

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD IN THE VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM
ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 2025 AT 2.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Daniel Allen (Chair), Claire Strong (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Keith Hoskins and Bryony May*

In attendance: *Faith Churchill (Democratic Services Apprentice), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Rebecca Webb (HR Services Manager)*

UNISON: *Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews*

Staff Consultation Forum: *Melanie Feradous and Franklin*

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

9 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2025/26

Audio recording – 1 minutes 56 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Claire Strong seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Daniel Allen be elected as Chair of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee for the Civic Year 2025/26.

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 3 seconds

There were no apologies received from Members.

11 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2025/26

Audio recording – 3 minutes 17 seconds

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Claire Strong be elected as Vice-Chair of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee for the Civic Year 2025/26.

12 MINUTES - 18 JUNE 2025

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 23 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

13 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 52 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be 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.
- (3) The Chair informed Members that the discussion paper on the 'Implications of the UK Supreme Court Judgement on Single Sex Spaces on the Workplace' would be discussed at a future meeting as the guidance from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission had not yet been published.

14 HR INFORMATION NOTE

Audio recording – 5 minutes 28 seconds

The HR Services Manager presented the Information Note entitled 'HR Update' and advised that:

- Recruitment data for Q1 compared to the same quarter in the previous two years was shown under paragraph 3.2.
- 85% of vacancies had been filled at the first attempt which met the 75% target.
- Vacancies in Q1 were double what they were in the same quarter last year.
- 3 vacancies across Governance and Environmental Health had not been filled, however, the positions had been temporarily filled or readvertised since the information note had been published.
- Over the last year, 22% of vacancies had been filled by internal candidates.
- Paragraph 3.3 highlighted staff turnover which was higher than Q1 last year, however, the Local Government Association benchmarking system revealed that their staff turnover was in line with other local authorities.
- Staff turnover would be monitored as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) approached.
- Absences had decreased in recent months due to a reduction in long-term absences as shown in the data at paragraph 3.4.
- High levels of mental health absences were still present, and the HR Team continued to provide support and raise awareness for this.
- Nationally, absences had increased significantly to 9.4 days lost in the last year.
- Paragraph 3.5 detailed the 3.2% pay award that had been agreed in July and paid to staff in August.
- The apprenticeship mentoring scheme had been refreshed to allow graduates to become mentors and new apprentices would be assigned apprentice buddies to support their induction into the Council and the apprenticeship programme.
- A new graduate had joined the Council earlier this month and managers across the Council continued to give positive feedback on the impact of graduates.
- Paragraph 3.8 gave an update on recent learning and development events that were linked to the Staff Survey Action Plan and management development.
- Employee wellbeing arrangements and recent occasions that had been publicised to all staff were set out in paragraph 3.9.
- As part of National Inclusion Week in September, the Council provided staff with resources and a webinar focused on becoming an active bystander which was also a topic at the October meeting of the Inclusion Group.

- Paragraph 3.11 described the first all-staff events that the Council held in September and feedback from these would be used to improve future events.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Bryony May
- Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions, the HR Services Manager advised that:

- Staff that left the Council did so at various stages in their careers including retirement, but some left early in their careers as the Council had a small and flat organisational structure.
- The Council was focused on staff development which could help with retention but also work against them if opportunities for staff to progress within the organisation were not available.
- Approximately 20 staff attended the mental health lunchtime walk and these would be organised more regularly and at different locations in response to staff requests.
- The Wellbeing Room had been launched recently and advertised to staff through various means. New staff would be made aware of it during inductions and its usage would be monitored along with any feedback received on it.
- Remote working could be linked to staff feeling isolated, and managers were reminded to undertake regular 1-1s with staff who mainly worked remotely.
- There were many opportunities for staff to contact others and socialise outside of their teams.
- It would be difficult to measure the impact that LGR would have on their ability to recruit as variances in recruitment were natural.
- Approximately 200 staff attended the all-staff events and positive feedback had been received on them, particularly on the transparency that had been provided on LGR despite the lack of some information on this.
- The sessions on team building and resilience and the opportunity to meet other teams face-to-face had also been well received by staff.
- The proportion of part-time to full-time staff that attended was unknown, but they were held on three different days and times to provide a range of options for staff of all working patterns to attend. A recording of the events was also made available as they recognised that it would not be possible for all staff to be present at them.
- No reasons for the failure to fill the vacancies in Governance had been learned from either managers or candidates.
- New apprentices were allocated longer serving apprentices as buddies.
- The White Ribbon programme was talked about within the Inclusion Group and was not currently available on the Council e-learning portal but could be investigated.

In response to questions, the Chair advised that:

- Attendance at all three staff events had been good and they would aim to hold them each year.
- Apprentices had brought good changes to the Council including improvements to the safeguarding process around licensing and the Council should be proud of their apprenticeship programme.

The Chair thanked the HR Services Manager for presenting the Information Note to the Committee.

15 DISCUSSION PAPER - EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION

Audio recording – 30 minutes 10 seconds

The HR Services Manager presented the Discussion Paper entitled 'Employer Value Proposition' and advised that:

- An Employer Value Proposition (EVP) defined the core promise that an employer made to its staff outlining what they could expect in return for their work.
- A compelling EVP was crucial to attract candidates and keep staff motivated.
- The core components of an EVP were detailed as development, flexibility, inclusion, wellbeing and reward.
- In terms of development, the Council offered staff a range of training programmes and workshops to enhance their skills and advance their careers in addition to coaching and mentoring.
- Flexibility was offered to staff through hybrid and remote working in addition to flexible hours which helped to promote a healthy work-life balance.
- Generous leave policies also enabled staff to take proper breaks away from work which benefitted both staff and the Council.
- Diversity and inclusion were at the heart of Council values to ensure that everyone was respected regardless of their background or identity and to achieve a sense of belonging among staff.
- It was important to the Council to create a healthy and supportive environment in which staff could thrive and have access to a variety of wellbeing initiatives and rewards including a comprehensive benefits package.
- The Council EVP was communicated to candidates through recruitment webpages and during interviews and could be found by existing staff through various means including The Hub or by simply talking to their managers.
- Members should consider the questions posed at the end of the paper.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Bryony May
- Councillor Ian Albert

The Chair highlighted that Members should be sharing job vacancies at the Council through social media and word-of-mouth where possible.

Councillor Claire Strong noted that it would be valuable if their graduate and apprenticeship schemes were included in the Council EVP, particularly to attract talent to the Council.

In response to questions, the HR Services Manager advised that:

- Data from the Staff Survey had been published, and the headline data had been included on recruitment pages and in Council media.
- Graduate and apprenticeship programmes highlighted the commitment of the Council to staff development.
- The Council did not have a specific document on EVP as it was spread across their interfaces and expressed through work culture.
- Feedback on working at the Council had been communicated via staff surveys.
- The Council also received period feedback from candidates on the application process and their reasons for wanting to work at the Council.
- The Council regularly met with UNISON Members.
- The People Strategy would be another way of communicating their EVP to staff once formulated and UNISON would help to shape this.

RESOLVED: That the Committee commented on and noted the Discussion Paper on Employer Value Proposition.

16 SCF MINUTES

Audio recording – 45 minutes 10 seconds

The Director – Resources presented the item entitled 'SCF Minutes', alongside the Minutes from the meetings of June, July and September 2025 and highlighted the following:

- There had been no meeting in August due to the summer holidays.
- HR, IT and Building updates had all been received.
- Attendance at their meetings had been good and SCF staff representatives had received positive levels of engagement.

In response to a question from Councillor Claire Strong, the Director – Resources advised that the absence of the Chief Executive at the meetings in June, July and September was likely to be Local Government Reorganisation related.

In response to a question from Councillor Claire Strong, the SCF staff representative advised that the Chief Executive had attended the most recent meeting in October.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forum for June, July and September 2025.

17 SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

Audio recording – 48 minutes 33 seconds

The Chair led a discussion on future topics for the Committee to consider and suggested 'Trade Union Membership' as a topic for discussion.

In response to a question from Councillor Claire Strong, the HR Services Manager advised that approximately 15% of employees were Members of UNISON but that this may have increased since Local Government Reorganisation was announced.

Members agreed two topics on 'Change Management' and 'Implications of the UK Supreme Court Judgement on Single Sex Spaces on the Workplace' for the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 2.52 pm

Chair