

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

24 MARCH 2010

PART 1* PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

5

STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

The Minutes for the meeting of the Staff Consultation Forum held on 20 January, 3 February and the Draft Minutes of 3 March 2010 are below.

Staff Consultation Forum

20th January 2010

Council Chamber

Attendees

John Robinson
Kerry Shorrocks
Lorrae Hunter
Hilary Dineen (on behalf of Nigel Schofield)
Val Farquarson
Caroline Gray
Lesley Boast
Chris Carter
Richard Tiffin
Dee Levett
Carole Casey
Christina Corr

Apologies

John Fisher
Sue Graves
Nigel Schofield

		Actions
1.	Apologies As above.	
2.	New Members of SCF MB welcomed the new members to the SCF meeting.	

<p>3.</p>	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>LB stated that the FAQs regarding essential car users should be attached as a link to the minutes. KS explained that as the minutes were currently in draft form, they would be attached to the final version.</p> <p>Lease Car Benefits</p> <p>LB asked for a clearer definition of “regularly” regarding call outs. KS advised that this was in the updated policy.</p> <p>G:\Human Resources\Draft Policy\Frequent & Low User Car Use Policy v2.doc</p> <p>LB advised that information requested on the number of people and how much the lease car scheme is worth, had not been received. KS said it had been sent and she had seen a copy of it.</p> <p>Radio Interview – LB advised that the protocol for member officer working arrangements relating to publicity and the media indicated that members should go through the communications unit before approaching the media and if not should make it clear that they are not representing the Council. JR advised that the quoted case appeared to reflect legitimate political comment from a member of the cabinet and as such was entirely consistent with the protocol and elected members representative roles. He explained that Members are not employees of the Council and are answerable to the electorate.</p> <p>Staff ID – SCF representatives had canvassed staff regarding staff photos being updated to SID. It was agreed that this should be on a voluntary basis only. It was also agreed that we look into the possibility of staff being able to have their photo updated if required.</p> <p>Death In Service Benefits - LB asked if there would be any insurance provision made for staff who are not in the pension scheme once the Death In Service Benefit was cancelled. It was advised that there would be no provision for staff who are not in the pension scheme.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Green Group</p> <p>KS advised that as the Green Group was folding, it was proposed that green issues are put back onto the agenda for SCF.</p> <p>The lift share scheme set up by Hertfordshire County Council was now up and running. The scheme can be accessed via the HCC website. http://www.hertsliftshare.org/Default.asp?uxi=&cr=check</p> <p>KS advised that she would be preparing a communication to staff advising of the Lift Share Scheme run by HCC.</p>	<p>KS</p>

	<p>RT advised that the Climate Change Group had now been set up and had been tasked with creating a lift sharing scheme for NHDC. It was agreed that JR would discuss with CMT, leadership for the Climate Change Group and green issues.</p> <p>It was asked if there had been any recent update regarding cardboard recycling at NHDC.</p> <p>Daniel Kingsley had advised that waste management were currently constructing their plans for the next 3 yrs and a suggestion for inclusion is ensuring that all NHDC officers are or become zero waste - to the best of our abilities. Until this time though, all NHDC derived waste is commercial and must be treated as such.</p> <p>It was agreed that DK be invited to a meeting of SCF.</p> <p>A comparison with other authorities regarding green issues was requested including bikes and electric cars, lease cars.</p> <p>It was suggested that the review of lease car benefits consider the impact of green issues and climate change generally.</p> <p>It was advised that Leisure Direct collect old mobile phones for recycling and that a collection box was located on the 4th floor. It was suggested that the collection box should visit other floors within the DCO.</p>	<p>JR</p> <p>JH</p> <p>KS</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>NHDC Update</p> <p>JR advised that the current budget cycle was coming to an end and that Cabinet would be considering the report on the 26th January.</p> <p>Car parking charge proposals could provide an extra £280,000 income.</p> <p>JR advised that discussions were still taking place regarding pathfinder programmes. NHDC were not currently included but were quite interested on what was being discussed. NHDC were currently working on the Corporate Business Strategy for the next 3-4 years and options were being kept open.</p> <p>The staff survey would be going out to all staff next month. Staff are to be encourage to take part. As in previous surveys, this will be carried out by another authority.</p> <p>Defra Statistics for Household Waste – JR advised that NHDC performance had improve further now being in the top 5% of Councils for recycling.</p> <p>Office Accommodation – JR advised that as we were not now moving to the Grammar School, staff from Town Lodge were to be moved into the DCO by the end of the year. JR advised that a project team was to be established and asked for 2 representatives from SCF to take part. Chris Carter and Dee Levett volunteered.</p>	

6.	<p>Blocking of Cars at Town Lodge</p> <p>It was advised that the blocking in of cars at Town Lodge was still taking place. KS advised that a report had been put together by Jim Turner for Norma Atlay and that an outcome should be available shortly.</p>	
7.	<p>Timetable for SCF on Reorganisation</p> <p>It was advised that the consultation period for the reorganisation closed on 14th January. A report on the final proposals are to be taken to Cabinet. KS advised that a e-mail had been sent to all staff advising that the consultation period had now closed. Heads of Service have been given a small window of time to allow them to respond to feedback received during the consultation period. A further OD team meeting is to be arranged.</p>	
8.	<p>Hitchin Town Hall and Museum</p> <p>The Hitchin Town Hall and Museum report is due to be discussed on 11th February 2010.</p> <p>It was advised that Team Talk dated 9th December 2009, point 6 relating to Hitchin Town Hall and Museum needed an explanation regarding the investment. It was agreed that future messages would be modified.</p>	
9.	<p>Morale</p> <p>Suggestions were received regarding the improvement of staff morale.</p> <p>More staff involvement in issues regarding the Council More consideration in what is said in letters to staff Sickness policy – Could it now be reviewed as it was brought in to solve problems. KS advised that a lot of staff have good attendance records and absence must be managed on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>KS advised that HR run a course on Managing People in Difficult Situations and members of SCF were welcome to attend the second part of that where the attendance procedure and sickness policy are explained. HR staff are trained to give advice to managers on the absence policy. EERA carried out attendance workshops last year with funding from Go-East.</p> <p>KS outlined systems that were in place to assist members of staff and managers including coaching, HR advice and OH advice in applying the policy.</p> <p>PPC the Councils confidential employee advice and counselling service was also available to all members of staff.</p>	

	<p>It was asked how often managers have refresher training and it was explained that courses for managers are run on a regular basis and HR continually coach on policy applications.</p> <p>LB asked why a suggestion to increase flexi time to 2 days per period was not agreed when it has no financial implications. It was explained that this was dealt with some time ago through SCF and a link to the previous minutes would be added. KS went on to say that whilst it may appear that there are no financial implications, there are hidden costs in providing cover for staff that are away from the office.</p> <p>http://srvinternet01/intracontent/staff_consultation_forum_05.03.08-2.doc</p> <p>http://srvinternet01/intracontent/staff_consultation_forum_04.06.08.doc</p>	
10	<p>Homeworking</p> <p>It was agreed that this would be a standard item on the agenda.</p> <p>A query was raised asking why its seen that absence levels reduce through home working since if an employee is genuinely ill/sick then should not be working either at DCO or home.</p> <p>KS advised that absence for home-workers can be expected to be lower for a number of reasons, as they pick up less viruses that might spread in the work place and are more able to work with physical difficulties for example a knee injury might prevent driving but a person could work from home, indeed we use home working to enable office based staff to rehabilitate to work if driving is a problem.</p> <p>It was advised that an allowance is available for equipment provided for homeworkers.</p>	
11	<p>Multi Functional Devices</p> <p>Would it be possible for the Ratio of NHDC staff to each new copier to be available. KS advised that we had been in touch with the document centre who advised that the number of devices was determined not by the number of users but by the volumes of work produced per area. Further information will be provided.</p>	KS
12	<p>Employee Queries</p> <p>It was asked if annual dates recorded in Trent could be in date order. CG to advise.</p>	CG

13	AOB Stat Days – Could data be provided by CSC to show how many visitors the Council received during the two stat days on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve.	KS
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Chair for next meeting : Margaret Bracey

Date of next meeting : 3rd February 2010 – Committee Room 3
2.30pm to 4pm