

THE GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

PROTOCOL FOR CONSULTATION

INTRODUCTION

This Protocol recognises the valuable contribution which can be made to the Board's business through appropriate consultation with all employees. This currently takes place with the trade unions acting as representatives of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board's workforce. It sets some standards to guide the process to be followed and gives guidance on the circumstances in which consultation is appropriate. There are a wide variety of issues which may arise and so the Protocol must be seen as guiding principles and cannot set out detailed arrangements for all circumstances. Managers are encouraged to seek the involvement of Personnel Services at an early stage.

This protocol supplements the Trade Union Officer Group Constitution.

SCOPE

The Protocol applies to all SJC local government employees.

Consultation shall take place whenever a decision is likely to have an impact upon employees and the way in which they work.

PURPOSE

To set out standards and principles to guide consultation with trade unions representing Board employees which will be applied consistently across divisions and issues.

AIMS

The aim is to establish a consultation process which provides for a meaningful exchange of accurate information and views to inform and influence Board decisions through:

- Exchange of accurate, easily understood information as early as possible.
- Open and honest discussion of proposals or issues, without bias or prejudice.
- Ensuring the views of all groups are fairly represented and considered.
- Consultation at the stage where options are being considered and prior to decisions wherever possible.
- Clear communication of action plans and timescales so that expectations are realistic.
- Taking account of contributions made and responding wherever possible.

To improve employee awareness of issues affecting them and their ability to contribute to the decision making process of the Board through their trade

union, if they wish. Thus, increasing employee involvement and listening to the voices of those affected.

CONSULTATION – General Guidance

The process of consultation is that of providing and seeking information. It is used as one method of establishing the views of employees on issues affecting them. To be meaningful, account must be taken of views and opinions expressed and consideration given to the information provided.

Issues for consultation are those which will have an impact on employees, how they work, the service they provide and, in general, on matters in which they would have an interest. This is very broad and guidance should be sought from Personnel Services (Moray Council).

Productive consultation which adds value requires appropriate, accurate information to be provided at key points. Information must be issued in early course but not at a point where it would raise undue concerns or raise expectations unrealistically. Employees and their representatives must have the opportunity to contribute to proposals affecting them during the development stage and before final decisions are made. In some circumstances, this may mean seeking approval from the Board or its Sub-Committee “subject to consultation” or “in principle” before proceeding with consultation.

An incremental process should be adopted where the issue is complex, with the information being issued in stages rather than en masse in the final stages of a project or proposal. A clear timetable and plan of action will be used to ensure that those affected are kept informed.

The basic consultation process is split into a formal and informal stage to allow for input from trade unions at a very early stage. The process has been broken down into a checklist for ease of reference. This sets out a framework, which will require to be modified for particular circumstances, but which will give some unity to the Board’s approach.

The informal consultation process will provide a quick “toe in the water” response for managers to use to inform their proposals. This will not be appropriate for all situations and can only be triggered through Personnel Services (Moray Council). The process will involve an informal meeting or discussion with the relevant representatives of the Officer/Trade Union Group, and the relevant Depute. All information provided at this stage will be treated in strictest confidence on the understanding it will not be passed to employees or other trade union representatives unless agreement on this is reached in each particular case. Where a view or response cannot be given immediately, a response will be provided within three working days. This process will not replace the formal consultation which will always be required.

The formal consultation process is the means by which views are sought to influence final proposals and decisions. At this stage a range of firm proposals may be being considered.

The process will involve the trade unions representing the workforce affected and a named representative will be nominated by the trade union to be their lead officer on the particular issue. Information to be provided will vary depending upon the circumstances and in some cases, for example redundancy, there is an established format for consultation. The attached checklist provides an outline of the information to be included. It is recommended that Personnel Services (Moray Council) be involved in the process except in relation to purely routine operational matters but the relevant Manager will lead the consultation.

A timetable for the formal consultation should be established at the outset. In some cases, consultation may simply be providing information, in others there will be a one-off response but in some cases there will be several stages to the process. This must be made clear from the outset and a clear end date established. A response will normally be made by the trade unions within 14 days of the proposals being issued.

Real consideration to responses will involve follow-up information and meetings with responses to points made. Due account and weight will be given to feedback and consideration will always be given to amending proposals in light of consultation. A summary of comments received will be made available to the decision-makers. In this way, the value of contributions made is clearly recognised. However, it is accepted that consultation must have an end point and that management will have the final say in the proposals which are put forward.

Consultation is concluded by ensuring that the outcome and decisions to be implemented are communicated along with information on how this will be achieved.

Consultation with all Employees: Consultation is with trade union officials as representatives of the workforce. However, where staff directly affected are not members of the trade union discussion may be held directly with those affected in order to establish their views and response to proposals. In certain circumstances consultation must take place both with the trade union representative and on an individual basis with the employees affected, for example redundancy. Guidance should be sought on these scenarios from Personnel Services (Moray Council).

CONSULTATION CHECKLIST

1. Set out and define the Project Brief or Issue

- Clearly establish and set out the requirements of the project.
- Detail the aim, purpose and the reasons for the proposals.
- Define any required outcomes or objectives.
- Ensure that any targets set are measurable and achievable.
- Set an overall timescale for the project to be completed within.
- Give key dates where appropriate (i.e. dates which must be met e.g. Board meeting dates).

2. Nominate a Lead Officer

- The Lead Officer sets out the detailed consultation/project plan.
- Ensure it progresses as planned.
- Ensure everyone involved is clear about their role and advised of any changes.
- Lead the consultation, ensuring appropriate involvement of affected parties.
- Prepare appropriate documentation, in consultation with the Personnel Services.
- Consider responses, resolve problems or complaints or, if response or resolution is not possible at this level refer the matter on.
- Prepare any necessary report to the Board.

3. Contact Personnel Services

- Discuss and identify potential staffing implications.
- Based on this, define areas for consultation.
- Decide whether informal consultation appropriate.
- Consider who to involve and consult with and the forum to be used.
- Determine whether/what approvals required prior to consultation
- Agree the timing for consultation, approach etc.

4. Prepare consultation information

- Set out proposals and any background.
- State the reasons for proposals, including appropriate budget information.
- Explain who will be affected, how and when.
- Outline options available and considered without ruling out others.
- Consider using questions to trigger and target responses.
- Indicate a reasonable timescale and method for feedback.
- Set out a draft timetable for progress/implementation.

Note: The Lead Officer will be responsible for preparing consultation information, however, this must be done in consultation with Personnel Services (Moray Council).

5. Arrange meeting(s), as appropriate, with employees and trade unions

- Arrange information-giving meetings with employees and invite trade unions.
- Consider the timing of meetings so that employees can attend.
- Advise Personnel Services (Moray Council) of such meetings.
- Hold separate meetings for detailed discussions with employee representatives, normally the trade unions.
- Where there is no trade union representation, discussion must be held directly with those affected and guidance should be sought on this.
- Ensure that full discussion takes place and that the full implications of a proposal are understood.
- Ensure all employees are given the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

6. Consider feedback

- Gather and consider all information received.
- Arrange follow up meetings and consultation to respond to issues raised, if necessary.
- Collate comments, consider and give appropriate weight to these.
- Consider feedback and respond to comments made, in summary form.
- Explain why any comments are not incorporated or relevant.
- Take account of information and views and incorporate into or amend proposals as appropriate.
- Conclude consultation stage and advise decision now to be made.

7. Proceed with implementation, with update advice and/or meetings, if appropriate.

On Behalf of
The Board _____ Date _____

On Behalf of
The TU _____ Date _____