

West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel** held on **Monday 18 January 2016** at **3.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

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 Bob Cockle Cllr Patricia Warby	Cllr Ruth Bowman Cllr Stephen Edwards	Lizzi Cocker Mark Johnson Jane Orton

16. **Election of Chairman for 2015/2016**

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Patricia Warby be elected Chairman for 2015/2016.

17. **Election of Vice-Chairman for 2015/2016**

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That Mark Johnson be elected Vice-Chairman for 2015/2016.

18. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rona Burt (Forest Heath District Council - Employers' Side), Councillor Clive Springett (St Edmundsbury Borough Council - Employers' Side) as well as Claire McKenna and Julie Roberts (Staff Representatives - Employees' Side).

19. **Substitutes**

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

20. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2015 were received and noted.

21. **Workforce Data (Report No JST/JT/16/001)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented this report which set out the West Suffolk workforce data for the twelve month period up to 31 December 2015. The report also provided a comparison between the data as it stood now and with that reported to the previous meeting of the Panel; which was for the twelve month period up to 30 June 2015.

The West Suffolk average sickness level of 6.75 days was still far below the national average of 7.9 days, this was particularly pleasing bearing in mind that a large proportion of the workforce undertook manual operations, for example the waste operations staff.

At the last meeting of the Panel a question had been asked as to how West Suffolk compared to other neighbouring authorities. The Officer had undertaken comparisons regionally and was pleased to report that West Suffolk continually fell below in both long and short term sickness absence.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the workforce data, attached as Appendix A to Report No JSP/JT/16/001, be noted and supported.

22. **Fit for Work Service (Report No JSP/JT/16/002)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented this report which outlined the new Fit for Work Service which came into effect on 8 September 2015.

This was a Government-funded service which provided Occupational Health assessments on referral from the employee's GP or employer, where an employee is absent from work for at least four weeks.

Whilst the Officer welcomed the service it was noted that the West Suffolk Councils already used an existing occupational health service (WorkFit) with a wider range of benefits and the new scheme was not intended to replace this. Any advice from Fit for Work would be taken into account as part of the process.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Fit for Work Service, as set out in Report No JSP/JT/16/002, be noted and supported.

23. **Legal and Case Law Changes (Verbal)**

The HR Business Partner provided the Panel with a verbal update on a number of recent legal and case law changes which had come into effect over the past few months.

Looking forward to April 2016 changes were also to be made in respect of the National Living Wage. The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services added that this would, in due course, trigger a wholesale review of the Local Government pay scales.

The Panel was also advised that the Local Government Employers' two-year NJC pay offer of 1% was now being balloted on.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

24. **Organisational Development Plans - Update (Verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided the Panel with a presentation of the ongoing work across the West Suffolk Councils on the Organisational Development Plans.

Members were advised that a lot of work had been undertaken with Leadership Team and Service Managers, and in due course the plans would involve the wider workforce. The Panel would continue to be updated on progress at future meetings.

A question was asked to how progress on the Plans would be formally monitored and a suggestion was made for this to be undertaken via the joint meetings of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committees. The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services agreed that consideration needed to be given on the most appropriate method for progress to be reported.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

25. **Trade Union Bill Update (Verbal)**

Mark Johnson advised the Panel that the Government had published consultation on the Trade Union Bill which brought about changes which he feared could affect relations between unions and employers.

He praised the good relationship that existed between the West Suffolk Councils and Unison and raised concern that the Bill could have an adverse affect on this.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

26. **Date of Next Meeting**

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services advised the Panel that she was looking to schedule in the next meeting during June/July 2016 and all members would be advised once scheduled.

The meeting concluded at 3.52 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
