

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Joint Consultative Committee

Minutes

**Thursday, 15th October 2015
(2.00 p.m.)**

PRESENT: Councillor S. E. Ralphs (Chair)

Representing the Council:

Councillors M.T. Bowen, C.R. Jebb, B.C. Johnson, L.D. Lea,
C.W. Pearce and C. Wood.

Representing the Employees:

UNISON - Steve Robinson

Officers:

Andrew Stokes - Executive Director (Transformation)

Mary Walker - Organisational Development
and Transformation Manager (ODTM)

Pat Trafford - Member Services Officer

In Attendance:

Councillor D.H. Ogden

APOLOGIES: Councillors P.J. Roberts and J.P. Redfern. Mrs. S. Higton
and Mr. A. Swithenbank.

Background Papers to these Minutes are exempt by virtue of the provisions of Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 - Part 1 of Schedule 12A, Paragraph 1 (Information relating to an individual) or Paragraph 4 (Labour relations matters).

Please note: These minutes are subject to approval by Cabinet.

11. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16th JULY 2015** (11)

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the above meeting be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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HUMAN RESOURCES ITEMS

(Mary Walker, Organisational Development and Transformation Manager, attended for the following items.)

12. ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT UPDATE. (12)

As the Service Reviews progressed, there were weekly meetings between the Transformation team and Unions, the latest of which had been held on 6th October 2015. There was to be an update given at each JCC meeting.

All staff consultations had now been completed and it was hoped that recruitment to the revised structures would be substantially completed by Christmas 2015. There had been in excess of 200 one-to-one meetings held with staff. There had been no compulsory redundancies during the process, though a number of additional voluntary redundancy requests had been received, of which 12 had been accepted. Careful consideration had been given to ensure that any resultant loss of expertise was covered with adequate handover arrangements.

There were currently 35 temporary/agency staff employed across the Strategic Alliance, many due to a recent policy of not filling vacant posts with permanent staff. The intention was to clear these posts in the near future, with some of the temporary/agency staff being offered full-time contracts. It was stressed that it was the responsibility of managers to ensure that permanent staff were able to do the work previously done by temporary/agency staff. The UNISON representative queried what rights the agency staff had, with some having been utilised by the Council for a long time. Some of the permanent staff who worked alongside these staff felt that they were being exploited. ODTM confirmed that some of the staff in question would be offered full-time permanent posts but that there was always going to be a need for flexibility with holiday/sickness/Christmas cover. There was certainly no intention to reduce the level of front line services provided.

The harmonisation of Terms and Conditions across the Alliance was progressing into phase 2, with all staff now paid on 15th of each month, the increment freeze had been lifted and the previously referred-to disparities in pay having been removed as agreed. The process was now due to move into phase 3, looking at, among other things, flexitime working.

The accommodation review had been commissioned to ensure that the Alliance was making the best use of its assets, with each team having a management hub at either Leek or Buxton at which all staff in the team would be expected to attend to spend time together each week. The location for working during the remainder of the week was to be via 'hot-desking'. This had inevitably led to concerns regarding travel costs, child care arrangements etc which had been addressed. Specific mention was made that, with the Planning service hub being in Buxton, there would still be a full-time member of staff available for public consultations in the Leek One-Stop-Shop. There was to be a campaign to improve communications regarding voicemail messages, 'out-of-office' messages and extended use of works mobile telephones.

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13. **SICKNESS ABSENCE SUMMARY 1ST APRIL TO 31ST AUGUST 2015.** (13)

The report showed that the rate of sickness for the 2015/16 year to date had been 3.41 days per full-time employee, representing a slight increase over the 2014/15 year, which was 3.11 days per full-time employee. The 3.41 day figure was split into short term cases (1.58 days) and long term cases (1.83 days). The Council still featured in the 'upper quartile' in terms of sickness absence.

Sickness absence was tabulated into internationally recognised categories, though the previously-requested split of the categories for: 1. Stress and 2. Muscular Skeletal/Back problems into work-related and personal instances had not yet been built into the statistical analysis. This would be available for the next report.

Answering concerns regarding staff members who needed special equipment for pre-existing medical conditions and were expected to work off-hub, confirmation was given that the equipment in question would be provided at all sites worked at to avoid a worsening health situation. On a related subject, the recently-introduced tablet devices were noted for being suitable for short-term work only, not being suitable to pass a 'Display Screen Equipment Assessment'.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be **NOTED**.

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 21st January 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The UNISON representative advised that, at the last meeting of the UNISON Branch Executive, the following points were made (*responses in brackets*):-

- The end result of the service reviews was that there would be less people doing more work, which would inevitably lead to increased pressure and add to concerns about the equitable treatment of staff. (*The Chair wished to send a message to all staff expressing the employers' appreciation for their loyalty and co-operation over the recent past*);
- There were no tangible results evident from the ongoing consultancy initiatives. (*The consultants in question – Northgate and Grant Thornton – were established partners of the Council. They had proved themselves essential partners in achieving the savings shown so far. It was accepted that there was a shortfall of information to staff and this would be addressed as soon as possible*).

The meeting closed at 3:00 p.m.

_____ Chair _____ Date

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