

West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative** held on **Monday 20 July 2015** at **3.00 pm** at **Room GFR13, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present:	<u>St Edmundsbury Borough Council</u> (Employers' Side)	<u>Forest Heath District Council</u> (Employers' Side)	<u>Staff Representatives</u> (Employees' Side)
	Cllr Carol Bull	Cllr Ruth Bowman Cllr Stephen Edwards	Mark Johnson Jane Orton Julie Roberts

By Invitation

Cllr Ian Houlder

8. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2015/2016

In view of the nominations for Chairman of the Panel due to be sought from St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Employers' Side and with the three Borough Councillors appointed to the Panel having offered apologies for the meeting, it was agreed that the election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2015/2016 would be postponed until the next meeting of the Panel. Mark Johnson, Employees' Side and outgoing Chairman, agreed to continue in the Chair for this meeting.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services advised that Officers were looking to arrange a future meeting of the Panel during end October/beginning November 2015 and all Members would be informed of the date once scheduled.

9. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rona Burt (Forest Heath District Council – Employers' Side), Councillor Bob Cockle (St Edmundsbury Borough Council – Employers' Side), Councillor Clive Springett (St Edmundsbury Borough Council – Employers' Side) and Councillor Patricia Warby (St Edmundsbury Borough Council – Employers' Side) as well as from Lizzi Cocker and Claire McKenna (Staff Representatives – Employees' Side).

10. Substitutes

Councillor Carol Bull attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor Clive Springett (St Edmundsbury Borough Council – Employers' Side).

11. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2015 were received and noted.

Jane Orton made reference to Minute No 4 in respect of the Employee Volunteering Scheme; she inquired as to whether any staff had made use of the scheme since the last meeting.

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) explained that HR would continue to advertise opportunities available to staff to volunteer and discussions were currently being undertaken with the Families and Communities Team with regard to a potential volunteering opportunity.

Mark Johnson made reference to Minute No 6 (Workforce Data) and the reference therein to the Member Development Session scheduled during April 2015 which was to include focus on Shared Services.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services explained that the session in question had been cancelled. However, the Shared Services element had been covered both as part of the post-election Member Induction sessions and also in the pre-election candidate information briefings.

12. **Politically Restricted Posts (Report No JST/JT/15/002)**

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services presented the guidance that had been produced to ensure that West Suffolk employees in politically restricted posts did not allow any perception to arise that their own personal or political opinions had influenced or improperly interfered with their work.

The Panel was advised that all staff concerned would be informed directly of the guidance.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Politically Restricted Posts: Guidance for Officers document (attached as Appendix A to Report No JST/JT/15/002) be noted and supported.

13. **Shared Parental Leave and Pay Guidance (Report No JST/JT/15/003)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented the Shared Parental Leave and Pay Guidance which provided West Suffolk employees with information relating to their statutory rights with effect from 5 April 2015.

The Panel was advised that the document contained a helpful 'Frequently Asked Questions' section.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Shared Parent Leave and Pay Guidance document (attached as Appendix A to Report No JST/JT/15/003) be noted and supported.

14. **Pensions Discretion Policy (Verbal)**

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services verbally advised the Panel that the Pensions Discretion Policy had been considered and approved by both Authorities' Cabinets and Councils in February 2015.

The adopted Policy document was available should anyone wish to consider it in detail.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

15. **Workforce Data (Verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) delivered a presentation to the Panel which set out the West Suffolk workforce data for the period 1 October 2014 – 30 June 2015. It contained various information; including age and gender analysis, staff turnover and sickness absence.

Whilst the average West Suffolk sickness level was still far below the average nationally for Local Government employees it had risen slightly in comparison with the previously reported period. To quantify, the Officer advised the Panel that short-term absence had actually reduced, however, long-term had increased slightly largely due to a particularly challenging period with some staff being diagnosed with serious illnesses.

A question was raised as to how the West Suffolk figures compared with those of neighbouring local authorities. The Officer agreed to look into this and would provide a comparison, as far as was possible, to the next meeting of the Panel.

The Panel also asked that the headline figures from the workforce data presentation be forwarded to them for their reference and the Officer agreed to action this.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the verbal report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 3.37 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
