

Meeting of the Council – 27th February, 2012

Report of the Cabinet

Housing Repairs and Maintenance: Procurement and Delivery of Services

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet in connection with the outcome of negotiations with the trade unions (GMB and UCATT) to agree terms and conditions for Building Services craft workers.

Background

2. On 7th December, 2011, the Cabinet received a report setting out the options available to the Council to manage the repairs and maintenance service. In addition to continuing to work on the Joint Venture option (that being the preferred externalisation route), officers were asked to re-enter into negotiations with the trade unions to ascertain if an in-house solution could be found. Officers were asked to conclude the negotiations by 31st January, 2012.

Negotiations

3. Following the establishment of the following core principles and objectives, a series of meetings with the unions took place, the final one being on Friday, 27th January, 2012:-
 - (a) A Local Agreement that recognises the status of and covers all JNC Craft Worker National 'Red Book' employees within Building Services (DACHS).
 - (b) A set of terms and conditions which ensure the organisation remains sustainable and adaptable to future changing needs.
 - (c) Maintain continued performance improvement and further enhance operational efficiency.
 - (d) Listen to and engage with the workforce before final decisions on service delivery are made.
 - (e) Provision of opportunities and funding to support staff development and multi-skilling.
4. The conclusion of the negotiations in reaching a position where the unions could recommend acceptance of the proposed terms and conditions to its members recognised that the organisation going forward had to be flexible and adaptable to meet future service needs.
5. Having concluded negotiations, joint road-shows were planned to present the Agreement to the Craft Workers with a ballot proposed for the week commencing 20th February, 2012. The agreement to undertake joint road-shows endorses the unions' positive response to the proposal.

6. A successful ballot will result in planning for implementation, to include a skills audit and establishing training for those workers who would want to enhance their skills.
7. If the ballot results in a 'no' vote, it is proposed that Cabinet's preferred externalisation option of establishing a joint venture organisation is commenced.
8. At its meeting on 8th February, 2012, the Cabinet made recommendations to the Council as set out in paragraphs 13 and 14 below.

Finance

9. Housing Repairs and Maintenance and improvements are funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Public Sector Housing Capital Programme.

Law

10. HRA finances are governed by Sections 74-88 in Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Equality Impact

11. If the service remains in-house, the proposed changes will be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
12. The Cabinet has previously received an EIA that considered the procurement phase of a joint venture.

Recommendations

13. That the progress made in respect of the negotiations with the unions to create an organisation with agreed terms and conditions that is capable of change to meet the future needs of the service be noted.
14. That the officers be instructed to take the following actions on the conclusion of the ballot, either:-
 - (a) To implement the new terms and conditions in the event of a successful ballot.
 - (b) In the event of a 'no' vote, to proceed with the procurement process for a joint venture organisation.



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Leader of the Council