

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

5 August 2015



Minutes

Present: Claire Morgan (Chair), David Scholes, John Robinson, Kerry Shorrocks, Maggie Williams, Amanda Dell, Christina Corr, Jo Softly, Catherine Cole, Dee Levett, Chris Carter, Sharon Nahal, Anthony Roche (item 2), Debbie Hiscock (item 3) Katie Trigg (item 3)

Circulation: Those present

1. Apologies

None.

2. Managing Organisation Conflicts in Council Roles & Duties

Anthony Roche attended to present his report on managing conflicts in the Council. AR apologised for the late circulation of the report and advised that this report was being presented to SCF as part of the consultation process and would then be presented at the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee followed by Cabinet for adoption.

AR advised that this policy dealt with Organisational Conflicts which was separate to the Council's existing Conflicts of Interest Policy. The latter deals with employee conflicts and the former deals with a host of others including Trusts/Corporate Bodies, Land, Partnerships, Regulatory Services of the Council and Procurement of Services.

This policy has been developed to document how the Council dealt with such issues and provides management with a toolkit on how to assess and deal with any organisational conflicts as and when these arise.

MW asked whether the Conflicts of Interests Policy would be renewed in light of this Policy and KS confirmed that this would be looked at in the near future and at the very least would be rebadged as 'Personal Conflicts of Interest'.

There being no further questions, SCF thanked AR for this report.

3. Property Services Issues

Debbie Hiscock attended for this item and introduced Katie Trigg, the Property Services Apprentice who had come along to observe the meeting.

DH understood that the role of SCF was that if issues of a Property Services nature had not been resolved after it being reported then it would be brought to a meeting of SCF as an issue to be raised more formally. However, DH advised that it appeared there had been a number of issues reported via SCF which had never been reported to Property Services for action.

AD advised that SCF representatives were not always aware what had been reported, whether appropriate action had been taken and therefore on occasions, had no option but to raise matters at this forum.

DH advised that when an item has been reported a notice to say that is clearly displayed so others know about that.

In order to improve communication, DH agreed that Property Services would either place an item on the Message Board or in Team Talk reaffirming the reporting procedure to staff.

JS advised that within the next issue of NHDC News, there was an item scheduled on the Property Services Team and perhaps the message could be reiterated there too.

After some debate it was agreed with DH that:

- A representative from Property Services would attend SCF every two months to provide an update of issues and this would give SCF representatives an opportunity to feed this back to their teams and for Property Services to receive feedback.

Action: DH

- SCF representatives would ensure that any issues reported to them had been reported to Property Services in the first instance.

Action: SCF Representatives

Finally, whilst DH was present, SCF members were asked whether they had any 'employee issues' relating to Property Services. The following items were raised:

Multi Storey Car Park

AD advised that the stairwell in the multi storey car park was often littered and items left overnight and that this was an increasing problem at present especially due to school holidays.

DH advised that the stairwell is cleansed every morning and that should items, litter be left during this day, this would not be cleaned/removed until the next morning. However, if there was anything of an offensive nature then this should be reported to Property Services who would then make the necessary arrangements to remove.

AD also raised an issue of teenagers 'hanging around' on the top floor of the car park and generally causing a nuisance. AD asked whether it would be useful to have an Enforcement Officer to patrol the car parking to disperse the youths.

DH advised that if staff were to see any behaviour of the sort described then they could call 101 and the Police would be called or, advise Property Services who would then call out Arena Security. However, DH advised that it does take time for the service to arrive on site and usually by this time they have moved on.

DL raised an issue around the air quality on the building and that she had been approached by a couple of individuals, who had experienced 'hay fever' type symptoms.

DH advised that she was aware of an issue some time ago and at the time, a lot of work had gone in to ensuring cleaning materials used were that would not cause irritation, or reoccurrence of such symptoms. DH also requested that staff be made aware that placing hand cream, air fresheners in toilets had to be removed as they may cause harm to some employees who have previously experienced symptoms.

However, it was noted that air circulation issues would be considered via the Office Accommodation project.

Action: DH to include the message about the issues either on the Message Board or Team Talk

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

KS advised that following on from the query raised with regard to Broadband Payments, KS had met with IT and it was agreed that staff could claim for Broadband Payments including line rental up to the value of £15.00. However, it was noted the Home-working Policy was currently being reviewed and it may be that this is looked at again as part of that review.

Action: Note

There being no other outstanding action, the minutes were agreed.

5. NHDC Update

JR advised that a planning application had now been made for changes to the external appearance of the District Council Office. This includes replacement windows that will be tinted green and a new canopy over the main entrance and can be viewed by following this link <http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/3000-C-002-05%20Perspective%20-%20South%20East.pdf>

Further to a meeting of Cabinet, the refurbishment for North Herts Leisure Centre was agreed which would produce an additional £220k income stream for the Council once complete. In addition, Cabinet has also give approval for the business case to be developed for the provision of a Joint Waste Services with East Hertfordshire District Council.

DS advised that Council had recently approved the Council's objectives for the next five years and these would now feed in to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Business Planning process. However, due the government's announcement that there would be potential reductions of expenditure of up to 40% within the non ring-fenced spending departments, full details of the implications for NHDC would not be known until the Revenue Support Grant announcement in the autumn. DS also advised that discussions were ongoing with regard to the senior management restructure and more information would be made available to staff in the autumn.

6. Office Accommodation Update

As detailed above, the planning application for the external appearance of the building has been made and the project team are meeting on a regular basis. Information on this project can be viewed by following this link <http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/strategy-and-performance/dco-refurbishment-and-modernisation-project/office-refurbishment>

7. Employee Queries

C Corr raised an issue around Play Rangers employment. It was noted that some staff were taken on but only offered either a limited and variable number of days work. After some discussion, KS advised that she would discuss this with the Service Manager and come back to C Corr.

AD raised an employee query on an ongoing request that a shower facility at the new Museum be provided.

JR explained that as per previous explanations provided, shower facilities to assist disabled customers were to be provided but, the building is constrained in size and has Listed Building status. These circumstances meant that it had not been possible to secure Building Control approval for the installation of showers. It was noted that NHDC has no obligation to its employees to provide shower facilities. However, discussions were underway with Hitchin Swim Centre to ascertain whether it would be possible for Museum staff to use their shower facilities if they were to cycle in to work etc. As details become available, staff at the Museums will be advised.

Finally, JR advised that this matter had been raised on a number of occasions and a similar response provided, it should no longer be raised at meetings of SCF and instead, the employee should be asked to refer this matter to their line manager.

Action: AD/JR

DL advised that she too had a number of queries around the Museum and JR requested that, in the first instance, these matters be raised with management before being raised at SCF

Action: DL/JR

AD raised an issue following the MSU Team meeting where there were problems experienced with officers not updating their diaries. In discussion it was noted that diaries should be up to date to assist those members of staff handling calls. A procedure on updating Outlook Calendar is in place and is attached here <http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/property-and-support-services/telephones>

Finally, JR requested that the MSU Manager discuss this issue with those service areas where this is an issue to try to resolve. This matter should then be brought to her Head of Service if the problem persists.

Action: AD

AD advised that there had been a query around the pension scheme at a recent MSU Team meeting and asked whether any briefings could be provided.

KS advised that there were two very good websites which provided a lot of detail on the pension scheme and the links to these sites can be viewed below:

London Pensions Fund Authority <http://www.lpfa.org.uk/>

Local Government Pension Scheme
<http://www.lgps.org.uk/lge/core/page.do?pagelid=97977>

AD asked if there was any update on the on-line recruitment application form problems. KS said she would look in to this and advise – subsequent note: The form problems were referred to IT and HR were advised that these had been resolved. Since then HR have had more feedback that the same problems is

occurring and an IT request has been made for the problem to be investigated.

Finally, JS advised that she would be leaving the organisation and as such, this was her last meeting of SCF. Oliver Furbur had been nominated to act as the 4th Floor representative. His nomination was seconded by Sharon Nahal and Maggie Williams.

8. Chair for Next Meeting

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