



Xchange Group

Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 13th August 2009 in the Members' Room

Present: Amy White	AW	Unison Representative
Brian Harrison	BH	Planning Services Representative
Carolyn Aldridge	CA	Policy & Community Development Representative
David Oliver	DO	Chief Executive
Heidi Lightfoot	HL	ICT Representative
Kathy Everitt	KE	Head of Organisational Development
Mike Deacon	MD	Heads of Service Representative
Pauline Matheson	PM	Organisational Development Representative
Rachel Reeds	RR	Resources Representative
Thomas Morrissey	TM	Environmental Services Representative

Minutes: Romina Vella

1 **Apologies for absence**

Julie Lee – Customer Services Representative

Palden Dorje – Unison Representative

Symon Adamson – Revenues & Benefits Services Representative

2 **Appointing a chair**

KE read the policy for the Chair. **CA** agreed to take the role of Chair but said she would prefer it if one of the absent representatives took the role. **KE** agreed to speak to the absent representatives to see if any of them wanted to be the Chair and report back to Xchange who the agreed Chair is. **KE** thanked **CA** for her offer.

KE

It was also agreed that the elected Chair would agree future agendas with **DO**.

3 **Welcome to Xchange and Introductions**

a) **KE** welcomed the Xchange representatives. All gave a brief introduction about themselves.

KE explained the aims for the Group:

- The development and revision of policies and procedures affecting employees;
- Changes to terms and conditions of employment;
- Issues that would have an impact on the Council's employees e.g. significant change to the Council's organisational structure.

b) **Communication:** A new 'Xchange button' would be created on Eunice that would contain all the information about Group.

ALL

The representatives agreed that a Group photo should be taken and placed

on EUNICE and in the In-House magazine with more information about the representatives.

KE suggested that after each agenda item the Group should agree what they want to communicate to other employees, and how. This was agreed.

4 **Workplace Drugs and Alcohol Policy**

KE had circulated a copy of the policy to the Group before the meeting. **KE** told the Group that the Workplace Drugs and Alcohol Policy is new and that the Personnel Sub-committee had asked the Group to consider it and seek wider consultation.

Various issues were discussed among the Group:

- Policy needs to be balanced between the Council's desire to support any employees who may have a problem with drugs or alcohol and the need to take disciplinary action where required.
- Make clear what was acceptable and not acceptable.
- Consultation would be happening

The Group agreed that the best way to conduct the consultation would be through:

- Face to face discussions with staff by members of the Group
- A 'SNAP' questionnaire on Eunice

KE would email the Group a copy of the questionnaire so that all representatives could discuss it with staff. **KE** would collate and then analyse the responses which would be reported back to the Personnel Sub-committee.

KE

5 **Web Usage Policy**

CA reported some queries on personal use of the internet outside of working hours that had been raised by colleagues. **HL** replied to some queries:

- Gov Connect requires levels of security that means we need more control over web access and an audit trail of the sending and receiving of electronic files
- Too much capacity on the system was taken up when staff use sites such as webmail and social networking at the same time.

KE to discuss with the Head of ICT.

KE

The Group agreed to set up an email distribution list for Xchange. **HL** action.

HL

Group discussed a blog for staff to put questions on.

6 **Employment Policies and Procedures under review**

KE mentioned that all policies were on a review schedule. They were being reviewed and updated.

KE

Currently the policies being looked at are:

- Sickness/Absence
- Overtime/allowances

7 **Best Public Sector Employer to Work For Survey**

KE mentioned that the survey would take place in September or October and the results would be published early 2010.

KE explained that last year's Best Council survey had been widened to cover all Public Sector Employers and the reason for entering is to see how our results compare to our results last year and how our results compare with other public sector employers. This will give us information we can learn and improve from.

KE suggested that this information would be placed on the Xchange button on Eunice.

8 **"Big" Team meeting (Council wide)**

DO introduced this item. The intention is to have a few meetings a year that would involve all staff and would be a forum to discuss significant issues affecting the Council.

The Group agreed that the sessions should be no more than once or twice a year, and they should take approximately one hour including time for questions from staff which would be submitted in advance.

The Group suggested that the first session should cover the current financial situation.

9 **Council Finances**

DO read sections from the Leader's last few addresses to the Council, which set out his thoughts in regards to the economy and the likely impact on the Council's finances. **DO** explained that the Council was aiming to reduce spending by about £1m in 2010/11 and would hope to keep avoiding any redundancies.

DO

DO explained all vacancies are reviewed when they arise to see if savings can be made by not filling them.

The cuts that had already been agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee are:

- Car parks and public toilets – responsibility given back to Town Council.
- Historic buildings grants and community safety grants..

DO made the commitment that, if an area was being looked at where staff might be affected, the staff in that area would be notified about the situation and consulted about any possible changes.

10 **Employee Benefits**

DO explained that, as part of the need to reduce costs, the Council was considering various options regarding the Council's Life Assurance and BUPA benefits.

DO

KE explained that BUPA costs the Council around £60,000 a year. Various options have been discussed with the Council's brokers to see whether the cost could be reduced without a significant impact on staff, but that was not possible. The only option which would deliver worthwhile savings was to stop our membership altogether.

The Life Assurance cover costs about £17,000 a year and there has only been one claim in the last 10 years or more. In addition, the Local Government Pension Scheme has changed to provide additional life cover, so it was proposed that the Council's own additional cover be cancelled.

Concerns were expressed by the Group that withdrawing from the BUPA scheme may be a problem for many staff. It was agreed that staff would be given a full explanation as part of the consultation on the proposed changes.

DO to email to members of staff explaining the situation and seeking everyone's views and circulate a draft to the Group for comments first.

The email would include an explanation for staff of what to do after reading the email and who to contact if they have any concerns or queries.

KE advised the Group that the Council are required to formally consult with UNISON about the proposed changes. She explained that a further meeting would take place with UNISON at the end of September to discuss the results of the employee consultation. KE said that a meeting with Xchange would be arranged as soon as possible to communicate the results of the consultation.

11 **Details of the next meeting**

KE to circulate proposed date – meetings would be held approximately every 6 weeks.

KE