

# Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

7<sup>th</sup> May 2014

## Minutes

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Present: David Scholes, John Robinson, Claire Morgan, Kerry Shorrocks, Christina Corr, Maggie Williams, Susanne Gow, Jack Hughes (minutes),

Apologies: Helen Rae, Dee Levett, Amanda Dell, Chris Carter and Sharon Nahal

Circulation: Those present, Helen Rae, Dee Levett, Amanda Dell, Chris Carter and Sharon Nahal, Ian Davis.

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- |   | <b>Actions</b> |
|---|----------------|
| <p><b>1. Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Chris Carter, Dee Levett, Helen Rae, Amanda Dell and Sharon Nahal</p>  |                |
| <p><b>2. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>CC commented that the Car Lease scheme was well received by staff and the Ground Floor, who were keen to know further details.</p> <p>JH commented that in response to the question raised by CEC around a water cooler for 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ian Davis had confirmed that:</p> <p><i>'In response to your question about the water filters in the kitchens and the chiller in the centre of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, in essence they all carry out the same function, chilling and filtering. The only reason the 4<sup>th</sup> floor has a unit in the centre of the office is because a built in chiller would not fit within the kitchenette situated on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor area.'</i></p> <p>JR commented that the question around the addition of a porch area above the staff entrance should be raised to Property Services and a copy of the minutes be distributed to them.</p> | <b>JH</b>      |
| <p><b>3. SCF Meeting Dates</b></p> <p>In AD's absence, KS raised her request to change the day SCF meetings take place, as Wednesday now fell on a non-working day for AD.</p> <p>KS commented that SCF meetings had long been established as the first Wednesday of the month, that the tenure of SCF representatives was temporary and that in the past representatives have stepped down when they were no longer able to attend on a Wednesday.</p> <p>JR commented that when SCF first began to meet, the meeting times were staggered.</p>  |                |

DS stated that changing the date of SCF meetings may inconvenience other members and that the key to the success of any change would be to give as much advanced notice as possible.

Moving the day between Weds one month and another day might be possible.

#### **4. Green Issues/Ideas**

DS advised that comments on the Car Lease scheme had been fed back to Councillors at an informal briefing, that Councillors had raised similar points to staff and wanted to hear further details of the scheme. DS explained that this initial consultation was required first to gauge interest before more details could be given.

JR commented that with salary sacrifice arrangements, staff need to be made aware of factors such as the impact they may have on pensionable pay.

KS commented that if the proposed scheme was to go ahead, it would be implemented via a framework agreement and within that there are various providers of Car Lease schemes. This means that there would be a selection exercise within the framework agreement which would take some time.

CC commented that momentum could be lost if there is a large gap in time between consulting staff on the scheme and implementing it.

DS confirmed that they would be clear on any timescales at the earliest opportunity.

JR stated that NHDC's Outlook magazine would be out on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and would be made available to staff via the intranet. This edition of Outlook will include information on the new electric car charging points installed across the district. JR commented that the Grounds Maintenance department and their contractors John O'Connors had been trialling the use of these vehicles to carry out work.

Outlook will also include an article on the Waste & Recycling department's success during 2013. JR stated that they have been nominated for Public Sector Recycler of the Year alongside organisations such as Network Rail and the University of Reading. JR added that NHDC's Waste & Recycling service recycles 57% of all waste collected and that it is currently the lowest cost service across Hertfordshire. JR expressed that this was a great achievement and that further details of the team's success would be in Outlook.

#### **5. NHDC Update**

JR stated that the Hitchin Town Hall / North Herts Museum project had just received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund of approximately £1M which will dramatically reduce the cost of the project to the Council.

JR informed SCF that a summary of the staff survey results would be made available to staff in the coming weeks. JR commented that the results were stable and encouraging especially in times of high financial pressure. JR added that the survey would help to develop action plans to address any issues identified in the results and that this process will take place in June and July.

JR stated that Unison would be balloting for industrial action in June. JR commented that employers had refused a request for arbitration and that advice would be issued to staff if a strike was to occur.

DS added that elections would be taking place on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May with the verification and count taking place up until Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May. DS offered his thanks in advance to the 350 to 400 people involved in organising the elections and added that words to this effect would be in the upcoming Team Talk.

CC enquired as to when committee rooms would be available to staff following elections. DS advised that this would be no more than 3-4 working days after the elections, to allow sufficient time to clear down.

#### **6. Office Accommodation**

KS explained that no update could be given at this time as the project board had not yet met since the last SCF meeting.

CC queried whether or not the project board were considering staff being decanted entirely from DCO during the refurbishment works.

KS explained that she could not answer this question at this time but that it is one of many options that the group were considering as part of the process.

JR added that decanting staff was not included in the original mandate.

DS suggested that Andy Cavanagh attend the next meeting.

**AC**

#### **7. Employee Queries**

CM brought to SCF's attention an email that she had received regarding the unclean state of the female toilets on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor.

KS commented that these complaints should be raised to property services first and if no response had been received or action taken, in that instance the point should be raised at SCF.

SG stated that she had received two employee queries, the first of which was whether there was any pay-rise for employees in the near future.

JR explained that Councils had received a "bottom-loaded" offer which would see lower paid employees receive a higher pay increase, with higher paid employees receiving a 1% increase. JR went on to explain that this would be largely unaffordable and that a 1% increase across the board was likely to be the end result.

The second query raised by SG was enquiring as to when employees would be receiving their Pension scheme opt-out letters. KS explained that auto-enrolment began in April and from this point on an employer cannot remove an employee from the pension scheme, so to do so the employee would have to contact the pension scheme provider.

KS stated that she would contact the LPFA to see if they would provide any update on this matter and also to clarify this process. Once an update is received, KS will publish so that staff are clear. **KS**

#### **8. Any Other Business**

JR stated that Cabinet had approved the Pay Policy Statement, Further changes were likely due to the transparency agenda.

#### **9. Chair for Next Meeting**

Christina Corr.