

## EMPLOYEE FORUM

21 March 2018

Present: Mrs A Dooner (Chair)

### Member representatives:

Mr A Archer, Councillor P Harries, Councillor R Owens, Dr RM Plummer and Councillor M Williams.

### Staff representatives:

Ms N Couceiro, Miss S Davies, Ms D Hughes and Ms J Jones

### Union representatives:

Ms H Huelin and Ms M Hughes (Unison).

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 11.10am)

#### 1. **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Kidney.

#### 2. **Introductions**

Each person introduced themselves to the rest of the Employee Forum.

#### 3. **Disclosures of interest**

There were no disclosures of interest.

#### 4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6 September 2017 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 6 September 2017 be confirmed and signed.

#### 5. **Pay Offer: National Joint Council for Local Government Services**

The Personnel Manager explained that the Authority was part of collective terms and conditions which were negotiated nationally by employers and unions at the National Joint Council (NJC). In terms of pay, the NJC agreed the salary values attached to the spinal column points (scp) (pay spine), each Authority then had its own structure, ie how it divided the pay spine into grades.

The NJC had been working on the challenge of meeting the increases in minimum wage rates proposed when the National Living Wage (NLW) was introduced for workers 25 and over. Many of the scp's into Scale 3 would have fallen beneath the level of the NLW and a major overhaul of



the pay spine was therefore needed.

It was noted that the Authority had been applying the Living Wage for some years, and currently paid a supplementary living allowance on top of basic salary to ensure that everyone except trainees earned min £8.45 per hour, rising to £8.75 from 1/4/18.

A 2 year pay offer had been made to unions in December 2017 as set out in the documentation circulated to members of the Forum, however the results of all the ballots had not yet been received and therefore no award had yet been agreed.

The Personnel Manager explained that the offer for 2018 proposed increases of between 3.7% and 9.1% on scp's into Scale 4, with 2% on other points, however as the Authority already paid the Living Wage, increases in these grades would not be as high. The 2019 pay offer which was also of 2% or above, had greater implications for the Authority's pay structure which would have to accommodate the changes to the pay spine that were proposed. The current structure was incremental, valuing long service. However reviewing this structure could allow pay to be linked to performance, skills or competence and behaviour to better reflect the Authority's values. There was a need for staff and particularly managers to support any such change in order to make it work. The views of the forum were therefore invited

The Chief Executive added that this two year offer was a positive one for staff and it had been discussed at Staff Reps and the Authority's Leadership Team. A further presentation would be made to all staff at the forthcoming staff meeting. This was the start of a process, and any changes would take time to implement, however nothing could be done until a pay award was made.

Staff Reps on the Forum reiterated their views that now was an opportune time to review the pay structure and several Members agreed, although there were some reservations regarding a performance based structure. Responding to a question, the Personnel Manager acknowledged that she did not have the capacity to carry out a review in its entirety, however the work could be broken down and managed with the help of outside expertise.

**NOTED.**

## **6. Priorities for the Authority against the backdrop of a 5% cut in funding**

The Chief Executive reminded members of the Forum that the Authority had received substantial budget cuts in recent years, with a 5% cut for



18/19 followed by an indicative cut of 5% for 19/20 having recently been announced. The result of this was that the Authority's budget for 19/20 would be some £450,000 lower than in the current year; it was noted that the end of year funding recently received from Welsh Government would not impact on the baseline budget. This meant that setting a budget was becoming increasingly challenging, despite increased income from centres, car parks and planning fees. Views of the Forum were therefore sought as to what action the Authority should take.

Suggestions from the Forum included careful prioritisation of what the Authority was delivering, ensuring everything was in line with its purposes and acknowledging that there were certain things that might have to stop, as well as increased generation of income. It was also suggested that Welsh Government needed to be made aware that continued cuts could lead to the Authority being unable to deliver its purposes, although other members noted that in reality other services, such as education and social services, would always have a higher priority in terms of spending. It was acknowledged that the National Parks made a considerable contribution to social welfare, demonstrated in the Williams Report, and also to the Welsh economy; the importance of political lobbying with a single voice was therefore highlighted.

**NOTED.**

#### **7. Principles and Guidance to Support Joint Workforce Planning in Public Services in Wales**

It was reported that the Public Services Staff Commission was an independent non-statutory organisation that advised the Welsh Ministers and public service organisations in Wales on the workforce issues arising from public service reforms which needed action and resolution. In order to support its work, the above mentioned guidance had been issued in 2017 and it was noted that it applied to NPA's. While the principles set out in the guidance were supported, the Welsh public sector was very varied, and this Authority was a small organisation within it. The document had, nevertheless, been circulated to members of the Forum for discussion on what 'Workforce Planning' meant for the Authority.

The Forum agreed that the principles set out in the guidance were excellent, although more appropriate in scale to the larger public bodies.

**NOTED.**

#### **8. Ministerial Statement on the Future of NPAs and AONBs**

The Chief Executive reminded members of the Forum that it had seemed that the National Parks in Wales had been under constant review in recent years. The Statement was considered to be positive, although



Members' desire that the Authority's duty to foster the economic and social well-being of communities living within the Park should become its third purpose was not included. The statement indicated that a number of things were going to happen, most significantly the publication of a policy statement and it was hoped that this would be the subject of consultation before it was agreed.

Members of the Forum gave the document a cautious welcome, particularly the statements that National Parks would be retained and their purposes would not be weakened. It was also hoped that the Statement would mark the end to the period of review which was unsettling for staff.

**NOTED.**

