

**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 10 June 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, and Cllr Oliver arrived at 3.41pm.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Strategic Director of Customer Services, Learning and Development Manager, Employee Relations Officer and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

**UNISON:** *Robin Norton.*

**STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM:** *Christina Corr.*

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tricia Gibbs, Bob Leverett of UNISON and the Head of Human Resources, Kerry Shorrocks.

**APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Gibbs, the Chairman of the Committee, had given her apologies for absence and therefore 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 agreed to serve in that capacity.

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

**2. MINUTES – 18 MARCH 2009**

It was agreed that the Minutes of the JSCC meeting held on 18 March 2009 be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

No other items were presented for consideration by the Committee.

**4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members were reminded that 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 – 4 MARCH, 1 APRIL AND 6 MAY 2009**

The Employee Relations Officer (ERO) referred the JSCC to the Minutes for the meetings of the Staff Consultation Forum (SCF) held on 4 March, 1 April and 6 May 2009 for details of the three meetings, actions taken and items carried forward.

She provided a summary of the main points held at each meeting, with particular reference to: the Green Group event held on 25 March 2009 in the Members' Room and Committee Room 3 in the form of a book sale and cake sale, which had raised a total of £195; whether queries from employees are followed up (the Strategic Director of Customer Services declared that queries were debated at great length and then followed up); resulting from a question on IT Processing Requests, the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Manager had attended the Staff Consultation Forum on 3 June 2009 to provide clarification.

Members asked several questions and made comments including a suggestion that the Minutes should be produced in a shorter space of time, allowing the SCF Minutes of 3 June to be discussed at the JSCC Meeting of 10 June 2009. It was also clarified that the final Senior Management Restructure would be debated (not "agreed" as stated in the Minutes) by Full Council following Cabinet.

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

## **6. HUMAN RESOURCES RETENTION AND EQUALITIES UPDATE**

The Learning and Development Manager (LDM) presented the report of the Head of Human Resources, updating the Committee on the current position regarding actions contained in the report, which had been put before the JSCC on 18 March 2009. She informed the Committee that updates are periodically requested from employees, but many staff choose not to respond. The LDM reminded the Committee that there had been a change in diversity information from June 2009 (not 2008 as stated).

The Chairman commented that it was good to have more information, but that staff were not obliged to supply it. Human Resources officers were liaising with departmental managers and team leaders to gather information. Members asked what the information was used for, and the LDM explained that it was used to help inform activities, eg targeting advertising.

Members asked several questions, including what was the percentage of Indian/Bangladeshi staff (the SDCS did not know the precise figure, but knew that it was above the regional average, gathered from self declaration and application forms); and why Pakistanis were not specified (they are not a large sector of the population in North Herts, and many do not complete forms).

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 together extremely closely and that the Equalities Officer was responsible for shaping policy regarding equality issues, as well as liaising with other departments.

## **7. PEOPLE STRATEGY – 2008-2011 UPDATE**

The Learning and Development Manager (LDM) presented an update to the report of the Head of Human Resources regarding the People Strategy 2008–2011, detailing progress made in its implementation. She advised that the good progress continues, despite the significant impact of the restructure arrangements and business continuity planning for swine flu on the HR Team.

The SDCS pointed out that in view of this, some elements of the People Strategy need to be positively deferred, but this would be contained in a further report.

It was pointed out that the Absence Graph on P.49 of Appendix B showed a decrease in turnover. It was suggested that this could be due to the increased requirement for job security.

The matter of the deadline for all appraisals being 31 July was raised, and whether any spot checking was carried out on the quality of appraisals. This was confirmed; the Committee were also informed that some of the changes already implemented had had a positive impact on quality, eg that the Heads of Services collating and viewing all the appraisals for their service area raises their awareness of any issues that need follow-up.

*It was agreed:* That the Committee note the progress made against the implementation of the updated People Strategy actions 2008-2011.

**8. 2009/2010 NATIONAL PAY NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE**

The Employee Relations Officer (ERO) presented the report of the Head of Human Resources. She stated that a pay offer of 0.5% had been offered on 1 April 2009 and was valid until 1 June 2009. This offer had been rejected by the three main unions, so nothing was currently "on the table", and further discussions were taking place.

**B. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIC FORUM (DISCUSSION)**

**9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE SURVEY 2008 – KEY FINDINGS**

The Learning and Development Manager (LDM) took the Committee through the discussion paper regarding the key findings of the Local Government Workforce Survey 2008.

Members debated the report, and commented that: some people are sector-centred and cannot see opportunities across the region; the workforce activities run with outsourced providers and local partners and other authorities are structured around shared Service partnership and the Workforce Planning Group are not all made up from local government; of those authorities who involve trade union and/or other employee representatives in planning the authority's workforce development priorities, several scheduled meetings each year with Unions; a shared graduate scheme has been investigated with Hertfordshire County Council; North Herts District Council (NHDC) has been accredited with the Investors in People award for the fourth year running; NHDC is amongst the 74% of local authorities whose occupational health services were outsourced; the last Skills Audit carried out in NHDC was in December 2008; NHDC has recently signed up to the Skills Pledge and is currently preparing an Action Plan to support this.

The point was also made that NHDC do not currently have any recruitment or retention difficulties and that pay awards were based on performance as well as annual incremental progression.

Discussion ensued regarding the essential training for managers to help them manage difficult situations before they became significant issues and training on managing performance. It was also pointed out that the Council provides a mediation service for staff.

Members were advised that the method for allocating learning and development budgets had been changed to be more needs-led, and that this is now working more effectively.

Turnover is down to 8.7% from 12.72%.

The possibility of holding workshops on policies was discussed, and Members confirmed the excellence of the training on Standards Boards.

Suggestions for future discussion papers included a Pensions Fund Group, and the Strategic Director of Customer Services (SDCS) informed the Committee that a list already exists from which discussion papers are chosen.

***It was agreed:*** that the report on the Key Findings of the Local Government Workforce Survey 2008 be noted.

The meeting closed at 4.01 p.m.

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Chairman