

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: SCOTTISH TRADE UNION CONGRESS (STUC) AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Date: 29 September 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & HOUSING SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 18th August 2015, Executive considered a motion in respect of the recent memorandum of understanding between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC). At this meeting, it was agreed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive for further consideration.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on this matter.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 It is understood that the Scottish Government and STUC Memorandum of Understanding was originally developed in 2007. It has been updated since that time, with the current version having been signed off in May 2015. The document appears to be aimed at the Trade Unions working in partnership with the Scottish Government on a range of matters, setting out roles and responsibilities, values and shared priorities and partner commitments. This however, is drafted with a Scotland wide perspective.
- 2.2 In addition to the Memorandum of Understanding, a review was published by the Scottish Government called the 'Working Together Review (Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland)'. This review was chaired by Jim Mather (Gael Limited) and had representation from the STUC, Unite, Unison, University of Strathclyde, City of Edinburgh Council, National Express and Tullis Russell. This does not form part of the Memorandum of Understanding, but is relevant for consideration as it does refer to 'progressive workplace practices' which links to the wording in the motion presented on 18th August.
- 2.3 There were 30 recommendations in the review which were set out under the following four headings:
- Developing Capacity and Capability in Industrial Relations;
 - Supporting Fair Employment;
 - Opportunities for Constructive Union and Employer Leadership;
 - An Evidence Based Approach to Industrial Relations.

- 2.4 The recommendations brought out a number of actions on how the Unions can be better supported, be more involved and assist in working together with employers on good working practices.

3. CURRENT LOCAL POSITION

- 3.1 There are currently a range of consultation and negotiating forums with Trade Unions in Falkirk Council, aimed at ensuring Trade Union involvement and engagement in the work of the Council. These include:

- **Service Based Forums:** these are held in all Services and provide the Unions and the Council with the opportunity to discuss relevant areas of work for each Service.
- **Health and Safety Forums:** these operate in specific service areas and are aimed at ensuring the involvement of Trade Unions in health and safety matters.
- **Informal Joint Consultative Committee:** this forum allows Trade Unions and officers to discuss areas of Council wide business.
- **Formal Joint Consultative Committee:** this is the formal consultation forum of the Council involving both Trade Unions and elected Members.
- **Corporate Negotiating Group:** this group aims to provide a forum for Trade Unions and officers to consult and negotiate on employee related issues aimed at realising savings which will contribute to the Council's budget strategy.
- **Budget Tripartite:** This group provides a forum for Trade Unions, elected Members and officers to discuss key strategic issues impacting on the Council's budget.

- 3.2 In addition to the above, a number of Improvement Groups have also been established across the Council to jointly review working arrangements, identify improvements in particular service areas and ensure a commitment to implement the improvements by all parties. Membership of these groups include: relevant managers within the Service, Trade Unions and as appropriate, employee representatives from the service area. Improvement Groups are currently operating/being established for the following areas: Building Maintenance, Children & Families, Community Learning and Development, Grounds Maintenance, Home Care, Fleet, Janitorial Services, One Stop Shop Services, Refuse Collection, Rent Arrears, Roads, School Libraries, Services to Tenants and Street Cleansing.

- 3.3 Meetings also take place at service level to deal with any issues which the Trade Unions would wish to raise and/or any issues which services believe should be discussed with Trade Unions.

4. FUTURE AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 In light of the recent service structure changes, discussions are now taking place with the Trade Unions on the arrangements for service based forums and health and safety forums. This work will include a review of the service based forum constitution and provides an ideal opportunity to review current arrangements and ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned to the new Council management structure.

- 4.2 In addition, a draft policy document was received from the Falkirk JTUC in February 2015 outlining a potential policy statement from the Trade Unions on a partnership agreement which they would wish to discuss with the Council.
- 4.3 At that time this was received, both at the Trade Union/Officer negotiating meeting and at the Tripartite, it was made clear to the Trade Unions that the Council would be happy to discuss a partnership agreement with them. The Trade Unions indicated that they still required formal agreement from each of the constituent Trade Union partners of the JTUC, before they would provide the Council with a final version of their local policy. The Trade Unions have been approached on a few occasions to seek an update on this, but as yet, the Council has not received a final version. The Unions are aware that the Council is willing to discuss this with them, but can't do so until the final version is received.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 A wide range of Trade Union engagement forums are already in place within the Council, allowing for collaborative working. Work is also underway to review how some of these work in practice at a service level, in light of the review of service structures. This provides an opportunity to review current practices to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of both the Council and the recognised Trade Unions. The next area of discussions with Trade Unions on engagement arrangements will focus on a partnership agreement. Timescales for this are however, dependent on the Trade Unions agreeing their collective position and their availability to attend meetings to progress this.
- 5.2 Any meeting arranged with Trade Unions can take into account the STUC/Scottish Government Memorandum of Understanding, ensuring a local emphasis and full involvement of the local recognised Trade Unions.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the engagement forums currently in place;
 - Note the review underway to re-examine engagement and consultation forums currently in place;
 - Request an update report on progress made in due course.

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DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & HOUSING SERVICES

Date: 25 August 2015
Ref: KA/SR
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.