

## Minute of Meeting Joint Consultative Board (Non-Teaching)

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday, 02 September 2020	15:00	Microsoft Teams Platform,

### Present

Representing Renfrewshire Council Management - Councillors T Begg, J Harte, J McNaughtan, J Paterson and A Steel.

Representing Trade Unions – M Ferguson, M McIntyre, K Kernachan and L Glover (UNISON); and R Stewart (Unite).

### In Attendance

G McKinlay, Head of Schools (Children Services); A Bennett, Housing Services Manager (Communities, Housing & Planning Services); D Gillies, Head of Facilities Management and G Hannah, Strategic Change Manager (Environment & Infrastructure); L Neary, Head of Transformation HR & OD, R Laouadi, HR Manager, R Cree, OD & Workforce Planning Manager, G Campbell, Principal HR & OD Adviser, G Dickie, Partnering & Commissioning Manager and D Pole, End User Technician and R Devine and T Slater, both Senior Committee Services Office (all Finance & Resources); and S Strachan and M Kirkbride (Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership).

### Appointment of Chairperson

It was proposed and agreed that Councillor Steel chair the meeting.

**DECIDED:** That Councillor Steel chair the meeting.

### Convener's Statement

The Convener advised that this meeting would be recorded for subsequent broadcast via the Council's website.

## 2 Apologies

S McAllister (Unite) and S Hicks (UNISON).

## 3 Declarations of Interest

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

## 4 Developments in Health, Safety and Wellbeing

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to activity undertaken in relation to health, safety and wellbeing issues since the previous meeting.

The report indicated that several workstreams had been paused due to the pandemic and that the report focussed on actions and activities undertaken to support the Council's response and recovery plans. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the Health & Safety team had been an integral part of the Council's emergency management team providing guidance as documents had been released by the UK and Scottish Governments, the NHS and Health Protection Scotland. It was noted that consultation and collaboration had been undertaken with the trade unions to ensure the health and wellbeing of those involved in activities.

The report also detailed guidance and policies that had been reviewed and issued, outlined the support provided to front line services in the delivery of emergency and prioritised work, and to employees with underlying health conditions to ensure a safe return to work, advised that a covid-19 web link had been established for the dissemination of guidance and communications to employees. Updates were also provided in respect of activity undertaken relative to the evaluation of contractor's health and safety documentation, submitted as part of the procurement process, Freedom of Information enquiries and the review of arrangements for Renfrewshire House. It was highlighted that a large element of the workload had been undertaking site visits and inspection of all high schools, primary schools, early learning centres and nurseries. Although scheduled meetings of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee had been suspended due to the pandemic weekly meetings with the trade unions continued to take place.

The support and collaboration of the trade unions in tackling the challenging situation was praised by all in attendance.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## 5 Absence Statistics

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's absence statistics for the period 1 January to 31 March 2020.

The report provided information in relation to absence targets and how Services and categories of staff had performed against them. An analysis of reasons for absence for the period was included within the report. Information was also provided on supporting attendance activity levels, by Service, sick pay costs and the overall

number of days lost during the period to 31 March 2020 together with comparative data for previous years.

**DECIDED:** That it be noted that the report reflected the absence statistics for the period 1 January to 31 March 2020.

## **6 Details of Grievances**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the number of grievances received.

The report provided information on grievances at both the informal and formal stages. The report indicated that there was a total of 11 grievances as at March 2020.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## **7 Agency Workers**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the number of agency staff employed within the Council as at July 2020 and detailing the capacity and Services in which they were engaged. The report advised that as at July 2020, 185 agency workers were employed across all Services.

Reference was made, during discussion, to factors associated with covid-19 which had resulted in the increased use of agency staff.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## **8 Covid-19: General**

The UNISON representative praised and wished the Board to record its appreciation of the collaborative working which had taken place locally involving front-line employees to address challenges arising from the covid-19 pandemic. Mention was also made to the local government deficit resulting from Covid-19 expenditure, the opportunities to review Service structures, future working practices, processes and procedures which had been identified and implemented as a result of addressing the pandemic and that the potential to continue collaborative working in the future be explored. The sentiments were echoed by members of the Board. Furthermore, it was noted that the potential to formally recognise the exceptional efforts of local front-line employees during the pandemic be explored.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That the Board record its appreciation of the collaborative working which had taken place locally involving front-line employees to address challenges arising from the covid-19 pandemic;

(b) That the information be noted; and

(c) That the potential to formally recognise the exceptional efforts of local front-line employees during the pandemic be explored.

## 9 Social Care - Rest Breaks and Facilities

The UNISON representative expressed concern regarding the lack of progress in providing Social Care employees with suitable toilet and rest break facilities. Reference was made to the need for investment to address the issue, the isolation and vulnerability of the staff grouping involved, the time period that the problem spanned, the lack of availability of public buildings locally and their locations, the need for staff, many of whom walked between sites to include travelling time in their break period. Arrangements that had been put in place by management to try and address this long-term issue and the entry restrictions subsequently imposed as a result of Covid-19 were outlined. Mention was also made to the desirability for additional uniforms to be issued to the employees involved, many of whom were undertaking additional working hours during the pandemic and/or also undertook split shifts, to minimise the need for their daily washing.

It was agreed, following discussion, that management review arrangements in terms of the inclusion of travelling time in staff break periods and the issue of additional uniforms immediately. The Board also agreed that the current situation in terms of provision of break facilities for Social Care employees was unacceptable and that the matter be submitted to the Administration group of the Council for further consideration.

**DECIDED:** That management review arrangements in terms of the inclusion of travelling time in staff break periods and the issue of additional uniforms immediately and that arrangements be made for the matter to be submitted to the Administration group of the Council for further consideration.

## SEDERUNT

Councillors Harte and Paterson left the meeting during consideration of the following item of business.

## 10 Homeworking/Work Expenses during Covid-19 pandemic

The UNISON representative advised that it was possible for the employer to pay a recommended HMRC tax free rate of up to £6 per week to employees in respect of increased costs incurred by them working from home during the current pandemic. Alternatively, employees could claim the tax relief on £6 per week direct from HMRC worth £1.20 per week for a 20% basic rate tax-payer and £2.40 per week for a higher rate tax payer. Reference was made to the relevant Scottish Government guidance available, and the savings already accrued by the Council as a result of home working by employees. It was also noted that the tax self-assessment process was complex.

The Board was advised that a decision had recently been taken by Chief Officers of the Council that employees be signposted to pursue tax relief option in line with the national position and the advice note given to Councils from Cosla. Reference was also made during discussion to the position adopted by other local authorities, and the need for the Council to ensure parity between employees working from home and employees who had worked on the front-line during the pandemic. Political support was sought for Renfrewshire Council to be seen as a model employer and to pay employees directly the HMRC tax free rate of up to £6 per week.

**DECIDED:** That arrangements be made for the matter to be re-submitted to Chief Officers of the Council for further consideration.

## 11 Meetings

The Clerk advised that the next meeting of the JCB Non-Teaching was scheduled to be held at 3pm on 11 November 2020.

The opportunity was taken to highlight that the constitution of the Board, agreed at the meeting held on 4 September 2019, required there to be no less than 5 meetings per year. To date there had only been one meeting of the Board held during 2020. It was agreed that it would not be feasible to convene four meetings of the Board during the remaining months of 2020.

**DECIDED:** That it be noted that the next meeting of the JCB Non-Teaching was scheduled to be held at 3pm on 11 November 2020 and that otherwise the position be noted.