

West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

West Suffolk
working together

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel** held on **Monday 26 January 2015** at **3.00 pm** at **Room GFR13, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present:

Chairman Mark Johnson
Vice Chairman Cllr Angela Rushen

<u>St Edmundsbury Borough Council</u> (Employers' Side)	<u>Forest Heath District Council</u> (Employers' Side)	<u>Staff Representatives</u> (Employees' Side)
Cllr Bob Cockle Cllr Angela Rushen	Cllr Stephen Edwards Cllr Tony Simmons	Mark Johnson Jane Orton Julie Roberts

By Invitation

Cllr David Ray

1. **Apologies for Absence**

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

It was also noted that Samantha Rackham (Staff Representatives – Employees' Side) no longer worked for either West Suffolk authority having left for alternative employment.

2. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2014 were received and noted.

Mark Johnson made reference to Minute No 034 and the reference therein to the requirement for individuals who made mileage claims to retain their receipts for fuel purchases. He inquired as to how long these receipts needed to be kept.

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The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services explained that the HMRC advised a period of 7 years, however, scans or photographs of the receipts would suffice.

Mark Johnson also made comment with regard to Minute No 039 which concerned the Member Development Charter.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services explained that certificates for achieving the Charter had been presented to meetings of both authorities and they were now displayed in West Suffolk House and the District Offices.

4. **Employee Volunteering Scheme (Report No. JSP/JT/15/001)**

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services presented this report which set out a Joint Employee Volunteering Scheme designed to support West Suffolk employees that already volunteered and to encourage new volunteers to get involved in opportunities to share their skills and experience, to develop new skills and to contribute to the local community.

The Panel were advised that Forest Heath District Council had previously operated a similar scheme which specified that a maximum of 10 days would be permitted as time off from work towards volunteering (St Edmundsbury Borough Council had never adopted a volunteering scheme in the past). However, whilst the proposed joint scheme was not as prescriptive in this respect (in that no maximum limit was set), the scheme would need to be effectively managed with the support of HR to ensure that there was no detriment to the service delivery of the West Suffolk authorities.

The Panel as a whole spoke in support of the scheme and asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Officers present.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the West Suffolk Employee Volunteering Scheme, attached as Appendix A to Report No JSP/JT/15/001, be noted and supported.

5. **Question from Unison West Suffolk Branch with regard to the Anglia Revenues Partnership Employment Model and Response from the Head of HR, Legal & Democratic Services**

Jane Orton presented the question from Unison West Suffolk Branch which concerned the Anglia Revenues Partnership employment model and highlighted some of the anomalies concerning the terms and conditions of staff who undertook the exact same role but which were employed by different authorities.

Whilst the branch appreciated there was no 'quick fix' for this, they just wanted to raise awareness with the Panel.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services then spoke on her response to this question, as made on behalf of the West Suffolk Councils. She highlighted the considerable work which had been undertaken over the years

to align the employment models such as Flexible Working and Sickness/Absence Policies.

However, the ARP staff were employed by seven different authorities and each received parity and equal pay based on comparison with the other employees of their specific Council.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services requested that the branch advise her of any specific employment policy (similar to those which had already been addressed) that the ARP staff would like to be considered by HR in order to achieve further alignment, where possible.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the question and response was noted by the Panel.

6. Workforce Data

The HR Business Partner delivered a presentation to the Panel which set out the West Suffolk workforce data for the period 1 April – 30 September 2014. It contained various information including; age and gender analysis, reasons for leaving and staff turnover.

Reference was made to a recent article which had appeared in the local press which stated that West Suffolk staff's sickness absence had increased due to stress. To quantify, the Officer explained that the figures quoted by the journalist concerned just 27 employees, of which 72% were suffering stress caused by entirely non-work related matters. Overall, the average West Suffolk sickness level was still far below the average nationally for Local Government employees.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services outlined the proactive and comprehensive way the authorities supported members of staff in sickness absence. Mark Johnson also spoke in support of the way in which the Unison West Suffolk Branch worked closely with HR.

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

Lastly, elected Members were reminded of the Member Development Session that was being arranged for 16 April 2015 which would include focus on Shared Services and corporate working practices.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the verbal report be noted.

7. **Any Other Business**

Changes to Parental Leave – 5 April 2015

The HR Business Partner advised the Panel that nationally the law was changing with regard to Parental Leave on 5 April 2015; a new system of shared parental leave would be introduced which would allow parents to share leave and pay and which would replace additional paternity leave and pay.

This legislative change would, therefore, be incorporated into all relevant West Suffolk policies.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

The meeting concluded at 3.52pm

Signed by:

Chairman
