

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 28 November 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 28 November 2023 at 2.30 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Alastair Moss (Chairman)
Florence Keelson-Anfu (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Randall Anderson
Steve Goodman OBE

In attendance:

Henry Colthurst

Trade Union Representatives:

Ben Campbell-White (GMB)
Diane Timmins (GMB)
Sarah Hume (GMB)
Melanie String (GMB)
Teresa Pugsley (Unite)
Nicholas West (Unite) – Online
Margaret Raymond (Unite) – Online

Officers:

Gemma Stokley	-	Town Clerk's Department
Pauline Shakespeare	-	Corporate HR
Shy'ancco Pitter	-	Corporate HR
Sonia Virdee	-	Chamberlain's Department

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence from Committee Members. Apologies were reported from the Chamberlain and also the Interim Executive Director of HR & Chief People Officer.

The Chairman opened the meeting by encouraging all to briefly introduce themselves.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 4 September 2023 are approved as an accurate record.

4. ITEMS RAISED BY GMB AND UNITE

4A. Dying to Work Campaign

A GMB representative made reference to the Dying to Work Charter, a link to which had been issued to all prior to the meeting. In order to provide some context, she reported that the Union were currently supporting three of their members who had received diagnosis of a terminal illness.

The GMB representative wished to place on record to HR colleagues –Ali Littlewood, Pauline Shakespeare, Colette Hawkins and Kaye Saxton-Lea as well as to

Barbara Plant (GMB National President) who had already been in contact with the charity Dying to Work to discuss this matter. It was reported that the Charter itself incorporated five steps and that, to date, the Corporation had actioned two of these with the next step being to review their Sickness Absence Management Policy, specifically what actions the employer should take when faced with an employee who had received a diagnosis of a terminal illness.

With the permission of one GMB member, she read out her story and journey within the Corporation to date. In doing so, she highlighted that the Corporation's current Sickness Absence Policy did not appear to offer much flexibility or particular support in terms of dealing with those who faced a diagnosis of a terminal illness and the physical and mental challenges that they and their families faced at this time. It was highlighted that the responses and support received in this particular case were neither helpful nor timely and that the communications issued were of a standard template style that were not appropriate for use in these circumstances, as were the Sickness Absence Management meetings called. The GMB representative commented that this had been a distressing process for all. Her members' recommendations were that the Corporation should be asked to sign up to the Charter and all that that entails.

The Chair thanked the Union representative for sharing this account with the Committee and asked that thanks also be passed on to the member concerned. He underlined the importance of being able to hear of such matters first hand.

An HR Representative responded to outline that the City Corporation did support the Dying to Work Charter and were not just signing up to this but would also be taking action including reviewing their Sickness Absence Policy. It was recognised that this and other key policies had not been reviewed in some time. It was outlined that this would need to follow a certain process but that, key to this, the individual would be put at the centre of the Policy. Alongside this, Corporate HR were looking to recruit to a newly created Policy Manager role which would be at a Senior Grade in recognition of the importance of this work. The new postholder would be tasked with reviewing all Corporation policies but this would be a priority Policy.

4B. GMB Health and Safety Survey

A Union representative reported that this had originated from a GMB regional initiative whereby they had asked all branches to survey their members as to Health and Safety matters. He commented that health and safety was at the core of what Unions did. He also commented on recent organisational changes around the management of Health and Safety within the Corporation on which the Unions had been consulted.

GMB were keen to share the results of the recent survey they had undertaken amongst Corporation members with the Committee. He highlighted that 38% of those who responded to the survey had indicated that they did not feel that the organisation took health and safety seriously with 46% indicating that they had not received health and safety training within the last two years. One in three had also suggested that they did not feel safe at work. Almost 40% had said that they had not seen any Workplace Risk Assessments. In terms of the top five hazards of concern to those who had responded, stress was underlined as number one. Stress management was something that the Union therefore intended to campaign upon going forward. It was suggested that this might be relevant to raise with the new HR Policy Manager in due course to factor into their future work given that this severely affected not only individuals but also business performance.

An HR representative agreed that there was more that could be offered in relation to stress management under the Corporation's Employee Assistance Programme and that it would also be relevant when various policies were reviewed. She added that she was also aware that Union colleagues were meeting with other Health and Safety representatives from across the organisation which would be ongoing and which she intended to link in to.

A Unite representative remarked that the Corporation did not appear to have or publicly advertise a zero tolerance Policy around violence towards employees. She had raised this matter previously and had been directed towards the Lone Working Policy but underlined that she did not feel that a brief reference here was sufficient. A GMB representative highlighted that the Barbican Centre had undertaken work around this and that others such as the Mansion House had now adopted this. It was suggested that this be explored further with HR in order to introduce this as a corporate-wide approach, building upon best practice elsewhere.

It was recognised by Union representatives that there was some good work in progress around Health and Safety and that this needed to continue to be built upon. A GMB representative reported that Unions were undertaking workplace inspections alongside Health and Safety colleagues. He commented that shortage of labour and workloads were also a great source of stress, pressure and low morale that would require exploring and monitoring to ensure that this was data driven.

In response to a query from the Chair as to Union workplace inspections, a GMD representative commented that if it were left to the employer to undertake its own inspections there would be a lack of external accountability. He clarified

that Union representatives approached these inspections from the point of view of their members. The goal, however, was always the same – to keep workers safe. The Union representatives also underlined that the diversity of the workplace sites here were unique to the City Corporation meaning that no two inspections were the same, with each having their own specific risks.

A Unite representative stated that they had raised serious Health and Safety concerns around one particular site on various occasions and were keen to work collaboratively with Corporate HR on this matter. Corporate HR asked that they reach out on this particular site after the meeting.

In response to a question from the Deputy Chair as to whether Health and Safety training was currently mandatory or tracked, Corporate HR stated that they were not able to confirm this at present but undertook to report back on the issue.

4C. Guildhall Library

Two GMB representatives, also Guildhall Library employees, opened by providing some background to the service offered by the Library, its holdings and its history. They underlined the importance of the service and its worldwide reach via the hybrid sessions/talks it hosted covering the history of the City of London and beyond which had been running since the onset of the pandemic. These were often oversubscribed with between 200-300 virtual attendees alongside 50-60 attending in person.

It was highlighted that the library was arguably the largest collection of works on a single City in the world and played host to the archives of the City but also for 80 livery companies. The library also holds the Lloyds Maritime collection (deposited in the 1950s by Lloyds of London) and the archives of the London Stock Exchange, dating back to its inception in 1698. Various key events over the past year including the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the publishing of Shakespeare's First Folio day were referenced. This had been featured by over 200 international news agencies as well as attracting much press coverage domestically.

The Union representatives went on to speak of how the recent Target Operating Model (TOM) had, they felt, disproportionately affected Library staff whose numbers had been cut to a level that allowed for little to no resilience, had adversely impacted on the service provided and had also led to a cut in opening hours and the removal of any out of hours provision for visitors. Having received the results of the 2023 user service, the vast majority of respondents (97%) still rated the service as good to excellent but all feedback received had been around a wish to see the previous opening hours reintroduced and to see a return to on demand retrieval.

A Union representative stated that this was of particular concern in relation to the City's ambitions around Destination City and also in the context of workplace stress as raised under the previous item.

The Chair thanked the Union representatives for sharing their experience here but also highlighted that the Committee with remit over this particular service was the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee. He went on to query whether any of the stakeholders mentioned – the Stock Exchange and Livery Companies – provided any financial support towards the service provided. The Union representatives confirmed that no financial assistance was contributed. It was suggested that this might be explored further via the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee. The Chamberlain also suggested conversations with the Transformation Team and progressing a business case around this and potential additional resource.

Union representatives underlined that they had brought this issue to the attention of this Committee in relation to wider employee issues and as a specific example of the very real impact of the TOM and reductions in staffing and service.

4D. Family Friendly Policy (City of London Police)

A Unite representative raised the Family Friendly Policy that was specific to the City of London Police and specific to police officers. This encompassed a number of issues such as Parental Leave, Keeping in Touch Days, time off for medical appointments and the like. This had recently been updated to allow police officers to return to work after parental leave on a phased basis with no financial detriment to the police officers choosing this option. The Union representative stressed that consideration ought to now be given to making this an option for other police staff as well as all City Corporation employees. It was recognised that this would have a financial impact and would also need to be subject to due process.

The Chair clarified that this Committee had oversight for civilian, non-uniformed police staff but not for uniformed officers.

Corporate HR responded to state that they would look into this proposal further and report back on this matter at the next meeting of this Committee.

5. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

A Member commented that, whilst there had been a number of useful discussions today, it was preferable that any issues the Unions wished to raise in this forum were first discussed with relevant Officers so as to ensure that these meetings were as productive as possible. He queried whether Officers and Union representatives could work together to ensure that this was the case going forwards.

The Chair endorsed this point and stated that it would be helpful to be appraised of area where there was a consensus that perhaps then required the political endorsement of Members or indeed where certain matters had reached a stalemate and where raising here might a useful means of escalation and where it might be useful for this Committee to provide a steer.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There were no additional, urgent items of urgent business for consideration.

7. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**
RESOLVED – That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item(s)
8

Paragraph(s)
1

8. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2023 were approved as an accurate record.
9. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions raised in the non-public session.
10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There were no additional, urgent items of business for consideration in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 3.17 pm

Chairman

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