

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 2, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON WEDNESDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2018 AT 3.00 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Sarah Dingley (Chairman), (Vice-Chairman), Lynda Needham, Martin Stears-Handscorn and Michael Weeks (In place of Bernard Lovewell)*

In Attendance: *Dee Levett, Kerry Shorrocks (Corporate Human Resources Manager), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources) and Hilary Dineen (Acting Committee and Member Services Manager)*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bernard Lovewell.

Having given due notice Councillor Michael Weeks advised that he was substituting for Councillor Lovewell.

2 MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2018

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 28 March 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council policy, this meeting was being audio recorded;

(2) The Chairman reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

5 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

The Corporate Human Resources Manager drew attention to the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held on 4 April 2018 and 2 May 2018 and the Draft Minutes of 6 June 2018 as follows:

Minutes – 4 April 2018

NHDC Update

There had been a full discussion regarding the Gender Pay Gap. It had been noted that there were many females in the organisation that worked part time in clerical roles and that the majority of jobs of similar value to these were with the Council's contractors in services such as waste and grounds maintenance.

This created an imbalance in terms of distribution of jobs by gender and widened the Gender Pay Gap.

There were more men in senior roles, however the plans to support more women in leadership roles through leadership development and succession planning had been circulated.

National Pay Bargaining

Unison had indicated that it would provide its final decision on the employers offer by early April 2018. Following confirmation that Unison had agreed, an update was provided that detailed that the updated pay offer would be paid in May and backdated to April.

The Chief Officers pay award was agreed later and was in line with the general pay award (i.e. would receive 2 percent per year for over 2 years).

Senior Management Restructure

The consultation period with affected staff was now complete and the aim was for the outcomes to be confirmed shortly.

The job matching exercise had taken place and a number of Heads of Service had been matched with new roles, however there were some roles that would require a recruitment exercise.

The aim was to have everyone in post by the end of May 2018.

Office Accommodation

Regular updates were still being sent to employees regarding the continuing work on the lifts and window blinds.

Training of fire marshals would soon take place and information regarding assembly points would be circulated shortly.

A rehearsal fire evacuation was planned.

Employee Queries

It was noted that since the return to DCO the SCF reps no longer represented a particular floor.

It was suggested that, once the restructure was completed, Reps could each represent a Service Area.

Minutes – 2 May 2018

NHDC Update

The Senior Management Restructure was going through the next stage with two Service Directors currently advertised, the aim was to go live from 1 June 2018.

A new corporate Service Delivery Plan would be developed, to be supported by Actions Plans from departments, this would replace the current service plan model.

Examination inspections regarding the Local Plan were now complete and the Inspector would report back in the summer.

There had been a lot of publicity regarding NHDC's Gender Pay Gap, however there was an action plan in place that sought to identify what the Gender Pay Gap would look like if contractors were included in the figures.

The new waste contract with Urbaser was due to go live. This contract would save approximately £2 million per year.

Office Accommodation Update

The window blinds had been ordered and were due to be fitted during the weekend of 12/13 May 2018.

Employee Queries

Parking Wardens had enquired about the use of rest rooms in Hitchin and Letchworth as they currently could not access NHDC buildings.

Members queried whether the situation regarding access to rest rooms for Parking Wardens had been resolved.

Dee Levett (Unison) advised that the Parking Wardens now had access to the Town Hall in Hitchin and the District Council Offices in Letchworth.

Members asked whether Waste offices, who were out and about in the District would be extended the same facilities.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that staff were able to enter any Council building.

Draft Minutes – 6 June 2018

Matters Arising

The window blinds had now been fitted in the DCO.

NHDC Update

The Senior Management Restructure had now been implemented and it was expected that Service Directors would be reviewing their areas of responsibility over the coming months.

The April pay increase was paid in May.

Staff allowances and expenses were being reviewed and would be subject to subject to consultation with mileage rates proposed to be reduced to be in line with HMRC rates and subsistence rates would be reduced to a maximum of £10 for a meal and only paid if incurred away from the individual's normal place of work.

Members asked for clarification regarding the number of people most affected by the proposed changes.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that 20 people had been identified as likely to be £100 per year worse off, although some would be better off

IT Update

IT had requested that all problems with IT systems are reported, as this helped to build a picture of the extent of any particular problem and would help in finding solutions.

Employee Queries

Careline had reported that the move to DCO had been mainly positive, however there had been a number of anti-social incidents and harassment of staff going to and from their cars, which had resulted in the Police being called.

There had also been incidents regarding the car parking arrangements for Careline staff, due to the arrangements not being fully communicated to the staff.

In response to questions the Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that the intimidation had been from groups of youths and that 2/3 people worked in Careline overnight.

Wednesday, 27th June, 2018

The move to DCO had been thought through very carefully and adjustments had been made to cater for the staff of Careline including a change to the smoking policy and consideration of safety issues.

The Service Director - Resources confirmed that the intimidation issues had also been reported to the Health and Safety meeting.

Members were supportive of the change to the smoking policy, but clarified that smokers must clear up after themselves.

It had been reported that the stairwell in the multi-storey car park did not smell nice and that the previous practice of washing the stairs every day did not appear to be happening. Property Services advised that there had been no change to cleaning arrangements.

It was clarified that people were allowed to eat at their desks, but should be considerate and not consume hot food due to its smell.

There had been some complaints regarding the cold air coming from the ceiling vents, making working conditions unpleasant. Staff were advised that hot desking meant that they could move from any desk that was in line with these vents, however Property Services would be made aware of the issue.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held on 4 April 2018 and 2 May 2018 and the Draft Minutes of 6 June 2018 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to consider any issues addressed by the Staff Consultation Forum.

6 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented the Information Note entitled People Strategy Update and drew attention to the following:

Work Plan

A new Work Plan for 2018/19 was attached as Appendix B.

Recruitment

Feedback regarding the electronic shortlisting process had been positive and this was now being used for the majority of vacancies.

Apprentices

A number of apprentice places had been agreed for recruitment, including some higher apprentices and it had also been agreed which departments would have an apprentice.

In response to a question, the Corporate Human Resources Manager explained the different types of apprentice roles.

Equal Pay and Equalities

The Council's Gender Pay Gap figures had been calculated and the narrative to accompany them, including an action plan had been submitted on-line and published on the Council's website.

Work had commenced on the Equal Pay Review and the report from this review would be considered by this Committee.

Pay and Benefits

The current contract with Serco under a Framework Agreement which included Payroll Services had been extended until March 2021 and NHDC had received costings regarding the extended contract.

The current HR and Payroll system was coming to the end of its commercial life and would cease to be supported from the early 2020's. This had provided an opportunity to review the current service provision.

A new outsourced payroll service would be sought. It should be noted that the introduction of a new payroll service would need at least 18 months in order to allow time for adaptations and simultaneous testing and payroll runs alongside the existing system.

Members queried whether there were any opportunities for joint working on this service and in what respect Serco was not working for NHDC.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that SMT had considered a paper regarding all options including partnership working and framework agreements.

Serco ensured everyone got paid, however HR spent a lot of time dealing with minor errors however price was the main consideration and it was felt that NHDC could get better value elsewhere.

NHDC would stay with Serco for 1 further year so that there was more time to consider alternatives and have a smooth transition..

The current contracts for the provision of the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health services would expire in March 2019 and a review was being undertaken to consider how these services would be provided from that date.

HCC were currently providing a Framework Agreement for the provision of these services and had invited NHDC to be named in this. This would allow the Council to draw down from this agreement once it had been established, but did not commit NHDC to using the services.

Learning and Development

Learning and Development were currently working on clarifying the need for a leadership development programme for the new Senior Management Team, this programme would commence in the autumn.

Organisational Restructure

HR had been dealing with a number of restructures including IT.

Absence

Absence had been higher in 2017/18 with a number of long term absences of staff with serious health problems. The year had ended at 6.15 days absence per FTE. Short term absence was up by 0.42 days and above the target of 3.5 days per FTE.

In response to a question the Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that long term absence started at 21 days.

IT WAS AGREED: That the information note entitled People Strategy Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the People Strategy Update.

7 DISCUSSION PAPER - COACHING AND MENTORING

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented a discussion paper entitled Coaching and Mentoring and drew attention to the following:

Coaching and mentoring were well established with NHDC and had been used for several years, often as an alternative to more traditional methods of training.

There were currently 17 Institute of Leadership and Management accredited coaches across the Council.

The most popular reasons for using coaching were:

- To aid leadership development;
- To improve job performance;
- To build on good performance;
- To focus upon skills and capability improvement;
- To explore career development needs.

Coaching should be considered during the RPR process.

Members discussed the paper during which they asked several questions, made observations and were given information as follows:

- The coaching course included elements such as assignment and practice sessions.
- There were all sorts of methods of training, including 1-1 sessions.
- Coaching tried to get the person to take on their own problems and recognise how they could find answers to address problems themselves.
- All coaches were volunteers, however discussions had taken place to look at whether coaches could be paid.
- Discussions had taken place regarding the role of coaching in addressing the Gender Pay Gap
- Coaching should be part of the RPR process and leadership planning
- A Mentor was someone to turn to for a specific issue, whereas a coach could be used for very specific or wide issues.
- Need to create circumstances where more experienced coaches could be utilised.
- Need people to see the benefits of coaching.
- Line Managers could be used to promote the benefits of coaching.
- It was important that care was taken in addressing the Gender Pay Gap and that this did result in undue favour being shown to women.
- There were a reasonable number of women in senior and professional jobs.
- It should be noted that women may chose to work part time whereas this was not a choice generally made by men.
- It was important to have female role models.
- The aim was for people to reach their full potential.

Members thought that it would be interesting to see if coaching was used more by one gender than another and if the reasons for that could be identified.

IT WAS AGREED:

- (1) That the discussion paper on Coaching and Mentoring be noted;
- (2) That the Corporate Human Resources Manager be requested to investigate whether coaching was used by one gender more than another and, if possible to identify, the reasons for that.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the discussion paper on Coaching and Mentoring.

8 SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

Members considered what subjects should be discussed at future meetings and agreed the following:

26 September 2018 – Family friendly legislation including shared parental leave.

Members commented that they welcomed the contribution of the SCF and Unison representatives and expressed disappointment at the low turnout from SCF and Unison.

The Corporate Human Resource Manager advised that she would mention this at the SCF meeting and would look into the possibility of substitutes SCF representatives.

IT WAS AGREED:

- (1) That the discussion topics for the meeting due to be held on 26 September 2018 would be Family Friendly Legislation;
- (2) That the Corporate Human Resources Manager be requested to discuss the low turnout at this meeting with the Staff Consultation Forum and investigate whether substitute SCF representatives could be appointed for this Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to choose discussion topics of interest for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 4.09 pm

Chairman