

JOINT CONSULTATIVE AND SAFETY PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2010 AT 10:00am

Present: Councillors J Park (In the Chair); F Heathcote;
J Prince; P Whalley and N Williams.

Union Representatives: C Sewell (UNISON), S Sanczuk (GMB);
S Mee (UNISON) and J Glynn (GMB).

Officers: F McMorrow, Acting Chief Executive; H Mitchell, Head
of Policy and Performance; Len Gleed, Human Resources
Manager; S Harrison, Health and Safety Officer; C Shackley,
Human Resources Officer; C Dunne, External HR and Training
Provider and C Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support
Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors
F Gleaves and K Hitchen.

JCSP 07/09 Health and Safety Report

The Human Resources Manager presented the Health and
Safety Report to the Panel and also introduced the new Health
and Safety Officer, Susan Harrison, who is part of the Leisure
and Environmental Services team reporting to the
Environmental Health Manager.

The Health and Safety Officer advised the Panel that it was
intended to standardise Health and Safety within Copeland
Borough Council.

The Health and Safety Policy would be re-written and also
added to the Intranet. The Health and Safety Manual was also
being updated.

Inspections and audits of all the Council's premises and
services were to be looked at and the results will be brought to
future meetings of this Panel.

It was also noted that the Council's Health and Wellbeing
Officer would be attending a future meeting to update the Panel
on his work.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

JCSP 08/09 Update Report on Sickness Absence

An update report on Sickness Absence was provided by the Head of Policy and Performance.

This showed that the sickness rate in the current municipal year was worse than that for the previous year.

The Panel were advised that Corporate Team undertook a case by case analysis in December 2009 of all employees listed as having triggered intervention according the Council's sickness policy and procedure.

As a result, Corporate Team agreed to a number of actions to tackle the problem. These were:

- To take action to reduce sickness absence in whatever ways were appropriate to individual circumstances.
- Heads of Service to ensure sickness absence targets are included in service plan objectives.
- Heads of Service to use the Quarterly Performance Management meetings to review the level of sickness in their teams and ensure follow-up actions happen.
- All Managers to ensure employees who are absent sick from work receive a Return to Work interview on the day of their return and relevant documents forwarded to HR immediately.
- Managers routinely refer employees whose length of sickness absence or frequency of sick leave trigger investigation promptly to HR and Occupational Health.
- That further training in managing sickness absence is commissioned.
- That a major part of a Manager's Group meeting is dedicated to awareness raising of sickness absence management.
- That additional investment in Occupational Health be sought through the budget process for 2010/2011
- A further review of the Council's Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure be undertaken.
- That consideration be made for payment of private consultations for employees with Specialists in order to receive medical reports quicker.

The Unions were asked to support the review of the Council's Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.

RESOLVED - that

- a) the update report on Sickness Absence be received and
- b) the actions proposed by the Corporate Team be supported

JCSP 09/09 New Initiatives at Copeland - Future Jobs Project and Apprenticeships

The External HR and Training Provider presented to the Panel on the Future Jobs Project and Apprenticeships.

The Panel were advised that with regards to the Future Jobs Fund, 8 Public Sector Vacancies had been identified . These were one at The Beacon, one at the Tourist Information Centre, one within Environmental Protection, one within Waste Enforcement, one Street Scene Operative, two Waste Operative Support workers and one Leisure and Environmental Services Administration Assistant.

With regards apprenticeships, Workforce Planning had identified 2 areas within Copeland Borough Council. One in Building Control and one in Information Technology.

In the discussion which followed, Members welcomed the schemes, although concern was expressed regarding the low wages being paid.

At this point, the Panel were also updated on the North West Skills Award run by North West Employers Organisation to Copeland Borough Council signed up in September 2009.

By March 2010 an Action Plan needs to be developed and the aim is to achieve the award by December 2010.

RESOLVED - that the presentation be received

JCSP 10/09 West Cumbria Partnership

S Mee (UNISON) expressed concern to the Panel regarding the proposed changes to the West Cumbria Partnership. In particular the lack of consultation with the Unions, unclear timescales and the possible number of staff redundancies.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that this had been a long process and draft reports had been sent to the Union. It was also noted that meetings with staff were currently being arranged.

JCSP 11/09 Shared Services

The Union representatives present expressed concerns to the Panel regarding the proposed sharing of Revenue and Benefits services from April 2010 and believed this was not realistic.

It was requested that a copy of the proposed timescale / programme and the reasons for the choice of Carlisle City Council as host authority be circulated to all present.

RESOLVED - that a copy of the proposed timescale / programme and the reasons for the choice of Carlisle City Council as host authority be circulated to all present.

JCSP 12/09 Whitehaven News Article

All Members and Union representatives present expressed serious concern regarding the article in the Whitehaven News dated 28 January 2010 regarding a member of staff currently being dealt with through the Council's disciplinary procedure. It was believed that the article was leaked to the press following a confidential email from the Leader of the Council to all Members.

Members felt that discipline of staff was not for Members, but for the Head of Paid Service. It was also felt that if the document had been passed to the press by a Member, then he/she should be reported via the Standards Board.

It was requested that the Executive be advised of this Panel's dissatisfaction that this situation has occurred and that a review be undertaken to prevent it from happening in the future.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be advised of this Panel's dissatisfaction that this situation has occurred and request that a review be undertaken to prevent it from happening in the future.

The meeting closed at 12:00 noon.

Chairman

Date