

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM - 16 OCTOBER 2019

Present:

Councillors Emberson (Vice Chair in the Chair), Brock, Page and Stanford-Beale

K Magee	Unite
A McNamara	National Education Union (NEU)
A Solera	UNISON
S Smith	Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development
Richard Woodford	Committee Services

Apologies:

I Newnham	Unite
M Palfrey	Unison

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Miriam Palfrey was elected to serve as Chair of the Forum for the remainder Municipal Year 2019/2020.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Emberson had been appointed to serve as Vice Chair at the Annual General Meeting of the Council on 22 May 2019 (Minute 11 refers).

3. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2019

The Proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 14 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisation Development submitted a report providing the Forum with information about the European Union (EU) settlement scheme and its implications for employees of the Council. Unison had requested that the Council considered giving paid time off to employees who needed to apply for settled status under the EU settlement scheme as a result of Brexit.

The report explained that the scheme had been designed to be simple to use and applications could be made via an app on a mobile phone. Furthermore, employees had until 30 June 2021 to make an application if there was a deal or until 31 December 2020 if there was no deal. It was therefore recommended that paid time off for employees to make an application under the settlement scheme was not required.

The UK was due to leave the EU on 31 October 2019, with or without deal, and it had been made clear that free movement would no longer be possible for UK nationals and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals in the UK after Brexit. If there was a deal, then under the withdrawal agreement all EU nationals (except Irish nationals) who were already resident in the UK would be required to apply under the EU settlement scheme for settled or pre-settled status. This included

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those who already held a registration certificate or permanent residence card. The withdrawal agreement provided for a transition period lasting until 31 December 2020 if there was no deal and the deadline for applications for settled or pre-settled status was 30 June 2021 if there was a deal.

The report explained that in the event of a no deal scenario, the settlement scheme would be available only for EU nationals who were already resident in the UK on or before exit day. They would have until 31 December 2020 to apply for either pre-settled or settled status. The application process had been designed to be straightforward and individuals would apply online and would qualify by meeting three core criteria - Identity, Eligibility and Suitability. A straightforward online application, where the applicant was not required to provide further information, currently took between one and four calendar days to process. The scheme had been fully open for applications since 30 March 2019, there was no fee and there was a free government helpline available seven days a week to support people who needed to make an application.

The Forum discussed the report and a number of points were raised including the following:

- The number of applications was increasing as was the complexity of the cases which meant there were issues with the software and many applicants were having to work with consultants in order to process their applications;
- The Document Check app currently only worked fully on Android smartphones and tablets and not with Apple devices;
- The number of staff who needed to apply for settled or pre-settled status was not known as only eligibility to work in the UK was asked for when staff joined the Council;
- It was noted that the Chief Executive's weekly blog included a reminder to EU members of staff about the need to apply to the EU settlement scheme;
- S Smith agreed to produce further specific communications with staff and to put a reminder in the printed copy of Inside Reading, the monthly newsletter for staff, so that staff who did not have access to email would be made aware of the situation;
- The trade unions asked that the position be kept under review and an update be given at the next meeting in February 2020.

AGREED -

- (1) That paid time off was not required for staff wishing to apply for settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme be agreed;**
- (2) That further communications with staff, including information in Inside Reading, be carried out by S Smith;**

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- (3) That the position be kept under review and an update report be submitted to the next meeting.**

(The meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.15 pm).