

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

4th February 2015



Minutes

Present: Clare Morgan, (Chair), John Robinson, Kerry Shorrocks, Maggie Williams, Dee Levett, Susanne Gow, Jess Young sub for Helen Rae, Christina Corr, Amanda Dell, Sharon Nahal (Notes)

Apologies: David Scholes, Chris Carter, Helen Turner

Circulation: Those present, David Scholes, Chris Carter, Helen Rae, Intranet

Actions

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from David Scholes, Chris Carter and Helen Turner

2. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

There being no outstanding action, the minutes were agreed.

3. Museum Restructure

Ros Allwood attended for this item and presented on the proposed restructure within the Museum Service. RA sought to clarify the minutes of the last meeting and confirmed that no consultation appointments had been arranged and then cancelled with staff. After clarification, AD confirmed that she understood the issue to be that due to project complexities the restructure appointments were deferred.

RA explained that the proposed staffing structure was to ensure that the Museum Service is run in an efficient and cost-effective manner, while making the financial savings required by Council. Ten years ago now the Council decided to close both Letchworth and Hitchin Museums, and to open one new museum for the District. Closure of the two existing museums has presented the Museum Service with major challenges, which all the museum team have managed in an extremely positive and professional manner. However for efficient running of the new museum during an extended period of Council savings, we need to make further changes.

In addition, there is some doubt over the delivery of the Town Hall side of the project, so the Council is currently looking at contingency plans in the short and longer term. As a result of this it is proposed to extend the responsibilities of all Museum staff to include working in the Town Hall as well as the Museum, in a range of duties broadly comparable with the existing substantive roles.

All

The Museum opening times are Tuesday to Saturday, 10.30 am to

4.30pm, Sundays 11.00 am to 3.0 pm. There will also be a number of regular evening events. A member of the Curatorial team will act as Duty Manager on a rota, one weekend in every five.

The structure proposed includes the deletion of the Assistant Curator post, the existing Curator posts retitled as Operations & Events Officer, and Heritage Access Officer. The Operations & Events Officer will manage the team of Visitor Service Assistants, the Museum Technician, and general volunteers.

The Heritage Access Officer will be responsible for the care and management of the collections, onsite and at the Burymead store. That post holder will manage the Local Studies Centre.

The Museum Support Officers will be based at the main Reception desk which would given them day Monday, and before opening and after the museum closes, to work in the main office, concentrating on any admin work that cannot be done during quiet times on the Reception Desk.

It is proposed that the total number of VSA hours are reduced, putting this group of post holders at risk of redundancy.

RA outlined the timetable for consultation as follows:

- 20th January Informal meetings between RA and individual staff
- 22 January Formal consultation meeting letters given/ delivered to museum team
- 2 February Formal consultation meeting for staff, with RA, John Robinson and Gail Dennehy, followed by individual meetings between staff and their line managers
- 4 February SCF Consultation
- 4 March Consultation closes

AD raised a question put forward by a member of the Museum Service. The question posed was around why the Council had chosen to retain two Curator posts and made near to no changes to any senior level posts including that of the Cultural Services Manager post. In addition, also questioned whether this structure would pass external scrutiny i.e. DCLG.

JR responded to confirm that DCLG had no influence on the structure proposed and furthermore, the proposed structure was fit for purpose for the new service and RA also commented that senior Curatorial staff, which is a specialist profession, was required at the numbers indicated in the structure.

4. Green Issues

MW raised an query she had received from a member of staff around car sharing and whether NHDC had any plans to introduce this at the

Council. It was agreed that this was a good suggestion and KS would relook at the car sharing scheme operated by Herts County Council and report back at a future meeting. **KS**

Subsequent note: link to scheme <https://herts.liftshare.com/>

5. NHDC Update

JR advised that Council was due to review and agree the budget for 2015/16 on 12th February 2015 along with the proposal to raise Council Tax by 1.9%. It was also noted that over the last ten years, the Council had secured savings to the value of c.£10 million and, that the next 2-4 years could see further government funding cut by up to 30%.

NHDC was the 5th most improved Council in the country to improve on its recycling and JR thanked all those involved in the delivery of the service.

In terms of projects the Council would be considering plans around the expansion of the North Herts Leisure Centre which would secure significant revenue savings for the Council. In addition, a new splashpad at Bancroft would be installed along with improvements to green space across the district.

The Council would be launching its new Website at the end of March with the new intranet being launched shortly afterwards.

The Council was also actively investigating the possibility of providing a joint waste and street cleansing service with East Herts District Council.

6. Office Accommodation Update

The Project Board were meeting on a regular basis and Andy Cavanagh had recently sent an email requesting for 'Project Champions' for the project. All information on this project is available on the intranet pages.

CC raised an issue around soundproof meeting rooms. It was noted that there were no such rooms within the Council and perhaps this could be considered by the Office Accommodation team when configuring the office layout. **KS**

7. Employee Issues

AD asked when the minutes of the last meeting would be available on the intranet. **SN**

CC stated that she had read the MPs had recently been successful in being permitted to use e cigarettes in the Parliament.

8. Chair for Next Meeting

It was agreed that Christina Corr would chair the next meeting.