

MEETING	Audit and Governance Committee
DATE	28 June 2018
TITLE	Local Conditions of Service
PURPOSE	Response to an Enquiry from Councillors Angela Russell and John Brynmor Hughes
AUTHOR	Geraint Owen – Head of Corporate Support

BACKGROUND

A letter dated 8th May 2018 was submitted to the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee by Councillor Angela Russell and Councillor John Brynmor Hughes (see letter appended).

The letter asks to discuss the letter sent to staff on the 26th March which gave notice of changes to the local conditions of service as from the 1st July this year.

The following responses are made to the concerns noted by the two Councillors:

1. Following the Cabinet's resolution on the 13th March this year to approve the package of changes to the local conditions of service, a letter was composed in order to confirm that decision and to provide twelve weeks' full notice to all relevant staff members.

The Human Resources Team consulted with the Legal Service on the letter's content. Confirmation was received, following minor alterations, that the content was factually correct.

The letter was sent to staff on Monday, 26th March, in my name, as Head of the Department which has responsibility for acting upon the said resolution. Since this was an operational matter, the Cabinet Member was not involved in composing the letter but a copy was provided for information purposes after the letter had been sent to staff.

The subsequent letter on the 3rd April was sent and it apologised for the tone of the original letter and the choice of words used. It is accepted that the wording of the original letter was heavy-handed and that the information could have been better communicated. This experience has highlighted, more than ever before, the need to look at the wording and the relaying of information through the eyes of all those who receive that information. In this respect, an important lesson has been learnt.

2. The cost of sending the letter of apology via post was £1,938. It should be noted that the letter was sent by e-mail to all those members of staff who have a Council e-mail address and in paper form to workplaces for distribution to a number of other staff.

There were no other financial costs emanating from the preparation of the letter of apology.

It can be added that employer and union representatives have re-engaged on six occasions since the release of the notice to change the local conditions of service and that this has been possible because of the fact that UNISON has now committed to take a full part in any discussions with the Council.

It is important to note, throughout this episode, that the local working relationship between the unions and the Human Resources officers has been good and this is reflected in the constructive discussions which have been conducted over the past few weeks.

It is the intention of the three recognised unions, namely UNISON, GMB and UNITE to hold a ballot amongst their members on additions to the package which was approved by the Cabinet. These additions include a number of commitments by both the Council and the unions for the future.

It is emphasised that this does not have an effect on the changes to the local conditions of service which are to be introduced on the 1st July, in accordance with the decision made by the Cabinet on the 13th March and the information presented to the Chief Officers' Appointments Committee on the 14th February and to full Council on the 8th March, 2018.