

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM
ON WEDNESDAY, 5TH JULY, 2023 AT 10.00 AM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Raj Bhakar (Chair), Claire Strong, Terry Hone and Tom Plater*

In Attendance: *Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Rebecca Webb (HR Services Manager), Christina Corr (Staff Consultation Forum Representative) and Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews (UNISON Representative)*

Also Present: *There were no members of the public present for the duration of the meeting.*

63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 58 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elizabeth Dennis.

64 MINUTES FROM 15 MARCH 2023

Audio Recording – 3 minutes 09 seconds

Councillor Claire Strong proposed and Councillor Terry Hone seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 15 March 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

65 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 59 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded.
- (2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and 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.

66 SCF MINUTES

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 20 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the item entitled 'SCF Minutes', alongside the Minutes from the meetings of March, April, May and June 2023 and highlighted the following:

- There had been a wide range of topics discussed at the Staff Consultation Forum, including the recording of calls in the Customer Service Centre and how staff could still have confidential conversations, long service awards and the response to small fire incident which occurred at the Council Offices.
- It had been recognised that staff were central to the delivery of the elections which took place in May.

In response to questions from Councillor Claire Strong, the Service Director – Resources advised that:

- There were two new people recruited to the IT helpdesk, including one temporary.
- The development team had some recruitment issues, with staff leaving or having left, and these vacancies are being recruited to.
- Only major IT issues were raised at the SCF, and these were usually acted on quickly by the IT team.
- There was no record of ongoing issues not being resolved, but this would be raised at the next SCF meeting.

It was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the minutes of the Staff Consultation Forum for March, April, May and June 2023.

67 HR INFORMATION NOTE

Audio Recording – 8 minutes 53 seconds

The Human Resources Services Manager presented the Information Note entitled 'HR Update', including that:

- There were still some issues with recruitment, with 7 roles unable to be filled and these areas have been given support.
- Processes were still being developed.
- The new Job Profile document had been launched, which merged the Job Description and Person Specification and included reference to the organisational values.
- The 'How We Work' document had been uploaded to the Recruitment webpage and this outlined the different types of working.
- Negotiations over pay had not been resolved and the unions were balloting for strike action, which could be taken at each Council individually.
- The new Employee Assistance Programme launched in April and offered a variety of routes for contact, such as live chat and text, and it was hoped this would encourage use by staff.
- The previously development morning had been themed around 'Together' and the session at the Office was well attended.
- The Personal Development programme had received good feedback, with further developments and ideas being discussed at SCF and Inclusion Group.
- The Inclusion Group had continued to meet and attended a staff briefing to encourage new attendees.
- The Gender Pay Gap had been discussed at the Inclusion Group, with an increase in 2022, but otherwise this had decreased as there are more females in the Leadership Team and the expansion of hybrid and flexible working.
- The figure for 2023 should be improved and HR would be working with the Group to refresh the action plan.
- Overall, the picture regarding equalities data was stable.
- Staff absence had improved during this period with a reduction in short term absence.

68 **DISCUSSION PAPER - ATTRACTING AND REWARDING SCARCE TALENT**

Audio Recording – 14 minutes 29 seconds

The Human Resources Service Manager presented the Discussion Paper entitled 'Attracting and Rewarding Scarce Talent' and advised that:

- Recruitment and retention had been a focus for many months due to employment conditions nationally, including positions which were previously easier to fill.
- Improvements had been made to the use of social media to promote roles, with images used to stand out and text to highlight key areas of specific role. Examples of these adverts was included within the reports pack.
- As the Council cannot always compete on pay, the benefits of working for the Council are being promoted more, including flexible working arrangements.
- Pay bands are now included on Job Adverts.
- Recruitment and Retention Policy had been put to use to attract people to hard to fill roles.
- The Council had a good record of career development, with staff often developing skills with the Council before moving onto further employment.
- Apprenticeship scheme was still running and often apprentices were able to find roles at the Council following the end of their apprenticeship contract.
- Had looked to expand the use of career graded roles in areas like Planning and Licensing.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Terry Hone

In response to questions, the Human Resources Service Manager advised that:

- They noted comments regarding use of positive wording on social media adverts and would guide recruiting managers on the use of these.
- Training and development was dependent on the role, where a professional qualification is possible then this might be considered a career graded post which would allow a candidate to enter at the lowest level, with a commitment from the Council to provide ongoing development.
- Information on future development was available on the recruitment pages on the website and would then form part of the induction process of new staff and into the Regular Performance Reviews.
- Where a qualification is expected to be worked towards, this would be specified in the advert.
- Ongoing development of existing staff would form part of the appraisal process, which takes place at least annually, and can be referred to throughout the year.
- Managers have access to information on development and training, but further information could be provided by HR.

RESOLVED: That the Committee commented on and noted the Discussion Paper on Attracting and Rewarding Scarce Talent.

69 **FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS**

Audio Recording – 24 minutes 06 seconds

Councillor Terry Hone noted that it was important that the Committee be kept up to date on recruitment issues, including specific areas which are of concern.

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Councillor Clare Strong noted that staff were the most important part of the business, and it was important to manage and monitor wellbeing of existing staff, as well as any development requirements.

In response to a question from Cllr Strong, the Human Resources Service Manager advised that the Council did have a secondment process which formalised this process, but it was expected that managers on a local level would speak with relevant officers at other Councils. However, there was no formal process for an experience day at other Councils.

The Chair suggested the topic of 'Employee Engagement within Hybrid Working' for the next meeting of the Committee and this was agreed with Members present.

The meeting closed at 10.30 am

Chair