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Staff Consultation Forum

7th December 2011

Committee Room 1

Attendees

Kerry Shorrocks
John Robinson
Gail Dennehy
Dee Levett
Christina Corr
Sue Graves
Margaret Bracey
Heather Cain
Antonella Di Maria

Apologies

David Carr
Nigel Schofield
Jacqui Hamilton
Claire Morgan

		Actions
1.	Apologies As above.	
2.	Internal/External Post Antonella Di Maria was invited to attend this meeting to discuss the current postal arrangements. ADM advised that all post for Councillors should be put in the pigeon holes in Democratic Services and not in the post boxes for franking. ADM advised that a reminder would be sent to all staff. Now that we no longer use a courier service, arrangements had been put in place for all external offices i.e. Hitchin Town Hall.	
3.	Introductions KS welcomed Heather Cain from Careline who was a new SCF representative. KS advised that Christina Corr had now been re-elected to the SCF. KS also welcomed Gail Dennehy who is attending as a representative for HR during the discussions into shared services with East Herts and Stevenage. KS advised that Gary Bell would also be attending on behalf of the Print staff. KS reminded SCF that any department who is affected by shared services could send a representative.	
4.	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes Property Services are still looking into the issue of gaps between office partition walls and windows and how this will be resolved. Rapid boil kettles are to be issued to each kitchen at the DCO.	

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	<p>It was advised that during the mild weather the heating had been on for 3-4 hour slots but now as the colder weather has arrived, the heating is on from 6am – 6pm daily. This time was extended if committee meetings were on in the evening.</p> <p>JR advised that a list and plan of departments on each floor was now available on the intranet. http://srvinternet01.north-herts.gov.uk/intracontent/index/corporate_main/staff_services/dco_staff_location.htm</p>	
5.	<p>Green Issues</p> <p>JR advised that NHDC had won the Green Apple award for office recycling and two others from community based initiatives.</p> <p>NS advised that when clearing out files from the Secondary Centre, the office recycling facilities can be used.</p> <p>Unwanted Christmas Presents – It was asked if we would be holding a present swap day after Christmas. It was advised that this would be discussed with the waste team.</p>	<p>JH to discuss with Waste Management</p>
6.	<p>Home-working/Office Accommodation</p> <p>It was raised that during the recent office accommodation project, staff were informed that desk pedestals and/or lockers would be provided for each member of staff. There are members of staff who home-work who have no storage facilities in the office. It was agreed that HC would be contacted for an update.</p> <p>It was asked if desks that are hot desks could be clearly marked. It was advised that advice would be sought from HC.</p> <p>Meeting rooms are available for staff to use to work in if they are not being used for meetings.</p> <p>The Office Accommodation Staff Survey is now on the intranet. http://srvinternet01.north-herts.gov.uk/phpBB3/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=2154</p>	<p>KS</p>
7.	<p>Saving Suggestions</p> <p>JR advised that JC would be providing feedback regarding all suggestions to “Tell JC” as requested at the last meeting.</p> <p>KS advised that she had recently attended number 8 in a series of 12 meetings being held around the country regarding national pay bargaining. Generally authorities that had attended the briefings were saying they would not be able to afford any pay increase for 2012/13.</p>	

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8.	<p>Guidance on Pay Policies</p> <p>JR advised that draft guidance had been issued in accordance with Section 40 of the Localism Act requires authority's to publish information on senior salaries and a number of associated policy statements. Council will need to vote over salaries over 100k and publications of some detailed salary information will be required. Work is underway to look at an appropriate pay policy.</p>	
9.	<p>Localism Act</p> <p>JR advised on the recent Localism Act which will be the centre piece for local government and will be subject to further regulations which have yet to be published. The Localism Act will give more control over the planning process, community right to challenge and challenge from local organisations. Formal guidance will be available in the new year.</p>	
10.	<p>NHDC Update</p> <p>JR advised that JC, subject to his new appointment being formally agreed will be leaving the authority in February. Options for a Chief Executive are currently being looked at with the Leader of the Council. Other significant issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Services – Cabinet agreed to the high level business case developed with Stevenage and East Herts. The detailed business case is expected to go to Cabinet in May 2012. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Serco contract is not being actively pursued at present. • There will be a freeze on Council Tax. • JR advised that there was no firm date available for the outcome of the Local Government Resource Review. • Industrial Action – JR advised that the Council had managed to maintain services during the recent industrial action with around 30 members of staff taking part. 	
11.	<p>Employee Queries</p> <p>It was asked if a television could be provided in the staff canteen area during the Olympics. It was agreed that this would be looked into as part of the overall Olympic planning for the Council.</p> <p>It was suggested that as income from recycling at NHDC was a considerable amount (even though earmarked for the savings 'pot') and that staff were making a considerable effort to recycle as much as possible and thereby in a small way reducing landfill, it would be appropriate that some of the income could be reserved for staff welfare projects such as the provision of hot water dispensers to enhance staff morale. JR agreed to raise this with the Senior Management Team.</p>	<p>KS</p> <p>JR</p>

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	It was asked if the Council will cover the cost for members of staff who have to increase their car insurance to cover business use. KS said it was not normally a big increase in the premium and if it was, it was worth shopping around. She explained the car allowance/mileage rates that are paid are to cover all the costs incurred in using the car for business use, they are not just payment for fuel.	
12.	Any other Business None	

Chair for Next Meeting : Christina Corr

Date of next meeting : 4th January 2011
Committee Room 3
2.30pm to 4pm