

JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR TEACHING STAFF

Minute of virtual meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff (JNCT) held via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 2.30pm.

Present: **Representing Perth and Kinross Council**
Councillors J Duff, J Rebbeck and C Shiers; S Devlin, G Doogan, S Hagney and S Johnston (all Education and Children's Services) and P Johnstone (Corporate & Democratic Services).

Representing Teachers' Associations
L Gibb, L-J Grant, M Laurie, C Rose, T Summers and C Weston (all EIS); M Mackie (SSTA) and S Topen-Cooper (NASUWT).

In Attendance: L Hamilton (ECS), A McAuley, Joint Secretary (Trade Unions); C Flynn and L Brown (both Corporate and Democratic Services).

Observing: S Hope, Joint Secretary, Employees' Joint Consultative Committee

Apologies: D MacLeod

Councillor J Duff, Convener, Presiding.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted and noted as above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ELECTED MEMBERS ONLY)

There were no declarations of interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

3. MINUTES

(i) Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff - 26 May 2020

The minute of meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff of 26 May 2020 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

(ii) Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff – 23 June 2020

The minute of the Special Meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff of 23 June was submitted and approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute of 26 May 2020 – Employee Wellbeing Survey – (Item 4.1 refers)

P Johnstone reported that a New Ways of Working Survey had been published on 25 May 2020 with a closing date for receipt of comments of 8 June 2020. 48% of staff had submitted a response within the first 7 days of the survey going public. The responses were analysed on school-based and non-school based employees. A total of 1472 responses were received which comprised 26% of the Council workforce. 66% of the respondents worked in Education and Children's Services, 52% of whom were school based staff and 34% were teaching staff.

The information gathered will be used to look at how the Council can build recovery and renewal. At the time of survey the country was still in lock-down and the responses captured how people were feeling at that time.

Following on from the survey an Employees' Sounding Board will be established which will seek employees' views on how they think things should be shaped and how the Council might do things differently in future. P Johnstone advised that Trade Unions participation would be welcomed. She requested that the names and contact details of nominated representatives should be forwarded to her and these would in turn be passed to Caroline Mackie, the lead officer for this piece of work.

C Weston thanked P Johnstone for the invitation and advised that she would meet with the Teachers Panel to discuss representation on the Sounding Board and provide names and contact details to P Johnstone. **(ACTION CW)**

5. COVID-19 UPDATE ON RECOVERY PLAN FOR RETURN TO SCHOOLS

There was submitted a briefing note by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (G/20/98) on the Recovery Plan put in place for return to school in August 2020.

Prior to discussion of the briefing paper as circulated S Devlin provided an update on the national picture. She referred to the third version of the schools reopening guidance which was published on 16 September 2020 which included changes to parts linked to PPE where individuals are symptomatic and further information provided within the guidance for Test and Protect procedures. She reported information is now included in the guidance linked to self-isolation arrangements following international travel. She further advised there is also a more detailed section around outbreak and case management and working with colleagues in Public Health. There is also an update in relation to young people in the senior phase attending college. The

recently re-revised PE guidelines are referenced in this version, and, similarly the first publication of the Home Economics guidelines are referenced in this version. She further advised that there has been an update to the section on guidance on school visits. Information has also been added on access to drinking water in schools and some specific information around breakfast clubs. A few other small changes have been made in the sections on additional support for learning and on ventilation. She advised that those two areas will continue to be updated with reference to ongoing feedback provided to the Scottish Government from the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group.

The Education Scotland Twitter feed had also provided details on further national guidance published in relation the secondary subjects of art, design and photography, music, drama and dance.

A slight change to the wording about people who can be in school over and above teachers, support staff, etc is also included in version 3 of the guidance. S Devlin advised the change recognises that a range of different support is provided to children and young people from colleagues in youth work, social work and third sector organisations. Other information is still expected in relation to guidance on organised activities for children.

The COVID-19 Antibody Survey for Education Staff will look to identify from a proportion of people working in Education in Scotland who has had coronavirus by testing for antibodies in the blood. The test looks at whether someone has been infected in the past. By testing people throughout the school year the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Sub-Group and Public Health Scotland will be able to track if this is changing over time. The study is open to any adult who works in a school or early learning and childcare setting with participants completing an on-line public health survey. Staff selected to join the study will be sent a home testing kit which requires that they take a finger prick blood sample to be returned by post to a laboratory for testing. S Devlin emphasised that this is voluntary and there is no requirement for staff to participate. Information on this has been issued to schools.

In referring to the briefing paper as circulated S Johnston advised that the return to school has gone well. Children and young people are delighted to be back, and staff are beginning to feel more comfortable with the processes that have been put in place for safety and protection. She advised that a number of informal trade union meetings have taken place over the summer and into August and September to ensure that the processes that have been put in place around health and safety and any issues and concerns raised by trade unions and staff in general are being dealt with.

For every individual COVID case in a school a Problem Assessment Group (PAG) has been undertaken alongside Public Health. Health and safety procedures and infection control measures have been rigorously inspected by NHS Tayside, Health Protection Scotland and by the Scottish Government. On every occasion the Council's procedures have been welcomed and regarded as very rigorous and have proved extremely helpful when it comes to the numbers of pupils who need to self-isolate as a result of a positive

case. S Johnston confirmed that to date there is no evidence of any transmission of COVID between pupils and adults or between adults.

Sheena Devlin asked trade union colleagues to pass on thanks to their teams on how well the application of the hygiene measures and the application of the various mitigations outlined in the national guidance are being adhered to in Perth and Kinross. Elected members had also recognised the significant additional work undertaken by staff in schools and within the virtual centre to ensure those measures were implemented.

In response to a question on PPE supplies, L Hamilton advised the ECS Contracts Team have put a new system in place. A member of staff now collates orders from schools to be delivered directly to the schools. Currently delivery is taking around 7 to 10 days. Any schools who need something urgently can contact the team via the generic account and the school will be provided with supplies to tide them over until their delivery arrives. The team hoped to have a clear idea by the October school break on stock in all the schools and the usage in all the schools.

In response an enquiry S Johnston advised that Public Health have responsibility for communication if an outbreak occurs in a school. In terms of workloads for Head Teachers she advised that a Head Teacher does attend the initial investigation meeting after a positive case has been identified. S Johnston confirmed that she also attends those meetings.

Communication templates have been prepared for schools that require them. This includes letter templates, information from Public Health, a script for admin staff and a letter for the wider community.

In response to a question on what support is being provided to schools to help improve adherence to the guidance in the wearing of face masks in secondary school, L Hamilton advised that the Scottish Government guidance states that schools should keep a stock of disposable masks for those students who have forgotten them. Posters have been sent to schools as a visual reminder. A video is also being developed that will be shared with schools and on social media that will involve the young people themselves on what face coverings mean to them and their understanding of the reasons for them and how they feel about wearing them in school.

In response to a follow up comment that some children in secondary schools are acting in an unsafe way, S Johnston advised there are steps that can be taken to mitigate behaviour by an individual in school which is deemed to be unsafe.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of briefing note G/20/98.

6. COVID-19 ADDITIONAL STAFFING WORKSTREAM UPDATE

There was submitted a briefing paper by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (G/20/99) updating the Committee on the current

position regarding the allocation of grants for the recruitment of additional staff to support education recovery in schools over School Session 2020/21 due to COVID-19.

In response to a question S Johnston advised that there is no guarantee of further money from Scottish Government and the criteria set for the additional support funding is very clear in that it is for targeted support for young people to ensure that they recover their lost learning. It is also to support COVID related absences which may or may not occur. Staff absences are also being monitored along with pupil absences and these have been very high over the last few weeks. If the Council was to continue to provide supply cover from this additional staffing then this would be to the detriment of targeted support. It has been made clear to Head Teachers that if there are short term absences schools need to manage these themselves.

S Johnston advised that work is being done to engage extra supply teachers and in August an additional 100 supply teachers had been recruited. The Service has also put in place a supply teacher network where a QIO meets virtually on a regular basis with supply teachers to tell them what it is like to work in schools.

In response to questions on protocols for pregnant teaching staff during the COVID outbreak, L Hamilton advised, pregnant staff are looked at individually and guidance will be taken from HR on this. P Johnstone added that the member of staff concerned would require to have a condition(s) other than their pregnancy which would require them to work from home for their protection. For example, if the teacher was over 28 weeks pregnant with a heart condition that would be impacted by COVID-19 then additional support and restrictions would be put in place of them. P Johnstone advised that a Group is currently looking at other work that could reasonably be undertaken by those teachers which could allow them to work from home not necessarily in school.

The Committee agreed to note briefing paper G/20/99.

THE CONVENER AGREED TO CONJOIN DISCUSSION OF ITEMS 7 AND 8

7&8 QUARANTINE ARRANGEMENTS – SNCT LETTER OF ADVICE AND QUARANTINE ARRANGMENTS FOR SCHOOL BASED STAFF (TEACHERS, MUSIC INSTRUCTORS AND SINGLE STATUS STAFF WITH NO ANNUAL LEAVE FLEXIBILITY)

There was submitted (1) a letter of advice from the SNCT published on 11 September on COVID-19 quarantine arrangement (G/20/101) and (2) a report by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (G/20/100) on the Service quarantine arrangements for school based staff (teachers, music instructors and single status staff with no annual leave flexibility).

In response to a request for clarification P Johnstone advised if holidays were booked prior to 22 May 2020 in accordance with the SNCT Circular 20/76 they will be allowed to work from home. In response to a further request for clarification on the position if quarantine was announced whilst a teacher was away, would they be covered by the SNCT JS/20/81 letter of advice? In reply P Johnstone confirmed only if the holiday was booked prior to 22 May 2020. If the holiday was booked after that date, the arrangement is that the teacher would be required to have a discussion with the Head Teacher or manager to ensure contingency arrangements were in place in the event they were required to quarantine on return from holiday abroad. S Johnston added if a teacher took the risk of booking a holiday after 22 May and had to quarantine the Council would be looking at unpaid leave or finding ways in which to get the additional hours back.

The Committee agreed:

- (i) To note the SNTC letter of advice JS/20/81 published on 11 September 2020.
- (ii) To note the content of Report G/20/100 on Perth and Kinross Council quarantine arrangements for school-based staff (teachers, music instructors and single status staff with no annual leave flexibility).

9. WORKING TIME AGREEMENT

The Committee received and noted a verbal update from C Weston and G Doogan on what schools were being required to do for this session in terms of the working time agreement. The focus should be on recovery and consideration would need to be given to the impact on school improvement planning and the working time agreement. Key areas of discussion included parental engagement, staff meetings, quality assurance through classroom visits and BGE progress and achievement. S Johnston agreed to have a further conversation regarding progress and achievement with representatives of the Teachers' Side.

10. PERTH AND KINROSS WELLBEING OFFER

The Committee viewed a video by G Reeves, Health and Wellbeing Champion, on the National Wellbeing Network which aims to promote and support the wellbeing of the Scottish Workforce and detailing what Perth and Kinross Council has been doing to support employee wellbeing throughout lockdown and what it will continue to do moving forward.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

There were no other items of business for discussion.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8 December 2020.