

Minute of Meeting

Renfrewshire Council Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 07 February 2023	14:00	Corporate Meeting Room 2, Renfrewshire House,

PRESENT

REPRESENTING RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL MANAGEMENT

Councillor E Rodden, Councillor J Paterson, J Calder, Head of Service (Curriculum and School Estate), J Colquhoun, Education Manager (Development), A Hall, Education Manager (Development), K Henry, Head Teacher, St Andrews Academy (All Education and Children’s Services) and L Mullin, Principal HR and OD Adviser (Finance & Resources).

REPRESENTING RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL TEACHING STAFF

K Fella (Joint Secretary), Y Murray, M Russell, D Tollan and J P Tonner (all EIS); L Gibson (NASUWT), R Kane (SSTA) and S McCrossan (Adviser to Teachers’ Side).

IN ATTENDANCE

S Fanning, Principal HR and OD Adviser, D Cunningham and J Barron, Assistant Committee Services Officers (all Finance & Resources).

APOLOGIES

T McGillivray, Head of Service (Inclusion and Quality Improvement) (Joint Secretary), H Paterson, Head Teacher, Heriot Primary School, Mairi Thomas, Education Manager (Development) and T Miller (EIS).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

1 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR PERSON**

In accordance with the terms of the local recognition and procedure agreement, which stated that the Chair of the Committee should alternate between the two sides comprising the Renfrewshire Council Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff, it was agreed that Councillor Rodden would chair this meeting of the Renfrewshire Council Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff.

DECIDED: That Councillor Rodden chair this meeting of the Renfrewshire Council Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff.

WELCOME

Councillor Rodden welcomed Raymond Kane, SSTA Representative, to his first meeting of the Committee.

2 **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

There was submitted the Minute of the previous meeting held on 8 November 2022.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

DECIDED: It was noted that in reference to Item 8 of the Minute of the previous meeting held on 8 November 2022 that an email in relation to special leave taken to participate in religious observance had been received by staff and it was felt this had received a positive response. Thanks were expressed to Management for implementing this.

4 **SUPPORTING OUR EARLY YEARS TEACHERS**

There was submitted a report by the Head of Children's Services relative to supporting early career teachers. The Council has worked in partnership with GTCS, Columba 1400 and probation managers across Scotland to develop a model to extend the support provided to teachers during the probationary year across the early phase. This Ambassador Model was intended to address gaps in the experiences of some early years teachers which arose from the pandemic by providing Ambassadors to be a point of contact for early years teachers and opportunities for professional dialogue. Renfrewshire was leading developments within the group of eleven local authorities piloting and co-developing the Ambassador Model.

There was a general discussion on the practicalities of such support, numbers required and the selection process for Ambassadors plus discussion on Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) and how this was being implemented in schools.

The Head of Service (Curriculum and School Estate) advised information on this may be available on CPD Manager and would provide additional information to the Committee.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the Head of Service (Curriculum and School Estate) would provide additional information on NVR to the Committee; and
- (b) That the report be noted.

5 ABSENCE STATISTICS - QUARTER 3 2022/23

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources which provided the Committee with absence monitoring information for the period to 31 December 2022.

Categories of absence, available methods of financial support plus health and wellbeing support, including Time for Talking sessions were discussed. The Principal HR and OD Adviser would review the methods of conveying employee benefits to all school employees and increase the health and wellbeing information made available.

The Head of Service (Curriculum and School Estate) would continue to work with the Teachers side in respect of ongoing CO2 monitoring in schools.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the Principal HR and OD Adviser would review the methods of conveying employee benefits and increase the health and wellbeing information made available to all school employees;
- (b) That the Head of Service (Curriculum and School Estate) would continue to work with the Teachers side in respect of ongoing CO2 monitoring in schools.
- (c) That the report be noted.

6 DEVELOPMENTS IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to developments in health and safety since the previous meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers (JNC).

The report outlined that risk-based reviews of all policies and guidance documents were underway to support the Council's new ways of working plans. Initial areas of work included guidance documents on accident reporting and investigation, manual handling, alcohol and substance use and violence and aggression in the workplace.

The report detailed meetings with Scottish Fire and Rescue, health and wellbeing guidance to support the workforce, reviewing floor plates and ventilation to facilitate new ways of working arrangements, regular meetings with Services, flu vaccination programme and information on training courses delivered.

Thanks were expressed by the Teachers' side for the flu vaccination programme and it was felt this had been well received/attended.

Collaboration took place between the Health and Safety Team, Businessworld Team, Trade Unions and Service representatives to review the violence and aggression policy and arrangements within the school environment. Meetings had been productive and it was agreed work would continue over the next few months. The report stated that a new version of the accident/incident form was launched on 5 January which should ease incident reporting and collection of data.

It was raised by the Teachers' side that there remained access issues with this new form. The Principal HR and OD Adviser explained that this was being reviewed and that he would discuss the hierarchy access issue on Businessworld with colleagues outwith the meeting and provide an update to the Committee thereafter.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the Principal HR and OD Adviser would provide an update on outstanding Businessworld issues to the Committee; and
- (b) That the report be noted.

7 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

DECIDED: That this confidential matter was not within the remit of the JNC and would be discussed outwith the meeting.

8 SICKNESS ALLOWANCE

There was submitted a report by the Joint Secretary (Teachers' Side) relative to the suspension of the sickness allowance for teachers during the ongoing legally mandated industrial action. As there was no reference to industrial action as a reason for suspension of the allowance in the SNCT Handbook the Teachers' Side believed there to be no contractual basis for the suspension of sickness allowance. The report requested reinstatement of the sickness allowance for teachers affected by this.

The Principal HR and OD Adviser explained that there had been discussion with the Chief Executive on 14 December 2022 and clarified that based on legal advice received the decision had been taken not to suspend sickness allowance but to suspend the entitlement to self-certify sickness on a day of industrial action and that employees would require to provide a fit note in those cases.

The Teachers' side raised that this suggested distrust, would be detrimental to employee wellbeing and may result in staff incurring additional charges by GPs to provide a fit note in instances contrary to Scottish Government self-certification guidelines, namely if absent less than 7 days. It was also suggested that this would put additional strain on already under pressure Teachers and GPs and therefore seemed unreasonable.

The Principal HR and OD Adviser re-iterated that this was the Council's position on this matter. The Head of Service (Curriculum and School Estate) stated that the grievance process required to be followed to look at any individual cases/concerns.

DECIDED:

- (a) That self-certification of sickness absence on a day of industrial action had been removed and a fit note was required; and
- (b) That the grievance process required to be followed to look at any individual cases/concerns.

9 PAYROLL/INDUSTRIAL ACTION

There was submitted a report by the Joint Secretary (Teacher's Side) relative to salary deductions applied following industrial action and the lack of consistency in terms of the dates and amounts of these deductions. The report requested greater clarity and transparency from the Council around the dates for and amounts of salary deductions to assist with ongoing financial planning for teachers.

The Teachers' side stated that staff were struggling with financial wellbeing hence were striking but felt unsupported and were being penalised by salary deductions and charges for fit notes.

The Principal HR and OD Adviser outlined the process and deadlines for deductions and that data was cross-checked prior to being sent to payroll to ensure accuracy. There had been FAQs issued to employees which contained the dates of deductions and information from the Director of Finance & Resources emailed to teachers.

The Teachers' side stated only one email had been received and that it was difficult to check deductions as it appeared that colleagues were deducted different amounts. The Principal HR and OD Adviser explained it was not advised to compare payslips due to personal variations.

The Teachers' side requested a ready reckoner type document to assist staff with financial planning, the Principal HR and OD Adviser responded that she could provide the 5 points on the mean grade salary for Teachers to assist but was limited to what figures could be provided, other than as examples, due to the uniqueness of individual pay. She advised that staff could contact her directly to discuss errors or concerns and they could be escalated to the Payroll Manager if required.

DECIDED: That the Principal HR and OD Adviser would provide the five points on the mean grade salary for Teachers to assist with financial planning in terms of deductions.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That it be noted that the next meeting of the Renfrewshire Council Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff was scheduled to be held on 21 March 2023.