



JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

MONDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 6.30 PM

GADE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

MEMBERS:

Councillors: Harden (no voting rights), McLean, D Rance, Sutton (Chairman), Whitman, Wood and C Wyatt-Lowe

TRADE UNION:

Will Cherry (Vice-Chair), Janet Colyer, Maggie Harvey, William O’Gorman and Christopher Plested.

OFFICERS:

Janice Milsom, Assistant Director (Strategy & Transformation, Community & Organisation); Matt Rawdon, Senior HR Officer; Helen Price, Corporate Safety, Health and Care Officer; and Pat Duff, Member Support Officer

AGENDA

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2012 (Appendix A, page *).

3. MATTERS ARISING

To discuss any matters arising from the last meeting held on 21 May 2012.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

(Helen Price, Corporate Safety, Health and Care Officer)

Report to follow.

5. CAR USERS' ALLOWANCE

(Janice Milsom, Assistant Director (Strategy and Transformation; Community and Organisation))

Background:

At the last meeting of the JNC, a paper was presented on options for reviewing Car Allowances, in response to a request from the unions that officers investigate possibilities for changing the current policy.

Current Policy:

Frequent car user allowance is paid to staff who complete more than 1000 business miles annually, receiving a £1,239 per annum and a mileage rate of 50.5p per mile. Low car user does not attract an allowance, but staff can claim mileage at 65p per mile.

Every financial year a review of staff mileage rates is carried out by Human Resources and staff can either retain or lose their frequent car user status.

Update:

Following discussions of options at the JNC meeting in May, officers prepared a paper with a range of options for consideration by the Council's Assistant Director (AD) group.

In the light of the national announcements around the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and advice from the AD (Finance and Governance) –the group has concluded that, unfortunately, the Council would not be in a position to propose any change to the current Car Allowance policy, unless changes could be cost neutral (i.e. there is no further budget to enhance the current offer).

Having explored at length all of the options, it was not possible to find one that is cost neutral. This includes the proposal put forward by UNISON at the last JNC meeting, which was also evaluated and would not be cost neutral.

In addition, we have also made comparisons with other local authorities and are satisfied that the DBC policy is broadly comparable. At this point in time, it is also fair to say that authorities reviewing these allowances are looking at reducing them rather than enhancing, again due to budget pressures.

Managers also continue to have the discretion to further review individual cases should they consider that necessary.

In summary:

As no alternative option to the current scheme can be arrived at that is cost neutral, it is recommended to retain the current scheme at this time.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS/FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

To discuss any other business that may have arisen since the last meeting/any future agenda items.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Meeting Date – start time 6.30 pm	Date agenda to be circulated
Monday 3 December 2012	Monday 12 November 2012
Monday 12 March 2013	Monday 20 February 2013

JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

MONDAY 12 MARCH 2012

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Attending:

Councillors:

Whitman (Chairman), McLean and D Rance

Trade Union: Janet Colyer, Christopher Plested and William O’Gorman

Officers: Janice Milsom, Assistant Director (Strategy & Transformation, Community & Organisation), Helen Price, Corporate Safety, Health and Care Officer and Pat Duff, Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 6.36 pm

1. CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chair, Councillor J Whitman was appointed as Chairman of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Harden and Sutton.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2012 were agreed by the members present and were signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

The Corporate Safety, Health and Care Officer summarised the report and advised that it had been to the Audit Committee recently.

The Health and Safety Strategy continued to be implemented. 100 different Health and Safety Co-ordinator posts had been filled within the Council.

The Corporate Risk Register had been completed. Work was continuing on corporate risk controls – a brief explanation of minimum standards across the Council that needed to be in place for certain risks (e.g. lone workers). Once those were finalised, action plans would be issued for each department. Lone workers in Housing and Revenue and Benefits had been issued with beepers and other workers may get them based on the corporate risk controls.

Janet Colyer said the beepers were very good and worked well.

The Directorate Health and Safety DMT Review meetings continued.

6. CAR USERS ALLOWANCE

The Assistant Director (Strategy and Transformation; Community and Organisation) summarised the report.

The Council wanted to consider a number of options, taking into account the feedback received. The Council wanted to ensure consistency and fairness and it was important to them that people got their costs back and that these were paid to everyone in the same way.

The Council should be looking to support its sustainable agenda in not encouraging people to drive more than necessary. The Assistant Directors Group said any new option had to be cost neutral – this would be difficult. Any increase in costs would need to be looked at next year as a growth item.

The option chosen must be a business decision and should be based on the job role. In the current job evaluation scheme extra points were awarded based on grade. Before people join the organisation an indication would be made to them that they may need access to a car.

The Assistant Director (Strategy and Transformation; Community and Organisation) asked for members' views on the options.

Option 1 – Take no action. This may have to stay for this year.

Option 2 – Reduce the mileage threshold. This option was most frequently used elsewhere. It would be important to work out criteria about who to award the money to and would have to be clear and strictly applied.

Option 3 – Sliding financial scale.

Option 4 – Lower the threshold to 500 business miles per year. This would incur costs.

Option 5 – Take away the allowance but increase the mileage rate. The manager would have to approve the mileage and people would only get paid for the number of miles done.

Seven staff had been identified as doing under 500 miles but nearer 450 miles and if the threshold was lowered this would help these people.

Councillor Rance advised that if more than 45p per mileage was claimed, this would be taxable. Councillor Rance assumed the Car User Allowance was taxable and suggested paying 45p per mile may be a better option for everyone. Car mileage allowance was meant to cover insurance and wear and tear on the car.

Janet Colyer said that historically it was called the Essential Car Users Allowance whereby anybody required to use their vehicle for Council business under their contract would claim the Essential Car User Allowance plus the Mileage Allowance. This was then changed to Frequent and Casual Allowance. People who did not clock up the 1,000 miles claimed 65p per mile and were saying they were now paying more

tax on that 65p than they were on the Essential Car User Allowance and were worse off. It would be difficult to make it right for everyone.

Councillor McLean asked if there were more than 28 staff affected by this and if the costings were correct.

Janet Colyer said there were more, including Supported Housing Officers, Tenant Services Officers and others who were obliged to use their vehicles to carry out their duties.

The Assistant Director (Strategy and Transformation, Community and Organisation) said the information had been taken from Supported Housing employee information.

Councillor Rance said the Council did not want people to be out of pocket and suggested other ways of doing this should be looked at.

The Assistant Director (Strategy and Transformation, Community and Organisation) said the undertaking had been to look at the situation this year. The managers would welcome more time to think about it and take other options back. Pool cars were also being considered.

Recommendation

That a further report be taken to the 3 September meeting.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Meeting Date – start time 6.30 pm	Date agenda to be circulated
Monday 3 September 2012	Monday 13 August 2012
Monday 3 December 2012	Monday 12 November 2012
Monday 4 March 2013	Monday 11 February 2013

This was agreed and noted.

The meeting ended at 7.08 pm