Questions from Janine Miller from Unison to the Dorset Area Joint Committee

Questions

1) The terms of reference for the Committee includes the statement at para 6 that the purpose of the Committee is “To oversee the development and delivery of a comprehensive communications and engagement strategy that address the requirements of ...... staff and wider stakeholders”. Will the Committee give a commitment that members and officers will:

   a. Work in partnership with the recognised Trade Unions, listening to our members and ensuring that TU representatives are fully involved at a governance, strategic and operational level in the process of decision making and organisation change;
   b. Maintain effective collective bargaining as the cornerstone of a joint commitment and approach to addressing financial realities while protecting employee jobs, pay and conditions;
   c. Jointly develop and follow model best practice policies and practices in conducting service reviews and considering commissioning decisions; and
   d. Retain equality proofed pay structures through equal pay audits and robust equality impact assessments.

2) A significant number of staff in the affected councils do not have regular access to a Council Intranet system, or work emails. How will the Committee ensure that these members are included in regular communications and are enabled and encouraged to participate in the engagement opportunities identified as part of the communications and engagement strategy?

Answers

1) The Dorset Area Joint Committee is committed to continuing effective working relationships with Trade Union colleagues. A meeting with Trade Union representatives from across all 9 Councils is currently being arranged to provide the opportunity to explore ways of working together that builds on our work to date. We know that delivering local government reorganisation will be a very significant challenge and we wish to do so in partnership.

   Should the Secretary of State make a final decision in favour of local government reorganisation the Joint Committee will be replaced by an Implementation Executive around Easter 2018 and that body will have the authority to deliver the new Dorset Area council. In the meantime the Joint Committee wishes to see reports bringing forward staff related matters which have been developed in consultation with staff representatives. These include implementing best practice. The submission for local government reorganisation was made in February of this year with the realistic expectation that there would be a decision in March. The loss of the subsequent 8 months means that the delivery of the new council will have to be done at pace. This will not negate the commitment to working with Trade Union colleagues but there has to be a recognition that in order to successfully implement change in a well-managed way there has to be a mutual recognition of the timescales involved and the challenge that this presents.

2) There are a number of ways in which staff can be encouraged to stay informed and engaged in the work of the DAJC, in addition to email and Intranet. Firstly, we encourage staff to keep up to date with the work of the DAJC website. This hosts the agenda, reports and minutes and is easily available from remote devices, such as a
laptop, ipad or mobile phone. The address is www.dorsetareacouncils.co.uk. News updates are also published on this site. The DAJC communications group live tweet at each committee and we also have a dedicated email for the DAJC where staff can get in touch; Dorsetareajc@dorsetcc.gov.uk. Each council has a programme of staff briefings which all staff are invited to. Some of those staff briefings have been live streamed so staff can watch remotely or post event. Chief Executives and the Senior Leadership Teams also pay regular visits to satellite offices. All staff are encouraged to speak to their line manager with any questions they have which can be passed to their Chief Executive to answer as and when answers become available. We are very happy to keep these initial arrangements under review and to develop them further in consultation with trade union colleagues.