

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

**Meeting held at the Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth Garden City on 18 March 2009 at 3.00 p.m.**

MINUTES

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

NB: *Councillor F.J. Smith left the meeting at 3.30 pm*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Head of Human Resources, Employee Relations Officer and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

UNISON: *Bob Leverett*

**STAFF CONSULTATION
FORUM:**
Corr.

Christina

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tricia Gibbs, Tony Barker and Robin Norton (UNISON).

APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRMAN

Councillor Gibbs, the Chairman of the Committee had given her apologies and therefore the Members were asked for nominations for a Chairman for this meeting.

Members debated that a Vice Chairman selected from the Staff Members should be sought and agreed that this should be resolved at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor T.W. Hone was nominated and

It was agreed: that Councillor T.W. Hone be appointed Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

33. MINUTES – 10 DECEMBER 2008

It was agreed that the Minutes of the JSCC meeting held on 10 December 2008 be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

34. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other items were presented for consideration by the Committee.

35. 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

36. STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM MINUTES – 3 DECEMBER 2008, 7 JANUARY 2009 AND 4 FEBRUARY 2009

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) referred the JSCC to the Minutes for the meetings of the Staff Consultation Forum (SCF) held on 3 December 2008, 7 January 2009 and 4 February 2009 for details of the three meetings, actions taken and items carried forward.

The HHR provided a summary of the main points held at each meeting with particular reference to: an update from the Head of Financial Services regarding office accommodation; Property Services attendance at meetings due to staff interest in office accommodation; activities of the Green Group; and the budget update from the Strategic Director for Customer Services and monitoring of equalities issues.

Members asked several questions including clarification regarding staff Christmas parties and whether staff were reporting property issues promptly.

The HHR advised that staff had been requested not to move furniture and equipment for office parties and not to consume alcohol during the parties and that staff do contact Property Services with issues as soon as they occur.

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

37. HUMAN RESOURCES EQUALITIES AND RETENTION

The Employee Relations Officer (ERO) presented the report of the Head of Human Resources. She informed the Committee that equalities and retention formed part of the People Strategy; that the turnover figures had reduced since 2007; that a large proportion of people leaving the Council were due to fixed term contracts ending; that the number of disabled people leaving had doubled, but this was based on very small figures; that data on equalities was being collected from staff, with a campaign planned to increase the number of responses. She drew attention to recruitment, learning and development, the People Strategy and key policies.

Members asked several questions including whether staff had been reluctant to complete forms; who was requiring the data to be collected; concern that staff are coerced into providing data; how the Equalities Officer interfaces with Human Resources and why the Equalities Officer was in the Policy Department.

The ERO advised that data had not been collected from staff who joined some years ago and new data was now required; that data was required under legislation; that it was not compulsory for staff to provide data; that the Equalities Officer and Human Resources worked extremely closely and that the Equalities Officer was responsible for shaping policy regarding equality issues as well as liaising with other departments.

It was agreed:

(1) That the update on retention and progress on equalities be noted;

(2) That the Employee Relations Officer be requested to bring an update on retention and equalities to a future meeting of this Committee.

38. PEOPLE STRATEGY – 2008 – 2011 UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) presented the report regarding the People Strategy 2008 - 2011. She advised that the third stage of the Payroll System Project was near to completion which included online recruitment; that a skills audit had been completed which had identified 25 people who had not attained level 2 Maths and English who would all be offered support; that work had started on a self assessment of workforce planning and that all actions in the action plan were at green and on target.

Members asked several questions including what support was being offered to those people who had not attained level 2 Maths and English and why the NGDP post had failed.

The HHR advised that Human Resources were working in partnership with an advisor and that individuals were being offered appointments with the advisor; that the NGDP post had failed due to internal funding; that the 2008 -2009 staff pay award had been finalised at 2.75 percent, with the back pay having been paid in the March pay round. She also informed the Committee that a senior management restructure was being undertaken, with the results expected from the Organisation Development Project Board at the end of March 2009 and any restructure of senior management due to be implemented in June 2009.

It was agreed: That the update on retention and progress with equalities be noted.

B. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIC FORUM (DISCUSSION)

39. CAREER GRADING – A SUMMARY

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) presented a discussion paper regarding Career Grading. She informed the Committee that career grading was being used in 'difficult to fill' posts, particularly Environmental Health and Planning; that it was difficult to attract fully qualified staff in these areas, but career grading was a way to encourage part qualified staff, who would then be supported through the remainder of their qualification and that individuals pay would be in line with the level of qualifications gained.

Members debated the report including that career grading was a good way to encourage staff into the organisation and whether performance affected pay awards.

The HHR informed the Committee that Managers of departments supported people through their qualifications; that performance would not be disregarded when pay awards are allocated and that the number of staff in career graded posts was small.

Suggestions for future discussion papers included Earnings/Benefit survey and Increased use of Shared Services/Structures.

It was agreed: that the report on Career Grading be noted.

40. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR CIVIC YEAR 2009 - 2010

The dates of the meetings of the JSCC and Human Resources Strategic Forum in the Civic Year 2009 - 2010 will be:

Wednesday 10 June 2009

Wednesday 9 September 2009

Wednesday 9 December 2009

Wednesday 17 March 2010

The meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.

.....
Chairman