

## **LUTON JOINT NEGOTIATION AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**28<sup>th</sup> April 2004 at 2.10 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors D. Chapman, Hand, Harris, and Siederer; C. Ayres (PAT), C. Beddows (UNISON), J. Cummings (TGWU), R. Field (AMICUS), M. Goodall (GMB), J. Gregg (UNISON), K. Haylock (UNISON).

### **1 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE EMPLOYER'S SIDE (REF: 1)**

**Resolved:** That Councillor Harris be elected Chair of the Employer's Side for the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

### **2 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF EMPLOYEES' SIDE (REF: 2)**

**Resolved:** That Mr. J. Cummings be elected Chair of the Employees' Side for the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

### **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 3)**

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Franks and Johnston and V. Gayler (SHA), B. Hughes (NASUWT), G. Ryan (ATL) and I. Smith (UNISON).

### **4 MINUTES (REF: 4.1)**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2003 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, PART VA (REF: 6)**

**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 PAY AND REWARD STRATEGY (REF: 5.1)**

The Director of Corporate and Customer Services referred to the issue of recruitment and retention across the Council which needed to be addressed. A sum of £925,000 had been identified in the Council's budget to

look at methods of recruiting and retaining employees and a presentation was made which outlined the proposals.

Measures of improving recruitment and retention, which would involve minimum or no cost, had been investigated. These included:-

- Revert to Herald and Post for weekly advertising.
- Improve recruitment branding.
- Introduce Web site/Jobs Go Public.
- Defining benefits package.
- Home-working/9 day fortnights etc.
- Other employee survey initiatives.

Other options which would have a cost included:-

- Increasing salary
- Retention/recruitment allowances.
- Car allowance (this had not been updated for some time)
- More trainees (home grown professional staff) so that the Council was less reliant on external professionals

Some form of recruitment and retention allowance was the favoured mechanism to be funded from the budget available. One idea was to have a payment – a little like a functional market premium (FMP) - which would be reviewed every three years and be linked to performance (but would not operate as a performance related pay mechanism). Further details needed to be worked out on this.

It was proposed that the payments would be determined by an officer Pay Panel to be chaired by the Head of Human Resources. The Panel would include two Heads of Services, a Financial Advisor, a Human Resources Adviser and a Trade Union representative. Its function would be to look critically at those posts presented as being hard to fill posts and determine whether or not payments should be made.

Implementation of the Strategy would be broken down into two phases. Phase 1 would deal with posts where there was clear evidence that there were difficulties in recruitment and retention. Engineers would be dealt with first as there was a severe issue in recruitment and retention in that field. An outline budget of £500,000 would be allocated to phase 1 and would be completed by late May, early June.

Phase 2 would deal with other posts where pay was uncompetitive such as Chief Officers and Heads of Service. An outline budget of £425,000 would be allocated to Phase 2 and would be finalised by late July. Hay consultants would also submit a report on Chief Officers and Heads of Service pay.

The Employee Side, whilst welcoming the sum identified to review recruitment and retention, were extremely concerned that a report had been submitted to Administration Committee without prior consultation with the

Trade Unions. Concern was expressed that Members of Administration Committee may have been under the impression that the Unions had been consulted on the report and this was not the case. The process had not been open and transparent as had been the case in the past, which was felt to be a retrograde step and not a positive way to foster good relations. It was felt that an apology was deserved.

The Employees Side reported that there was a general feeling of discontent amongst employees. It was felt that the allocation of funds as proposed was disproportionate and that a process which singled out one group of employees would be divisive. There was concern that a larger original sum had been reduced.

The Director of Corporate and Customer Services informed the Committee that when the matter had been before Administration Committee it had been subject to consultation with trade unions. He added that the presentation before the Committee was part of the consultation process. It had been necessary to get a steer from Administration Committee on the broad principles being proposed. The sum of £425,000 had been suggested as an allocation to employees whose jobs had uncompetitive salaries. Advice would be sought from HAY. Any resultant proposals to increase Chief Officers pay would not be funded from that sum.

The Chair felt that this matter had not followed the usual process of consultation with the Trade Unions and required that the item be referred back to Administration Committee. The Chair felt that it was difficult to get the full picture on the matter without more detail and found the report difficult to approve as a result. He requested that information on the findings of Carlisle Consultants and how that impacted on the process be included along with further detail about why hard to fill single status posts were excluded from Phase 1.

The Chair also felt that several issues were missing such as flexible working, succession planning, career development, unsocial hours and closer to home working. He also asked how you would differentiate between those posts who got retention payments, and those which did not. It was felt that these issues should be included in any further report before Members. The Chair further commented that he was not aware of recruitment issues at Head of Service level and above and felt that this should be excluded from the report and dealt with elsewhere.

The Head of Human Resources responded that he would take these points into consideration as part of the process of consultation with the Trade Unions. He wanted to maintain and continue positive relations with the Trades Unions.

Councillor Hand commented that single status would need to be included within the Strategy in order that all areas with vacancies were highlighted.

Councillor Siederer expressed a wish to speak with the Trade Unions on this matter prior to it being considered further by Administration Committee.

The Chair stated that the LJNCC's position was that there were a number of concerns and the matter should be referred back to Administration Committee for further consideration and then back to the LJNCC for consultation and agreement with the Trade Unions.

**Resolved:** (i) That Administration Committee be advised that the LJNCC had not been consulted on the proposed Pay and Reward Strategy.

(ii) That Administration Committee be requested to resolve that the proposals should be subject to consultation with the Trade Unions prior to any further consideration by Administration Committee.

(iii) That the matter be submitted back to the LJNCC for consultation and agreement with the Trade Unions.

## **7 BEST VALUE UPDATE (REF: 7)**

The Director of Corporate and Customer Services gave an oral update on the Best Value Review process. He reported that two Best Value reviews would take place later in the year in relation to the Engineering and Transportation Department and Regeneration. Progress had been made in relation to the review of Sports and Leisure facilities, which had been agreed by Executive. Unfortunately the timescale had slipped in respect of the Housing strategy.

The Joint Committee was informed that there was a place available to Trade unions on the Best Value Procurement Board which met monthly. The attendance of a Trade Union representative was requested.

The Trade Unions replied that they had been unable to attend recent meetings in view of the volume of work on single status. Whilst they might not be able to attend as regularly as they would wish, they were receiving the paperwork on a regular basis.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **8 BUDGET UPDATE (REF: 8)**

The Director of Corporate and Customer Services updated the Joint Committee on the draft Budget for 2004/2005. The budget book was now available which Trades Unions were welcome to. The outcome of capping of funding by the Government was still awaited.

Whilst concerns had been raised during the budget process, the outcome had been a positive one. Comments for improvement were welcomed.

The Joint Committee were informed that work on the 2005/6 Budget had commenced and that ways to improve that process would be review by Scrutiny.

In reply to a question about why the Housing Revenue Account had been underspent, the Head of Private Sector Housing replied that larger projects had not proceeded as planned and owing to severe shortage of Housing Surveyors there had been difficulty in commissioning repairs.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **9 REVISIONS ARISING FROM REVIEW OF INTERNET POLICY (REF: 9)**

The Head of Human Resources reported on proposed revisions to be made to Internet Policy which had been made following a request from administration Committee.

The policy was designed to provide clear guidance to employees and Members on how to obtain Internet access and the standards expected when using the Internet. It also protected the reputation of the Council by limiting the potential for misuse by employees. In addition, employees would be protecting from exposure to offensive and distressing content.

The Joint Committee was informed that several revisions had been made. These included renaming the document as 'Internet Acceptable Use Policy', updates in wording to reflect changes in the Council's flexible working policy, the use of clearer English and the inclusion of an additional category 'Hosting Sites'. An 'All LBC' E-Mail had been sent out on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2003 reiterating the forbidding of sharing of passwords.

The Employee Side requested that the policy be applied consistently across all Departments and all employees.

The Human Resources Officer replied that HR had been asked to produce HR guidelines to work to, to ensure consistency. These would be brought before the Joint Committee in due course.

The Chair understood that the policy needed to be applied to Councillors but asked for further guidance on access and general use for Members as they might possibly need to access certain restricted sites such as political sites.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That consideration be given to the access and general use clauses for Members who may have to access restricted sites, like political sites, as part of their role.

## **10 INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS (REF: 10)**

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

Housing and Social Services JNCC – 8<sup>th</sup> January 2003  
Environment and Regeneration JNCC – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2003  
Lifelong Learning JNCC – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2003  
Environment and Regeneration JNCC – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2003  
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003  
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2003  
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2003  
Housing and Social Services JNCC – 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004

**(Note: The meeting concluded at 3.15 p.m.)**