

# Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

6 July 2016



## Minutes

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**Present:** Christina Corr (Chair), John Robinson, Kerry Shorrocks, Amanda Dell (part), Dee Levett, Claire Morgan, Catherine Cole, George Sobota, Sharon Nahal (notes), Holly Butrimas-Gair (observer)

**Circulation:** Those Present, David Scholes, Anne McDonald, Maggie Williams

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### 1. Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Subject to a minor amendment to the minutes on page 2 where C Corr advised that she had 'asked if there had been' rather than 'stated there had been negative comments' in relation to the Uniform Policy at the Museum, the minutes were agreed.

### 2. NHDC Update

JR updated SCF on the recent local elections where there were no significant changes and Councillor Lynda Needham remained Leader of the Council. In addition, the recent referendum which resulted in a very high turnout nationally has seen impacts in the financial markets and in the coming weeks and we will start to get a better idea of just how much of an impact this will have on Local Government in the autumn.

The Local Plan will be presented to a special meeting of Council 20 July 2017. The Council has receiving a significant number of comments and these have been taken in to consideration along with changes in legislation and planning policy since the Preferred Options document was published.

The outdoor pools and Letchworth and Hitchin are now open along with splash pads in Hitchin, Royston, Letchworth and Baldock. Special thanks go particularly to the Grounds Team and SLL who prevented a reoccurrence of a flood that has sadly closed Letchworth Outdoor pool for the last week or so and we are hopeful that the clean up operation will be completed to reopen the pool next week. Howard Park & Gardens paddling pool had also been temporarily closed also because of the widespread localised flooding which resulted in the pool being contaminated but has now reopened.

Finally, JR advised that Council at its meeting in 14 July 2016 will be considering a reports supports the Council entering in to a joint waste contract with East Herts District Council. The contact would be expected to commence in 2018.

### 3 Office Accommodation Update

KS advised that the tender document for the office accommodation project were due back on 5 July 2016. Council is due to meet on 14 July at which Members will be asked to agree the final amount to be included in the Capital Programme to complete the project.

Final dates will depend on negotiations with the successful contractor and the plan at the moment is for staff to decant out of the DCO during September with construction work commencing in October. Again subject to negotiation, the works are expected to finish at the end of March 2017 with staff moving back to the DCO during April 2017.

#### **4. Staff Survey**

KS advised that the Staff Survey Full report will shortly be published on the intranet for all staff to see. <http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/communications-and-print/consultation>

The headline is that overall satisfaction with NHDC as a place to work has increased by 8% points to 86% this year. This is an extraordinary result given the pressures we are all under to do 'more for less' and is testament to the resilience and optimism of staff throughout the organisation. Whilst some staff were less satisfied with opportunities for career progression, office accommodation and basic pay.

#### **5. Employee Queries**

C Cole asked whether temporary air conditioning units could be installed in the Democratic Services office to help staff cope with the heat. C Cole advised that she had approached Property Services about this and was advised that this was not possible. It was noted that the office accommodation project would deal with ventilation issues in the building but, in the meantime, it was suggested that Property Services be approached to see if blinds to the offices could be closed in the morning and windows opened to help with the heat.

Action: SN

AD asked whether working core hours could be relaxed when working on elections/the count. C Cole stated that when confirming staff for these times, they were advised that they would need to seek their manager's permission before agreeing to work and that this was a separate employment contract from that with the Council.. Furthermore, it was noted that staff did need to adhere to core hours work the next day.

AD had a number of questions about the new telephone system and it was agreed that these should be sent to [telephone@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:telephone@north-herts.gov.uk) in the first instance.

Action: AD

#### **6. Chair for Next Meeting**

Claire Morgan to chair next meeting.