

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

6 March 2003
(4.30-5.15pm)

PRESENT: Councillors: Smart (Chair), White (Vice Chair), Knowles (alternate member for Councillor Stebbings), Liddle, Graham Cuffley (Unison), Richard O'Leary (GMB).
Councillor Taylor, Executive Councillor (Commercial & Human Resources)

Chief Executive, Head of Human Resources, Head of Environmental Health & Waste Strategy, Director of City Services.

1. MINUTES – 24 OCTOBER 2002

The minutes of the meeting were corrected under Declarations of Interest to show that Councillor Smart was a member of ATL and then confirmed by the Forum and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Dryden, Smith and Stebbings.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Smart declared a personal interest as a member of ATL.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AS EMPLOYERS – THE WAY FORWARD

The Head of Environmental Health & Waste Strategy introduced the report which informed members about the challenges set by the Health & Safety Commission, the analysis of accidents and planned actions to address issues raised and the programme for the coming year. He emphasised the importance of the partnership with the Trade Unions.

Graham Cuffley (Unison) highlighted the need for attention to non-attendance at work due to ill health arising from stress and the importance of preventive measures. He asked that under the Equal Opportunities Implications that the Race Discrimination Act be included. He was hopeful that the new performance appraisal system would help employees to link their work to the objectives of the Council.

Richard O'Leary (GMB) reported that during the Best Value Fundamental Service Review of Street Scene, the inspector had commended the work to prevent accidents as exemplary.

The Head of Environmental Health & Waste Strategy said that the Stress At Work Action Plan was intended to address issues arising from stress and that the Joint Health & Safety Committee were working on this.

In response to questions from members, the Head of Environmental Health & Waste Strategy outlined the procedures laid down for addressing the under-reporting of violent incidents led by Directors and involving Safety Co-ordinators. The Lone Working Guidance is designed to help prevent violent incidents and we have to address the culture of non-reporting of incidents.

The Chair brought to the attention of the meeting the importance of having the Accident Record Book readily available in departments and the Head of Environmental Health & Waste Strategy said he would remind departments.

It was agreed that the Executive Councillor for Commercial & Human Resources should be included on the Pictorial Representation of the City Council's Health and Safety Arrangements.

Graham Cuffley (Unison) said that the statistics should be put in the context of the fact that the number of attacks on people in public service had doubled in recent years, that there was more contact with vulnerable people since the care in the community initiative.

Councillor White asked whether the Council was adequately served with the Occupational Health Service was located in Milton Keynes and was it not possible to have a more local provider.

The Head of Human Resources acknowledged there were problems eg the speed of appointments offered. She reported that all councils in the area used the same provider as there were no others more local. She thought that there should be more emphasis on preventive work. She said that the provision was due for review within the year and that a partnership with someone local could be explored, an arrangement that could be shared between the councils.

In response to questions from the Chair, officers clarified that staff not based in offices made an initial report of a violent incident by phone and completed a form on their first visit to the appropriate office, all departments were undertaking risk assessments and that there was a policy on use of mobile phones in vehicles.

The Forum endorsed the report subject to the points raised.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 4 June at 4.30pm.

The meeting ended at 5.15 p.m.

Chair

