

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
AND
HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIC FORUM**

**Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth Garden City on 10 September 2008 at 3.00 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors: Tricia Gibbs (Chairman), Judi Billing, T.W. Hone and F.J. Smith.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development Manager, Strategic Services Director and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

UNISON: *Paul Stevens.*

**STAFF CONSULTATION
FORUM:**
Corr.

Christina

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Robin Norton (UNISON). No substitutions were made during this meeting.

2. MINUTES – 13 MARCH 2008

It was agreed that the Minutes of the JSCC meeting held on 13 March 2008 be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment to Item 9 Investors in People (IIP). It was actually the 4th assessment of NHDC, not the 5th, by the assessors from Investors in People.

3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other items were presented for consideration by the Committee.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, and the nature of the interest, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.

A. JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

5. STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM MINUTES

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) referred the JSCC to the Minutes for the meetings of the Staff Consultation Forum (SCF) held on 4 June 2008, 2 July 2008 and 6 August 2008 for details of the three meetings, actions taken and items carried forward.

The Head of Human Resources provided a summary of the main points held at each meeting with particular reference to: the slow running of computers in NHDC; a message to staff about the archiving of emails; an amendment of carryover capping of the four-week period under the Flexi Leave policy from 8 hours to 10 hours; the dates on which the IIP Assessor would be at NHDC; balloting of UNISON members for industrial action by the union; a response from IT Services to complaints about the level of frustration engendered by the slow-running computer system which affects staff work levels; a visit from Barbara Oakes of Property Services to the JSCC Meeting, during which she assured the Members that replacing a leaking tap in Legal Services with a new tap instead of a washer, was cost-effective; the success of the bid for IIP reaccreditation; strike action to be taken by Union members on 16 and 17 July; and finally that despite the strike action taken, NHDC had maintained a good service to its

customers.

She informed the Meeting that no further industrial action was expected, and that talks were to start shortly on a longer-term pay deal.

It was agreed: That the information provided in the three sets of Minutes for the Staff Consultation Forum be noted.

6. PEOPLE STRATEGY – UPDATED 2008–2011

The Head of Human Resources presented an update on the People Strategy 2008-2011.

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) advised that the People Strategy was very much on track and that the Investors in People re-accreditation had been successfully completed.

In addition, staff appraisal returns had come in at 100%, which was an excellent result.

The Head of Human Resources went through Appendix A, and pointed out that with reference to the Action Plan for People Strategy, everything is on track and work is under way. She stated that Member Development appeared to be stalling somewhat, and the Learning Development Manager would go through this with those present.

Cllr Judi Billing declared an interest due to her work, but stated that she would not leave the room during that item.

It was agreed: That the progress against the implementation of the updated People Strategy actions 2008–2011 be noted.

7. INVESTORS IN PEOPLE UPDATE

The Learning Development Manager gave an update on the IIP Accreditation, and took the Committee through the People Assessor's Report which had been distributed to all present.

She revealed that the People Assessor had interviewed 55 officers throughout North Herts District Council, and had made positive comments, including that NHDC had exceeded the expected standards. to buy/lease computers by giving concessions such as Tax and NI advantages; that employees had chosen computers from an agreed list and the equipment was hired to employees through a hire agreement with repayments by salary sacrifice; that at the outset in 2006 the Chancellor changed the concessions and introduced a charge to companies involved in home computing schemes. Problems with the company supplying the computers had developed as a result of the loss of HCI business and Evesham technology had gone into receivership. Technical support was now being given through the NHDC IT department.

It was agreed: That the information provided on the Home Computing Initiative be noted.

9. INVESTORS IN PEOPLE UPDATE

The Learning and Development Manager presented a report updating Members on Investors In People.

The Learning and Development Manager (LDM) informed the Committee of the key issues which included: that this is the 5th assessment by Investors in People of NHDC; that the assessors visited on 14 May 2008 and gave very positive feedback regarding the preparations for assessment; that assessments would take place between 24 June 2008 and 27 June 2008 which would involve interviewing 55 people including 2 councillors, with each interview lasting approximately 45 minutes; that verbal feedback would be given at the end of the interview period followed by a written report 3 weeks after the assessment was complete.

It was agreed: That the information provided in the Investors in People Update be noted.

10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources presented a report updating members on the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) advised that regular update had been given to the Staff Consultation Forum; that tax-free lump sum on retirement was no longer automatic, but staff could opt for it; that contributions were now banded according to earnings and that a letter had been sent to all members of the pension fund detailing the changes and any actions required. The HHR informed the Committee that there had not been many queries from staff and those queries that had been received were in the main from part time staff, she also advised that there had been no appeals and that the changes had happened smoothly.

Members asked questions regarding flexible retirement for staff and the HHR acknowledged that some more promotion work was required to ensure staff are aware of and understand flexible retirement issues.

It was agreed: That the updated information provided regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme be noted.

B. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIC FORUM (DISCUSSION)

11. PERFORMANCE RELATED PAY

The Head of Human Resources presented a discussion paper to prompt a strategic discussion on the potential advantages and disadvantages of Performance Related Pay.

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) advised the Committee that some of the issues to consider were: would it be fair; would it enable the Council to recruit and retain on equal terms; would it measure performance adequately; would it motivate employee and would it promote productivity. She advised that some of the benefits of performance related pay were: it could be a potentially fairer way of distributing wages; resources could be better targeted to recognise effort and achievement; it may reward and retain more effective employees and it would emphasise the importance of effective job performance. The HHR highlighted that some of the difficulties were: scheme could be time consuming to implement and manage; employee may become discouraged if they are not aware of levels of performance required or where awards were not applied consistently; there could be complaints about subjectivity in assessment and divisiveness in operation and there could be a disinclination among some employees to move around, where learning the skills required in a new job may jeopardise the awards.

Members debated the advantages and disadvantages and agreed that performance related pay schemes were not helpful causing a deterioration in staff morale; ill feeling amongst employees and employees spending a long time trying to convince managers that they deserved the performance related pay award.

It was agreed:

- (1) That the report on the advantages and disadvantages of Performance Related Pay be noted:
- (2) That Performance Related Pay should not be implemented.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The dates of future meetings of the JSCC and Human Resources Strategic Forum in the Civic Year 2008 - 2009 will be as follows:

Wednesday 10 December 2008

Wednesday 18 March 2009

The meeting closed at 3.58 p.m.

.....

