

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

3 September 2015



DRAFT Minutes

Present: Christina Corr (Chair), David Scholes, John Robinson, Kerry Shorrocks, Amanda Dell, Kiren Kalirai, Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews, Anthony Roche (item 1),

Circulation: Chris Carter, Dee Levett, Catherine Cole

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Carter, Dee Levett and Catherine Cole

2. Community Right to Challenge

Anthony Roche attended to present the papers for the Community Right to Challenge. This is part of the Localism Act that has been in force for some time now but as yet has never been used by any Local Authority however this procedure needs to be in place, in case there were to be an application.

The process is in place to allow relevant bodies to submit an application for running part of or the whole of a service of the Council. As an example a challenge could be made by teams/departments of the Council for the running of that department and the Council is then obliged to look at it and follow it through the correct Procurement process.

This procedure has already been to the Senior Managers Team meeting, where it has been considered. A time period has been set for a 2 month window for applications. AR reassured SCF that any staff that would be affected by this would be notified and consulted. AR advised that this will now go for approval to Cabinet at the end of the month.

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

3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

Property Services, at the last meeting had agreed to add a reminder note on the message board/team talk about how to report faults. KS said she had reminded property services of this and that Property Services would attend bi-monthly SCF meetings.

4. NHDC Update

JR provided the NHDC update to SCF.

North Herts Museum/Hitchin Town Hall

JR advised that there are still some problems to resolve ahead of the Museum opening later in the year, further updates will be provided at future meetings.

Governments Consultations

There are a number of consultations ongoing by the Government currently; JR provided a brief update of the various ongoing consultations including trade union reform, a cap on exit payments and a proposed reduction to the tax relief on redundancy payments.

Chancellors Announcement

JR provided an update on the chancellor's recent announcement about the financial problems that Local Authorities are facing. KS advised that updated People Strategy which will be brought to SCF in October outlines the economic and organisational situation and the workforce planning initiatives that are needed over the next five years.

JR stated that we have had a spate of vandalism around Letchworth recently. The statue of Sappho in Howard Park and Gardens has been vandalised, which will be repaired. The police have caught and charged someone.

There is also government pressure on Local Authorities for their capital reserves. DS explained that the council does have a limited capital reserve which provides it with a satisfactory buffer against sudden government funding changes.

5. Office Accommodation Update

DS advised that the planning consent for the exterior of the building has been granted. C Corr asked what the planning consent was for, and she was informed that this would be for minimal such as the new windows.

The Office Accommodation Project Group have received draft decant plans for Town Lodge and the former museum which are being finalised. The office accommodation plans are available to all staff and can be found in the 5th floor rest area.

CM asked if there are any changes planned to the rear of the building, where the staff entrance is. KS advised that there are only the changes to the windows at the rear. There are no extensions to the building planned.

6. Recruitment Process

KS provided an update on the changes to the former Vacancy Control process following an audit earlier in the year. The Audit recommended the VC process was reviewed.

The new Recruitment Process has been simplified with a redesigned form that will be signed off electronically. Strategic Directors will approve the recruitment of vacant posts. The Form and FAQ's can be viewed following the links below.

<G:\SCF\2015\09 02.09.15\02 Recruitment Process Form 070815.xlsm>

<G:\SCF\2015\09 02.09.15\03 FAQ Recruitment Process 270815.docx>

AD raised a query about on-line application form character count issue that was raised at a previous SCF. KS informed that this had been reported to IT and the problems had been worked on. Rebecca Webb was working with IT on the recruitment project and this would be kept under review.

7. Employee Queries

CM advised that she had been asked to present to the Housing and Environmental Health teams the purpose of SCF and the role of an SCF representative and she had created some paperwork and a presentation which is available to anyone else should they need it.

There were no other employee queries.

8. Chair for Next Meeting

It was agreed that CM would chair the next meeting.