within Paragraph 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 HOUSING STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL – UPDATE REPORT (REF: 6)

The Head of Housing (Landlord) reported in regard to the housing stock options appraisal. He informed the Committee that a steering group, which comprised Members, officers, tenants, leaseholders and Trade Union representatives met monthly to discuss the appraisal.

As part of the consultation process, newsletters and staff briefings had been held at various locations around Luton. Also, newsletters had been sent to tenants and articles placed in the local press. The independent tenants advisor had also provided information to tenants.

He went on to inform the Committee that progress on data collected included:

- Stock Condition survey complete – findings had been verified by independent surveyors before release to Luton Borough Council and would be available shortly.

- The Housing Need survey was underway – an initial report was anticipated to be available by mid February 2005.
- The Tenants Aspiration survey had been completed – a report on its findings was awaited.
- The financial appraisal was still awaited from Price Waterhouse Consultants – this was dependant on stock condition and the HRA Business Plan.

Options that remained were:

- To retain ownership and management of housing stock – no additional funding available.
- Transfer to Housing Association (a ballot of tenants required).
- Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) – the Council retained ownership but management by separate body. It was not yet clear if additional funding would be available.
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) – it was unlikely that this would be a whole stock solution.

The Committee were informed that initial feedback to the steering group, Members and Tenants Consultative Committee was expected on 25th January, followed by staff briefing sessions on 26th January. A report would then be submitted to Executive on 14th February, 2005.

He concluded that the Council would need to consult widely once the financial appraisal had been completed and the options most suitable for Luton known.

Resolved: That the report on the Housing Stock Options Appraisal be noted.

7 REVISED LOCAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE – UPDATE REPORT (REF: 8)

The Head of Human Resources referred to the previous meeting of the Luton Joint Negotiation Committee held on 22nd September, 2004 and advised the Committee that the revised Grievance Procedure had been supported by UNISON and approved by the Administration Committee on 26th October 2004.

Resolved: That the report on the Revised Local Grievance Procedure be noted

8 REVISED SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY AND FLEX TIME POLICY (REF: 8)

The Head of Human Resources submitted a report in regard to the Sickness Absence and Flex Time Policy. Members were informed that the Sickness Absence Policy had been considerably shortened and streamlined to enable the Council to deal with cases in a more flexible manner.

Councillor Harris raised concern that there could be inconsistency across the Council in how managers interpreted the Policy. He also suggested that the draft Sickness Absence and Flex Time Policy should be submitted to the Legal Services for clearance on equality issues, employment legislation and consistency. He added that it should then be submitted to Administration Committee. If Legal Services did not clear the draft policy it needed to be resubmitted to the Luton Joint Negotiation Consultative Committee for further comment.

Members of the Employee's Side agreed to the draft policy in principal, but agreed that it required clearance by Legal Services.

The Employee's Side raised concern that not all departments within the Council had access to the Flex time system, and commented that if the policy was implemented it should be embraced by all departments.

Resolved: (i) That the report on the Revised Sickness Absence Policy and Flex Time Policy be noted.

(ii) That the Head of Human Resources be requested to submit the draft Sickness Absence and Flex Time Policy to Legal Services for clearance on equality issues, employment legislation and consistency.

(iii) That once cleared by Legal Services, the Head of Human Resources be requested to submit the draft Sickness Absence and Flex Time Policy to Administration Committee.

(iv) That if the draft Sickness Absence and Flex Time Policy was not cleared by Legal Services it would be resubmitted to the Luton Joint Negotiation Consultative Committee for further comment by the Head of Human Resources.

9 COUNCIL RESTRUCTURING (REF: 9)

The Head of Human Resources updated the Committee on the Council restructuring. This report covered the approaches being adopted to implement the key recommendations from the best value review and outcomes of consultations with staff regarding options for future operational arrangements within the Chief Executive's, Lifelong Learning and the Housing and Social Services departments.

Resolved: That the report on Council Restructuring be noted.

10. INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS (REF: 14)

The Joint Committee had before them for information the Minutes of the meetings of the:

Environment and Regeneration JNCC – 9th January 2004
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 12th January 2004
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 15th March 2004
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 17th May 2004
Environment and Regeneration JNCC – 2nd July 2004
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 12th July 2004
Environment and Regeneration JNCC – 10th September 2004
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 13th September 2004
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 15th November 2004

(Note: The meeting concluded at 3.05 p.m.)