

London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
STAFF COUNCIL
Held on 17th July 2008
1100-1330 in the Conference Room, HQ**

<u>Chair:</u>	Caron Hitchen – Director of Human Resources & OD	HQ
	Eddie Brand – Staff Side Chair	Unison
	Phil Thompson – Trade Union Side Secretary	Unison
	Eric Roberts – Assistant Staff Side Secretary	Unison
	Martin Flaherty – Director of Operations	HQ
	Tony Crabtree – Assistant Director, Employee Support Services	HQ
	Steve Sale – Head of Workforce Modernisation	HQ
	Nic Daw – Head of PTS	Pocock Street
	Pat Osliff	GMB
	Mick Butler	GMB
	Bob Buck	Amicus
	David Lamey	Unison
	Pete Hannell	Unison
	Tim Stephens	Unison
	Richard Chow	Unison
	Gary Edwards	Unison
	Phil Savage	T&G

In Attendance

Dave Powell – GMB Full Time Officer	GMB
Scott Velleman (Minutes)	HQ

ACTION

25/08 Apologies for Absence
Mark Lione

26/08 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 08th May 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting are permanently unavailable due to the hand written notes being accidentally misplaced. The group recapped some of the key points from the last agenda as follows:

14/08 Olympics Presentation

Peter Thorpe gave a presentation on the LAS' preparations for the 2012 Olympics and reported on the results of a survey carried out on the staff. ML as staff side lead for the Olympics has been involved and will consult with TC.

17/08 Director of Operations Report

MF gave an update on performance and funding increases from the commissioners to allow for extra recruitment and vehicle purchases.

Congratulations were also made to Barnehurst and Chase Farm on being chosen as the early implementer complexes for New Ways of Working.

18/08 Annual Leave Arrangements

It was proposed that a sub-group be convened to look into current annual leave arrangements and possible changes.

21/08 PTS Issues

ND reported that PTS had won 5 new contracts as of April 2008.

22/08 Fleet Issues

BB had discussed the recruitment situation in Fleet and the difficulties that were being experienced thereof.

27/08 Matters Arising

None

28/08 Director of Operations – Report (Standing Item)

MF stated that the Service had performed well throughout March and April; however it fell short of target in May by 0.5%. June and July have proved to be very difficult and both A and B targets were missed in June.

Workload has increased with an overall rise of 3% and category A calls rising by 6%. Simultaneously staffing levels have fallen; as well as delays being experienced at hospitals across London. To counter this MF is looking to review the Divert and Closure policies.

The commissioners and NHS London are putting the Service under pressure due to decreased performance. MF said that he will ask the commissioners for additional funding in order to continue making overtime payments and to accelerate the recruitment programme.

The group debated the reasons for the increased workload and whether this picture was being mirrored nationally.

ER offered staff side assistance in lobbying the relevant parties and felt that it was important to present the right message to the public and to help protect the Service.

29/08 Director of Human Resources – Report (Standing Item)

CH reported that the recruitment and training requirements are challenging against the existing plan. There are circa 400 staff, mainly under the new student paramedic programme, that need to be recruited and trained. It is intended to get through these as quickly as possible.

To facilitate this, various initiatives are being considered or implemented such as securing the use of Hannibal House at the Elephant & Castle, and it is hoped that this will be available at the end of September/beginning of October. Another potential consideration is to explore whether existing health professionals such as nurses would be interested in being trained as paramedics.

CH stated that this work will be formalised into a project to manage it effectively.

30/08 Operational Consultative Forum (Standing Item) – Active Area Cover

CH stated that consultation around Active Area Cover has been going on for 10 months, with more intensive discussions since March. The proposed arrangements would replace the existing Standby Agreement. Staff Side had raised some objections to the proposal in its original form.

SS discussed the details of the intensive discussions with Staff Side but summarised that the central issue was about the hours of operation of Active Area Cover.

CH stated that agreement has now been reached and a joint bulletin will be published today. In addition the full agreement will be published on The Pulse together with FAQs. There will also be joint briefings carried out at local level.

MF said how pleased he was that agreement had been reached as over the longer term Active Area Cover will help with performance. Implementation will commence from 04/08/2008 on a phased basis.

ER confirmed that the arrangements now agreed had changed quite significantly from the original form 10 months ago. The bulk of negotiation has been carried out in the Operational Consultative Forum which was given its authority by the Staff Council. ER said that the Forum should be congratulated as it has worked very professionally and continued that the Senior Sector Reps now needed some time to talk to staff about this.

31/08 HR Policy Update (Standing Item)

TC stated that there were no new updates to discuss. At the last Staff Council the Management Guidance on Second Jobs was tabled and will be published on The Pulse today.

32/08 PTS Issues (Standing Item)

ND reported that the NHS Procurement agency (PASA) has set up a framework agreement for PTS services in London. The Service tendered and he was pleased to report that PTS have been accepted as a framework

supplier. This was essential for the future of PTS as most contracts in future will only look at considering the framework suppliers.

There are 13 Trusts/contracts due for renewal in April 2009 that will use the framework agreement from now on and all will be put out to tender in August. Of these 13 PTS currently hold 6 of the contracts. Results of the tenders will be announced in November.

A big challenge of the PASA agreement is that up to 30% of total work will be notified on the same day that it is required. This will demand a big change to working practices and will signal the end of staff being designated as working on one single contract. Rather they will work within a designated geographical area in future.

The final important issue to come out of this is that pricing structures will change to a unit price per person. This will mean that there is a greater financial risk to providers. Rotas will also have to change and this will be discussed in the PTS Sub Committee.

33/08 Fleet Issues (Standing Item)

BB suggested that Fleet staff are unhappy with the proposal under the Fleet Review to move from the existing workshop configuration to two large workshops. He requested a meeting with MF to explain his concerns.

MF suggested a meeting the following week. He confirmed that the recommendations go before the Trust Board in August. He felt that the work that has been carried out is robust, but recognised that if it is approved by the Board there would be an enormous amount of change. He added that another aim of the review is to improve working conditions and terms and conditions of employment for Fleet staff, which should in turn improve recruitment and retention of staff.

MB argued that Fleet have concerns which could impact on A&E and therefore this should be discussed further in the Staff Council.

CH responded that whilst the Staff Council should be kept informed, the key discussions should take place in the Fleet Staff Committee, since it was the Fleet staff most immediately affected.

BB agreed with this position.

34/08 Mileage Rates

ER reported that the mileage rates in the Agenda for Change Handbook have been increased. He asked if the Trust rates will be increased in line.

TC responded that he needs to look at this with CH and MF and make a

recommendation.

35/08 2008 Pay Agreement

ER stated that he was aware that Trust's have been notified of the newly agreed pay deal. He asked when this was to be implemented.

TC replied that since the implementation of the ESR payroll system all national uplifts were applied simultaneously across the NHS, and confirmation of the arrangements were awaited. However, it was anticipated that that the new rates would be paid this month, with the arrears following next month.

36/08 Consultative Arrangements

TC stated that current arrangements have been in place since 2002 and need to be realigned to reflect the current structure of the LAS. Consultation on a revised structure had been on-going since 2007, and there was now a final proposal which had been submitted formally for approval by the staff side.

The new arrangements draw upon a variety of sources and principles, including the Trust's partnership agreement, the recommendations of the national Social Partnership Forum, the NHS Staff Council, and the Agenda for Change terms and conditions recommendations.

The proposals continue to regard appropriate representation and consultation at station level as the foundation of the arrangements. However, at corporate level they also enhance the role and influence of the Staff Council and extend its membership arrangements within senior management to reflect this.

At the last meeting PT had indicated that he hoped to have the document signed off today. There is still some work to complete in discrete areas but TC asked if Staff Side can now formally sign the document.

PT said how positive it was that the new structure reflects the strength of local partnership, and builds on the principles of national partnership. The proposals had been sent out some time ago, and at the recent trade union side meeting discussions had been held with the other unions (although Amicus were not present) and the constitution was ratified by 6 votes to 3.

PT reported, however, and voiced his concern, that Unison was the only union to vote for the constitution at that meeting. He stated that a letter had been received some time ago from John Lewis of GMB requesting an additional seat and citing new members of GMB from the ranks of the former ASU union as the basis for that request. Such a request would be unacceptable to the union side as a whole.

DP disagreed with that interpretation, and stated that the GMB's objection to the proposed constitution related to the way that seats had been allocated, believing this to be directly related to individual union membership levels. He confirmed that the GMB had written to TC confirming that they are willing to meet with all of the other unions to find a solution to their current disagreement. DP also proposed inviting ACAS to verify the membership of each trade union.

TC stated that the only consistent measure of assessing membership of the individual unions was the payroll records of contributions made directly from salary payments. He regularly monitored membership levels via payroll, and there was no evidence to indicate any significant changes to union membership within the LAS. This situation had been unchanged for a considerable period. The seat allocation under the previous constitution had not been set purely by reference to individual union membership, and the new arrangements retained exactly the same distribution of dedicated union seats.

CH asked TC if the proposed constitution has been formulated through due process, which he confirmed.

BB stated that on a personal level he had no issue with the proposed arrangements and would like to sign the document on behalf of Amicus. However, he had been instructed by his full time officer not to do so.

PS stated that most key decisions are made by the sub committees where TGWU are not represented and asked for them to be given seats on the sub committees.

TC confirmed in response that representatives across the Trust, including the senior representatives, are elected by staff, and the position of the unions is preserved by allowing only accredited representatives of the recognised trade unions to offer themselves for election. The over-arching policy setting body is the Staff Council, and how the unions fill their Staff Council seats is a matter for the individual unions. As a recognised union, TGWU has a guaranteed seat on the Staff Council, despite very low membership levels.

ER confirmed and supported the approach whereby the senior representatives are elected by all union members in the LAS, and regardless of which union they belong to.

DP formally proposed that the new constitution be put on hold until the GMB confirms its membership within the Trust which can be done before the next meeting.

PT responded that staff side have always abided by the membership figures provided by the Service as they have the details of union membership dues

being deducted directly from each member's salary.

CH stated that, in her view, there was no reason to look beyond the payroll information to give an acceptable indication of the membership levels since, as previously stated, this information was independent and consistent across the unions.

Management took a ten minute recess at this point to consider their position. Upon their return...

CH summarised that, having considered all that had been said to day, the position remained that 7 months have elapsed since the original deadline set to complete and agree the new constitution. The proposal that had been tabled for ratification had been subject to a free trade union side vote, with a majority of those participating in favour. She could see no benefit in revisiting talks on the form of the new constitution, and therefore those trade unions willing to sign and agree the document today were invited to do so.

The agreement was tabled for signature. ER signed on behalf of Unison, and BB confirmed that he agreed the proposed arrangements but was prevented from signing at present.

CH asked those unions which did not sign to reconsider their position and stated that the invitation to agree the new arrangements and to take up the seats that have been offered remains open.

37/08 Information Item: Corporate Health & Safety Minutes

As the meeting had already run over its allotted duration there was not enough time to discuss the Corporate Health & Safety Minutes.

Date of Next Meetings: 18th September 2008, 1100 – 1330 hours,
Conference Room, HQ