

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE - FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to changes to the Industrial Relations Committee (IRC) and its operation, and create a new Employee Engagement Panel (EEP).
- 1.2 At the IRC meeting in May, the IRC Chairman (Cllr Rickman) expressed the view that it would be timely to review and update the operation of the Committee, to provide an improved and more meaningful employee consultation mechanism, taking on board best practice elsewhere. Employees shared this view. It was also felt that the role of the Committee could be made clearer to the workforce, and that there should be greater flexibility about who could participate. The Committee then agreed outline proposals at the meeting in September. Following further consultation with employee representatives, the final proposals are set out below.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 It is proposed that IRC be discontinued and that a new Employee Engagement Panel (EEP) be created with 4 elected members and 4 employees as follows:
- 2 from Unison
 - 1 from Unite
 - 1 from GMB.
- 2.2 Members and employee representatives will continue to have two substitutes. At the last meeting the GMB representative asked that if he were unable to attend, another union representative be permitted to attend. There was no objection to this.
- 2.3 As with IRC, the Panel will meet 4 times per year and will fulfil the same functions whilst running on a more informal basis so as to make the Panel more accessible to employees. To this end, and in recognition that most employees are not union members, it is proposed that Panel meetings include the opportunity for any employee to attend and to raise any issues of concern (much like the public participation arrangements for formal committees) at a 15 minute employee participation period at the start of the meeting. Notice of any issue to be raised must be given two working days in advance so that the employer can come prepared and contribute to the discussion positively. The operation of the new body will be made known to employees via the Communications Unit. The Panel will meet in various council venues.
- 2.4 EEP agendas, minutes and reports will not be published on the Council website, because holding meetings in private has proved to be more conducive to open discussions. Any formal decisions on employee related matters will continue to be taken by the Cabinet or the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, which operate normal rules of public access to documents and public participation. EEP minutes and reports will continue to be available to staff on Forestnet. The Communications Unit will publicise agendas internally a week before each meeting.

3. EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

- 3.1 Employee side has been involved in the discussions concerning ideas for changes to the current IRC arrangements, and is happy to back what has been proposed. It is understood that the operation of the new panel will be reviewed after twelve months, and that Employee side will be involved in that review.
- 3.2 Employee Side have requested that regional union representatives continue to be allowed to attend meetings, and the Committee had no objection to this.
- 3.3 Employee Side representatives expressed the wish for the 15 minute employee participation period to be operated flexibly where required, and again this was accepted and would be at the discretion of the Chairman.

4. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE/CABINET COMMENTS

- 4.1 The Industrial Relations Committee discussed this matter at their meeting on 1 December 2016. The Committee supported the proposals.
- 4.2 The Cabinet considered this matter at their meeting on 4 January 2017. The Cabinet supported the proposals.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the following be recommended to the Council for approval:

- (i) That with immediate effect, the Industrial Relations Committee be discontinued and replaced with the Employee Engagement Panel (EEP).
- (ii) That EEP meet 4 times per year, and on the following dates in 2017/18, (previously agreed for IRC):
- 16 February 2017 – 2.00pm
 - 1 June 2017 – 10.00 a.m.
 - 7 September 2017 – 2.30 p.m.
 - 7 December 2017 – 10.00 a.m.
 - 15 February 2018 – 2.30 p.m.
- (iii) That the terms of reference of EEP be as set out in Appendix 1;
- (iv) That the agenda and reports be not published to the press and public;
- (v) That arrangements for EEP membership be as follows:
- 4 Elected Members (+ two nominated substitutes)
 - 2 Unison Representatives (+1 nominated substitute)
 - 1 Unite Representative, (+1 nominated substitute)
 - 1 Representative from GMB. (Can be substituted by GMB, UNISON or UNITE)

[Elected Member appointments will be made by full Council. The union representatives should be nominated to the Panel's secretary (Democratic Services) and may be amended by giving notice in writing];

- (vi) That the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship alternate between the Employer's and Employee's sides, unless it is mutually agreed to vary the arrangement;
- (vii) That the agreement of both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee be obtained before any meeting is cancelled;
- (viii) That there be a 15 minute employee participation period at the start of each meeting to allow any non-union member to speak on individual items on the agenda. Notice of the issue to be raised must be given to Democratic Services two working days in advance of the meeting.
- (ix) That officers be authorised to make any consequential alterations to the Constitution.
- (x) That operation of the new Panel be reviewed after 12 months.

For further information please contact:

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Background Papers:

None.

Appendix 1

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PANEL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To act as an advisory body to the Executive (for executive functions), and to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee as appropriate (for non-executive functions) on:-
 - (a) Major issues of concern to the Council and its employees, always provided that no question of individual discipline, grievance or grading shall be within the scope of the Panel unless referred to it by the Council, the Executive, or a Panel or Committee of the Council.
 - (b) Any relevant matter referred to it by the Council, the Executive, a Panel or Committee of the Council, the Chief Executive or by any of the trades unions.
 - (c) Negotiations to alter the Local Terms and Conditions of Service of employees.
 - (d) Disputes about the application and interpretation of conditions of service.
 - (e) Reviews of the conditions of employment, organisation and training of the Council's employees.
 - (f) Negotiations relating to procedural agreements, including the disciplinary, disputes and grievance procedures.
 - (g) Such other matters as are specifically assigned to the Panel