

APPENDIX 1 – Minutes of the Employee Partnership Forum

10 January 2019

Meeting Attendance

Committee Members:	Councillor D Mayer – Chair,
Apologies:	Rhys Cornwall (Head of People & Business Change), Rowena Hayward, Mark Rowland, Andrew Woodman, Rowena Hayward
Officers in attendance:	R Davies (HR & OD Manager), M Rushworth (Head of Finance), Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer), Michele Chesterman (Governance Officer), L Davies (Governance Officer)
Trade Union Representatives in Attendance:	G Hawksworth (NASUWT), R Dawkins (GMB), P Garland (UNISON), I Reese (UNISON), Richard Hughes (NAHT), D Rees (NEU)

1. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Minutes of previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2018 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

The HR & OD Manager confirmed that the Electronic Payslip sessions had taken place at various sites including Telford, but this did not include schools. The Manager confirmed that the Authority would be happy to arrange some additional session if required, with the intention to contact Schools, Business Managers and School Court Officers as this would be done on an individual basis. The UNISON Representative asked if there were any technical difficulties in accessing the electronic payslip system. The HR & OD Manager explained that some staff struggle but were now able to reset their passwords. The Council was looking at a data cleansing exercise and had also arranged a meeting with Midland, the providers of I Trent. The Chair informed the Forum that checks would be made with GDPR on any data protection issues

4. Budget Update

The HR & OD Manager confirmed that an informal briefing had taken place. The EPF was now the formal process with the minutes being captured as part of the formal submission.

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The Head of Finance commented that if any unions wished to write in – the minutes would be contained in the papers but any letters from individual unions would be passed on to the appropriate Cabinet Members.

The UNISON Representative (PG) asked the Officers to comment on the Education Welfare Officers budget being cut by 50% and the impact of that across the whole of the Council and the schools involved. The NEU Representative also commented that attendance is a huge issue for the Authority. The need to have children in school is paramount as there were many non-attending children within the Authority. There were many children and families who need the support of Education Welfare Officers. The NEU Representative noted that the proposal was that Education Welfare Officers would have two clusters groups, whereas currently they only have one cluster group. That would be an enormous task to cover. The Authority had an increasing problem where some families think it was acceptable to take the odd day's absence from schools which posed a great worry as some children were not being seen by the Education Welfare Officers.

The NAHT Representative raised the issue that the cuts would mean an additional impact on attendance and welfare and with the school budget deficit of £100k for 2019/20 that could mean that he would have reconsider the position of the Attendance Officer in his school.

The UNISON Representative (PG) commented that early intervention meant the costs were less to support those families affected. Where intervention occurred at a later stage there was more of a hardship on Social Services.

The NEU Representative understood the difficulties facing the Council but these issues had to be raised. There was a 3.1% increase in the school's budget but much of that (almost £3mil) would be spent on a new school. Effectively it meant it amounted to a cash flat situation as pay rises and pension costs would be much greater and could lead to a loss of staff.

The Chair informed the Forum that a few years ago Cabinet had spent 6 months analysing spending and had developed a top 10 list of areas where cuts should not be made. This debate would cut into some of those precious issues. The budget had been discussed at both of his governorships and they are aware of how important this was.

The NAHT Representative informed the Forum that a Teaching Assistant currently supporting around 15-20 children had to leave his post. The school could not afford to replace that person and it would have an impact on the attainment, behaviour and emotional wellbeing of those pupils.

The NASUWT Representative shared an experience of a support Teacher contacting him as he was the only member of staff with responsibility for 16 SEN pupils.

The UNISON Representative (PG) asked the Forum for feedback from the Cabinet Member regarding Supported Living losing 15 jobs. It was not a budget saving exercise. The Authority had decided not to go ahead with Supported Living. The initial consultation finished on January 6th. However, on the afternoon of 9 January 2019

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staff were asked to attend another meeting which led straight back into consultation, with the aim of closing down Supported Living. At the last consultation meeting staff were told that the mandate had been met with no further plans. The Unison Representative would like feedback on the rationale and confirmation as to when the Cabinet Member, Cllr Cockeram knew about this.

The UNISON Representative (PG) asked for an update on SENCOM for a better understanding of the TUPE process. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that a decision had been made regarding the SENCOM TUPE process. Eligible staff should naturally TUPE over from Torfaen. It was confirmed by the Officer that 7 members of staff had been identified, 6 of the Staff were Teaching Assistants and one Mobility Officer. The Officer said that it may be likely that there would be more teaching assistants TUPE across on 1st April than required but this would be determined in the future redesign of the service. The Officer confirmed that the Authority needed to recruit the following staff, Teaching Advisor, Visual Impairment & Hearing Impairment Staff, Speech and a Language Expert.

The UNISON Representative (PG) asked how the Authority had identified the staff. The HR & OD Manager confirmed that it had been calculated on a percentage of how much the person worked in Newport (30, 40, 50 or, 60 %). The NEU Representative asked if a considerable saving had been made. The Chief Education Officer explained that Newport Council was expected to provide £651k towards a regional service. It was worth noting that the whole of the SEN, Education Psychology and ALN Service did not come close to that figure. It was believed that by developing greater strength there would be an improve service to schools and everything linked together which was the reason it was being considered.

Action

The minutes of the meeting to be forwarded by the Governance Officer to the Head of Finance as part of the formal submission for the Budget.

5. Any other Business

The GMB Representative raised a Health & Safety issue in connection with the waste bins being reduced in size. Would this raise a problem with the manual handling on refuse and was there anything in place to prevent the public chasing after the wagon with their rubbish bags? It was appreciated training would be put in place.

Action

The HR & OD Manager agreed to provide feedback on the manual handling issues in connection with the introduction of smaller waste bins.

6. Dates of Next Meetings

The dates of the next meetings were as follows: -

10.00 am Thursday 4 April 2019 – Committee Room 1

10.00 am Thursday 18 July 2019 – Committee Room 1