

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

1st October 2014



Minutes

Present: David Scholes, Christina Corr (Chair), Kerry Shorrocks, Chris Carter, Claire Morgan, Amanda Dell, Dee Levett, Helen Rae, Jack Hughes (notes), Howard Crompton and Vic Godfrey (Item 2)

Guest

Speakers: Howard Crompton, Vic Godfrey (Item 2)

Apologies: Maggie Williams, John Robinson, Sharon Nahal, Chris Carter and Susanne Gow.

Circulation: Those present, Maggie Williams, John Robinson, Sharon Nahal, Chris Carter and Susanne Gow.

Actions

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Maggie Williams, John Robinson, Sharon Nahal, Chris Carter and Susanne Gow.

2 IT Restructure

HC and VC presented a report on the proposed IT Restructure. HC explained that Corporate Board had approved the Restructure report on 30th September and the Consultation period with staff was underway.

HC provided some background on the reasons for the restructure. He stated that in October 2013, a temporary structure was put in place to accommodate for the previous issues of mismatched workloads, issues with the IT Helpdesk and staff having the wrong responsibilities for their skillset. The proposed new structure is based on this temporary structure that has improved the service provided by IT but with the following changes:

- 2 new career-graded posts created – an additional Technical Support Officer and an additional Information & Asset Officer.
- Web Manager post to be transferred to the Communications team to better reflect the posts content management and strategic responsibilities.

HC commented that this proposed structure put no staff at risk of redundancy and that Job Evaluation was due to be carried out during the consultation period. VG commented that since the temporary structure was put in place, informal consultation had been carried out with staff which returned positive feedback.

KS commended the IT team for their efforts in supporting young people with work experience placements and apprenticeships and asked whether they would continue to employ apprentices once this new structure was in place. VG confirmed that they would be.

AD and CC commented that the IT team was approachable and that the current system was effective. VG and HC thanked SCF for their comments.

DL queried the timescale involved in moving the Web Manager role over to the Communications team. HC responded by saying that Corporate Board had recently improved the new CRM website project and that he envisaged the Web Manager role to be transferred for the beginning of this project. KS commented that pending the affected staff's approval, consultation could be ended early. VG explained that the budget for the CRM website project was in the process of being confirmed.

AD asked when the changes will take effect. KS explained that the process for this restructure will be:

- Consultation and Job Evaluation of posts
- Recruitment or slotting in processes.
- New structure is assumed.

DS commented that this restructure wasn't coming as a surprise to any of the team, that there had been long-term informal consultation with the team and that he anticipated a seamless transition.

SCF thanked HC and VG for their time.

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

AD stated that she had confirmed the process of going directly to Property Services rather than raising issues at SCF.

DL asked whether or not there had been an update on the potential change in paper supplier. KS suggested that feedback from staff on the issues they have had with the paper would be useful.

Update: Andy Bateman and Gary Bell are currently investigating different grades of paper with the new supplier and what the cost of improving the quality will be.

DL stated that some staff had problems understanding how to book bank holidays on the payroll system, but that DL was able to resolve this using the FAQ's posted on the website. AD confirmed that she had also used the FAQ's to solve a number of issues with the system.

Serco Payroll FAQ's

http://srvinternet01.north-herts.gov.uk/intracontent/index/human_resources/serco_hr_payroll_system/quick_guides.htm

KS advised that a Temporary Payroll Contract Manager, Vicky Castle, was now working alongside Caroline Gray on the Payroll Contract. An issue log for any system or service issues was being used to ensure problems are logged and planned for resolution. A discussion followed and members of the SCF were saying that most things people may not know how to do are shown on the user guides and FAQ's that are a good resource for most tasks on the system. The current Payroll Champion system in place is going to be revised so that a smaller number of champions will have a greater depth of knowledge. AD said the leave booking was "rather busy" with lots of leave types that were not applicable. KS confirmed that this was on the issue log but that the cost of any system adaptations had to be taken into consideration.

4. Green Issues / Ideas

HR advised that she had been passed a message from Kate Brierley and Reuben Avayoo to read to SCF on behalf of Corporate Climate Change Group:

The Corporate Climate Change group are pleased to announce that all our efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions and energy usage are showing a success.

NHDC have recently calculated and published the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from our own estate and operations from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2014. We are pleased to report a 21.06% decrease in comparison to the baseline year of 2008 in CO₂ emissions, and a 10.54% decrease compared to last year.

Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) published CO₂ emissions for all local areas in July 2014. The indicator comprises of an annual amount of end user CO₂ emissions across an agreed set of sectors (housing, road transport and business) measured as a percentage reduction of the per capita CO₂ emission from the 2005 baseline year. We are pleased to report a reduction of 18.8% in North Hertfordshire. For further information please contact Reuben Avayoo.

DS advised that NHDC were currently looking at the light switch and sensor mechanisms to see if they can be more green-efficient, which may be as part of the Office Accommodation project or before.

DL commented that exterior lights on DCO remained on throughout the night and questioned whether or not this could be changed to save on energy. CM commented that this may cause issues with security. DS advised that this was something property services could look into.

**Property
Services**

5. NHDC Update.

KS updated SCF on the on-going pay negotiations between the Trade Unions and Local Government Employers and explained the following:

Talks have been progressing between the Local Government Employers and Trade Unions. The pay proposal has just been shared

with Local authorities. It is not a pay offer at present. Unison is intending to proceed with industrial action on 14th October.

What's in the proposals?

- They cover a two-year period from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2016
- The increase will not be backdated to 1st April 2014, instead a lump sum to cover the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 December 2014 is proposed. This will not be consolidated into basic pay rates.
- The lump sum is £325 for those on NJC National Pay scales points 5, 6 and 7, £150 for those on scale points 8,9 and 10 and £100 for those on scale points 11 and above (The vast majority of NHDC are on pay rates above the NJC National Pay scale point 11)
- 2.2% increase for those on scale points 11 – 49 from 1 January 2015

KS advised that she would keep SCF updated as it develops.

DS advised that NHDC was currently entering its budget planning phase for 15/16, that this would go to Cabinet in December to be approved in February. DS stated that whilst excellent work had already been carried out and the budget was already balanced for 15/16, there is still the need to look at potential efficiencies and investment proposals.

DS updated SCF on the progress of the Salary Sacrifice Lease Car Scheme. The scheme is progressing well and will be in effect in a matter of months. A tender exercise had been carried out and the contract was awarded to InchCape. A mobilisation meeting is taking place during October and the scheme will be run as part of a framework agreement with Hertsmere Council and others.

As soon as the practical details of the scheme are ready they will be communicated to staff ahead of the launch of the scheme. It will be important for staff to look at the details of the scheme because a car salary sacrifice will be a scheme that has a significant impact on pay.

DS updated SCF on some major projects NHDC was currently working on, namely:

- The development of the Local Plan for the district
- Hitchin Churchgate redevelopment which is due to go to full Council in November
- The final build and fit-out phase for Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum

6. Office Accommodation Update

DL advised that original concept designs would be released within the next few months. The project team was currently consulting with individual teams to get an idea of their specific needs.

AD asked if the post room could be advised of any changes in team location, team names and post trays throughout the project. CC agreed

that this would be handy for her to know too.

DL advised that a full decant of staff to allow for renovations was being considered at some point during 2016 and options were currently being reviewed for where staff would be during this time, which was estimated to be around 20 weeks.

DS commented that once a specification for the refit is produced, the contractor may suggest an alternative, more efficient way of carrying out the works. KS agreed that the 2016 date given was an indicative timescale and SCF agreed that factors like Full Council meetings, elections etc. will have to be considered when decanting staff. CC raised the issue of noisy working conditions and DL advised that this would be fed back to the project team.

SCF was reminded that the Office Accommodation Intranet page was the best place to find updates on the progress of the project.

7. Employee Issues

Helen Rae raised an issue put forward by one member of staff around the new flexi-time policy. The member of staff feels that the changes to the policy have made the scheme less flexible as staff must attend for 6 hours or pro rata during the main office opening hours of 08.45 to 5.15. They also felt that there was not enough consultation on the change.

KS advised that the changes to the flexi-time policy had increased the number hours that flexi time could be accrued and the policy allowed later starts, or earlier finishes or longer lunch breaks. It was a significant staff benefit. The Policy review had been carried out seeking detailed views from Senior Managers and it was important to bear in mind that the policy is in effect on the understanding that the needs of the business are met. Particularly when used in conjunction with home-working, part-time working and other flexible working arrangements, NHDC offers a very generous flexible working package to its staff.

It should also be remembered that there are groups of staff that cannot work flexi-time and the policy review allows more freedom for Time off in Lieu to be used by these groups.

On the point of consultation, KS advised that an extensive review of the policy was done with senior managers. SCF is the formal staff consultation mechanism and the proposed changes were discussed with SCF and shown in SCF minutes and Team Talk It was also expected that SCF and SMT members would feedback to their own areas/ managers/teams the nature of what has been proposed and accepted by SMT.

DS commented that in circumstances like this, staff should discuss these flexible working issues with their line manager to try and find a solution. KS added that on the whole, the changes seem to have gone down with minimal issues. The policy was designed to offer flexibility whilst also meeting business needs.

8. Chair for the Next Meeting

Christina Corr