

# Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

3 February 2016



## Minutes

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**Present:** John Robinson, Gail Dennehy, Maggie Williams, Anne McDonald, Catherine Cole, Claire Morgan, Amanda Dell, Oliver Furbur, Dee Levett, Kiren Kalirai (notes), Ian Fullstone (Item 1)

**Apologies:** David Scholes, Kerry Shorrocks, Christina Corr

**Circulation:** Those Present, David Scholes, Kerry Shorrocks, Christina Corr and Ian Fullstone

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### 1. Building Control Project

IF attended to present this item to SCF and firstly introduced himself to the committee.

IF advised that there are a number of issues affecting the ability to recruit and retain members of staff in that department. There is a statutory duty for the Council to have a building control department.

Many options have been looked into over the years. Building Control have in previous years, taken students on work experience which through career progression have moved onto other posts, however the main difficulty lies in the fact that the Private Sector is the Local Authority's main competitor, therefore it is becoming increasingly difficult to retain staff.

7 local authorities have therefore made a decision to amalgamate their Building Control departments and form a wholly Local Authority owned organisation. This was in order to deliver the best possible service and was an opportunity for growth and an increase in resilience.

All staff affected will be protected by TUPE and the initial consultation of this has been done, however IF informed SCF that no member of staff is at risk of redundancy.

It is looking like the new company will be based in Hertsmere's offices in Borehamwood due to its links to London and the A1. This location is proposed for two years after which the company will make its own commercial decision as to where it is based.

AM asked if there is a potential for an overlap of jobs, to which IF advised that there is however the workload is there, there is a proposal to open a second company also in the future.

So far councils in Birmingham and South Norfolk have done this and it is working quite well there.

IF advised that they have gone out to tender for an IT system, and are anticipating to have an IT vendor by the end of March, the anticipated date given for TUPE purposes is 01/04/16, therefore staff can elect a representative to attend the next SCF meeting should they wish to. GD advised that Unison have also been informed

and are supporting staff as required.

AM asked about what would happen if members of staff don't want to move location and IF advised that individual cases would be looked into after the consultation period has ended and once colleagues have made a choice, but however generally so far that for support staff the location being in Hertsmere was of great concern, whilst for surveyors it was less of a direct issue, but still a concern however this would be looked into and considered at a later date if and when issues arise and on an individual basis.

## **2. Property Services Update**

This item was deferred to the next meeting as DH was unable to attend.

However, AD raised that there was an issue of flooding on the second floor, which had now been resolved.

JR updated SCF with regards to the Office Accommodation Project.

JR advised that there is revised tender information going to Council about new proposed works to the building, therefore the decant of the building cannot begin until the extent of work and timeframe of works is set.

GD reminded SCF that the office accommodation page has been updated with documents following the briefing from January.

JR confirmed that even if only the windows are to be replaced the decant of the office will still go ahead.

## **3 Apologies**

Apologies were received from David Scholes, Kerry Shorrocks and Christina Corr..

## **4. Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

There being no outstanding actions the minutes were agreed,

AD advised that a member of staff had raised an objection to the funding for the Eye Tests. The member of staff felt they were being discriminated against as they have no option but to go to Specsavers, where they had received bad service from many years ago. They felt therefore that they were being discriminated against this staff benefit.

MW and JR advised that the provision of eye and eye sight tests and corrective glasses is not a staff benefit, it is a health and safety requirement. As an employer North Hertfordshire District Council have to provide these but it is up to the Council to determine how this service is offered. The Specsavers scheme is being suggested as a means of providing the required service to staff but it is their choice whether they use this.

JR advised that the employee should contact Les Davison if they wish to query how the decision to recommend this contract was made, but that the voucher can only be used in Specsavers as per the policy.

JR advised that the rest room issue raised at the last meeting has now been resolved.

## 5. New Appraisal Process

GD presented a paper on behalf of Keith Crampton [Learning and Employee Engagement Manager] which outlined proposed changes to the way in which appraisals are carried out within the organisation following feedback received from the current method of appraisals.

The new process is based on the same document which will be used throughout the year from appraisals, mid year appraisals and one to ones. Managers and employees are to look at the competencies before meetings to decide which areas will be looked at – there is no longer a requirement for all competencies to be considered at every review as per the current process.

Training sessions will be held in March for managers and refresher courses will be carried out in March every year for new managers and anyone who wishes to attend. GD advised that this paper had already been presented to Corporate Board and SMT. GD asked if anyone had any feedback however SCF were quite supportive of this new process as it seems a lot more user friendly and adaptable to individual needs of employees. GD advised if anyone had any further queries or concerns for them to email Hrhelp where it can be passed to a member of the team to deal with as soon as possible as it is anticipated that this new process will be used from April onwards.

## 6. NHDC Update

JR reminded SCF that there are staff briefings to be held next week by David Scholes to provide staff with an update on the current position. We are to experience a further period of austerity however this will be covered next week in the staff briefings.

JR also informed SCF that it had been raised to him that the way in which the staff benefits are displayed on the intranet page is not very clear, therefore this will be looked into over the coming weeks to make it easier to read and for all the information to be in one place.

Action: JR to speak to ask Jill Welshman to send out a reminder email to all staff to invite them to the briefings to be held next week.

## 7. Office Accommodation Update

This item was covered under item 2.

## 8. Employee Queries

AD asked if the policy which dictates when members of staff should take lunch applies to both office workers and homeworkers. MW advised that this is dependent on the core hours worked however would check and let AD know.

Subsequent Note: MW advised that the policy states the following guidance for staff to take their lunch:

The Flexi-Time Policy states under Section 2:

*For office-working, lunch of a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 2.5 hours must be taken between 12.00 and 14.30."*

Home-workers would be expected to take breaks in accordance with Working Time Policy as set out in Section 10.2 of the Home-workers Policy ) which says:

*"Employees working from home remain subject to the Working Time Regulations 1998. Regular breaks should be taken (minimum every six hours) and they should*

*not work more than an average of 48 hours per week.* “

AD also asked that in light of the current IT problems we have had, what is the process for homeworkers – should they be expected to come into the office or wait at home for the IT problem to be resolved?

JR advised that this is dependant on individual circumstances – a member of staff for example may live half an hour away, but the IT problem may be resolved in 10 minutes, therefore this needs to be dealt with by individual managers on an individual basis and if managers are unsure then they should seek guidance from their manager.

AD asked if there is any indication of when the Town Hall will open?

JR informed SCF that there is no opening date as yet, A receiver has been appointed and NHDC are going through the legal processes but will open as soon as possible.

AD asked for an update on the restructure process and whether there are to be any redundancies?

JR advised that this will be covered in the briefings by DS next week, however NHDC are balanced for the next financial year, it is the following 2 years that savings will need to be made. However as previously informed this will be covered in the briefings next week.

GD advised that formal consultation on a restructure will be opening for the Housing Team from next Tuesday. The team has not yet been informed of the full extent of the restructure and therefore Martin Lawrence will email SCF next Wednesday to let them know the details. Martin will attend the next SCF meeting which is to be held on 2 March 2016. The consultation will be open from 9 February 2016 to 9 March 2016 therefore a representative from the Housing Team will also be offered the opportunity to attend the next SCF meeting.

CC raised an enquiry on behalf of a colleague on the recycling statistics provided to staff. It had been raised that the statistics for both food recycling and mixed recyclables were the same and wanted to know if this was a co-incidence or an error in typing/calculating. OF agreed to look into this further.

Action: OF

AD asked if the statutory days had been allocated for Christmas 2016. JR informed SCF that none are to be allocated as Christmas falls on a Sunday this year, therefore the Council Offices will only close on weekends and bank holidays. The working days between Christmas and New Year will be normal working hours, therefore it is up to individual departments to ensure there is adequate cover in the office during the week, as the council offices will only close on weekends and bank holidays.

JR also informed SCF that in light of the introduction of the National Living Wage from April 2016, any points in Grade 1 which fall under the new requirements will be increased to fall in line with legislation, regardless of the outcome of the current Pay Offer. There will be minimal impact as it doesn't affect many employees however it is something that has to be done to ensure we are compliant with legislation.

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

CC was nominated as chair for the next meeting in her absence.

AM tendered her apologies for the next SCF meeting.