

London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
STAFF COUNCIL**

Held on 23rd February 2006

At 11.00 hours in the Gascoigne Room, Union Jack Club

Caron Hitchen – Director of Human Resources, HQ (Chair)

Martin Flaherty – Director of Operations, HQ

Tony Crabtree – Head of Employee Services, HQ

Eric Roberts – Assistant Staff Side Secretary (Unison)

Steve Sale – ACAO, HQ

Gary Edwards (Unison)

Dave Lamey (Unison)

Clive Tombs (Unison)

Joe Easterbrook (Unison)

Andy Zucconi (GMB)

Pat Osliff (GMB)

In attendance Scott Velleman (minutes), ASSD Manager, HQ

ACTION

01/06 Apologies for Absence

Eddie Brand

Phil Thompson

Bob Buck

John Comerford

Peter Bradley

Greg Masters

02/06 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes from 24th November 2005 were agreed as a true record.

03/06 Matters Arising

03.01 Facilities for Pregnant Women (07/05)

TC stated that the sub group has met since the last Staff Council. Various queries were passed to Occupational Health via Julie Cook. Staff Side had subsequently queried their representation on the group, but TC reminded them that this was a matter for them, and the meeting had involved those reps who had been nominated. DL was asked to liaise with Julie Cook on any outstanding issues.

03.02 Insulin Dependent Diabetics (38/05)

CH reported that additional clarification had been received from Occupational Health based upon the approach taken by the Metropolitan Police. The matter is ongoing and the working group is scheduled to meet in the near future.

03.03 Suspension Guidelines (08/05)

TC tabled draft guidelines on the management of suspensions, produced in consultation with staff side. He asked the group to consider the document for comment/agreement. It was agreed that the document would be amended to reflect comments from council members and passed to ER for final approval, prior to publication as an appendix to the Disciplinary Policy.

TC/ER

It was also agreed that ER would be informed of staff suspensions.

04/06 Current Performance Issues

MF asked Staff Side to pass on his thanks to all staff for their efforts during the recent period of severe operational pressure. He reported that the Category A response rate is currently 73.7% for the year. MF highlighted the difficulties in maintaining staffing levels due to a high number of vacancies and a generally high level of sickness absence across the Trust. These issues are being addressed. MF stated that the Trust is only 0.5% below the category A14 target. He cautioned, however, that if the category A8 target is not achieved the Trust will be categorised as 'weak' by the Healthcare Commission. MF asked for the continued support of Staff Side in order to jointly tackle the problems being faced.

ER supported this statement and confirmed that the Staff Side view was that achieving the performance targets was important because the Trust does not deserve a 'weak' categorisation. He cautioned however that many staff did not understand the external pressures for achievement, and hoped therefore that there would be no repeat of this situation. He also confirmed that it was intended that once March has passed Management and Staff Side can continue meet more regularly once again to build on the good work that has been undertaken in the past.

05/06 Bank Holiday Pay

AZ said that this issue has been discussed for a long period of time. He reminded the group that the policy of adding time earned for working bank holidays to annual leave entitlements is problematic and causes difficulties at the station administration level. AZ stated that greater clarity was required and that staff should be paid for the hours they have worked.

ER added that guidance on this issue from the national Staff Council is still to come. He requested that bank holiday payments revert to Whitley Council terms and conditions until a national position is agreed.

CH added that the national position should be agreed by October though this could slip.

TC agreed that the Trust should not use the same approach as last year. He

stated however that the implications of crediting staff in advance with the full 60 hour entitlement provided by Agenda for Change had caused unforeseen difficulties in 205/06, and it was not intended to adopt this approach in the coming year. He acknowledged that Staff Side had a different view about the accrual of time, and did not endorse the 60 hour interpretation. It was agreed that this issue could be discussed outside of the meeting.

06/06 Funding Issues

ER stated that Staff Side would like to form a joint group to look at funding issues so that any prospective difficulties could then be approached with a united front to commissioners/SHA.

CH and MF welcomed this suggestion.

07/06 Opportunities for Older Members of Staff

GE raised concerns that the Service does not scale down the duties of older members of staff. GE suggested that Urgent Care work would be ideal for staff nearing the end of their careers, and at the same time would solve the recruitment problem for the Urgent Care Service.

CH felt it was a valid point, however she highlighted the need to examine workforce planning across the board.

ER pointed out that this should form part of the work under the Improving Working Lives initiative. It was agreed to report on this issue at alternate meetings.

SV

08/06 Mileage Allowances

ER advised that the national Staff Council will be discussing national provisions for payment of mileage allowances, but that this did not preclude local discussion. Staff Side therefore suggested that there should be an initial discussion with CH.

09/06 Agenda for Change Update

CH reported that over 80% of staff have been assimilated as of this month. She gave her thanks to Staff Side for their help in moving the project forward.

JE stated that a joint thank you should be given to Kathy Finch and her payroll team for their tremendous efforts in recent months. This was endorsed by all.

10/06 KSF/PDR Update

SS reported that approximately 78% of jobs now have a KSF outline. Timescales have slipped slightly as the majority of focus has been on

Agenda for Change. The fifth version of the electronic KSF outline will be launched in tandem with email accounts for all staff. SS stated that the Service will be in a robust position by June.

ER suggested that a series of KSF roadshows would be a good idea.

11/06 PTS Issues – Standing Item

CH announced that PTS had recently won the Bromley contract which is due to commence in April. Additionally the management reporting arrangements have changed. Mike Dinan will now be the executive director overseeing PTS. This is to better accommodate its operational priorities.

12/06 Fleet Issues – Standing Items

There were no issues to report in BB's absence.

13/06 Information Item – Corporate Health & Safety Minutes

TC distributed the previous minutes from the Corporate Health & Safety meeting. The latest set would be distributed electronically.

14/06 Smokefree Policy

TC advised that it was intended to propose to the Trust Board that the total smoking ban on NHS premises should be implemented in the Trust by the end of June. TC also asked Staff Side to communicate to their colleagues that they should respect any smoking bans at other NHS premises.

15/06 HR Policy Update

TC tabled the HR Policy update and briefly out-lined the priorities for the coming months.

16/06 Any Other Business

There were no additional items to raise.

Date of Next Meeting: 18th May 2006
11.00 – 13.30 hours
Location: Partnership House Room C