

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

01 July 2020



Present: Kerry Shorrocks (KS), Dee Levett (DL), Lea Ellis (LE), Vic Godfrey (VG), Christina Corr (CC), Ian Couper (IC), Allison Fox (AF), Emma Jellis (EJ), Rebecca Webb (RW), Caitlin Bruce (CB – notes)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Anthony Roche

2. Matters Arising

None discussed.

3. NHDC Update

Jo Dufficy will begin her new roll as Service Director for Customers in October.

Ian Fullstone has been appointed as the service director who will deputise for the Managing Director from 18/07/2020.

A reminder to staff to use up annual leave taking breaks in the year. See the global e mail sent on 20 May.

A modified staff survey will be conducted this year that will focus on homeworking and new ways of working that may be utilised in the future.

The gender pay gap average earning snapshots have seen a positive change in the pay gap which has significantly reduced since the first snapshot was taken in 2017, this shows a significant improvement. An insight article will follow. It was brought to the attention of the SCF that the Gender Pay Gap Group and what they do may not be widely known across the organisation. There was an agreement that members of the Gender Pay Gap Group should make staff more aware of what they do and help understanding of what it is there for.

Pay bargaining – the employers have offered a rise of 2.75% (the highest offer seen in a number of years), this has gone to a ballot with union members. It will take some time for this ballot to be processed. More information will follow as soon as more is known.

4. Building services Update

Thank you to all staff for your resilience during the pandemic.

There are some members of staff who are still using the council offices – the use of this building is under constant review. We have minimalised the number of people in the building, but it can still be used – please ensure you have used the outlook calendar to book time in the building.

The HR restructure was raised , this will consist of the deletion of the Corporate HR Manager post and the HR Services Manager will report directly to the Service Director for Resources. This will be subject to a full council meeting. There are minor structural changes.

It was raised that hand sanitiser is not available in the reception area and there is not one by the staff entrance. **IC to investigate having a hand sanitiser by the staff entrance.**

A question about the plan to get employees back in the office was raised. The response was that this would be addressed in the virtual staff briefing but as of yet the recovery team has no solid plans to have employees return to the district council offices in significant numbers any time soon.

A question was raised regarding potential financial difficulties faced by the council. The response was that although there is uncertainty in the future, at the moment there are sufficient reserves and there is no need for an emergency budget yet.

5. IT Update

IT have faced several challenges since the beginning of the lockdown, now most people are able to function and carry on their roles working from home but going forward work on infrastructure will be needed.

The helpdesk has been extremely busy because of both homeworking and requests for additional equipment due to homeworking.

IT are thankful for all the compliments they have been receiving – they boost moral within the team and it is good to give credit to their hard work.

Work will begin shortly to put new monitors on certain floors of the district council offices.

There are plans to move emails on to the cloud, this will mean that employees will not need to have access to an NHDC device or Blackberry work in order to access emails. This will not have cost implications as it is already part of our Microsoft agreement and will mean we can discard Blackberry work.

The ongoing tablet refresh is being carried out to install new security software on to the tablets.

There is some work needed on PC refreshes at the council offices but this has slowed due to the fact that many of them have been allocated to homeworkers.

There have been several requests for zoom, there are a few log ins for some members of staff. A reminder that these are to be used for work purposes only.

6. Employee Queries

A question about the new Service Director for Transformations post was raised asking if more information could be given about this post.

IC replied that this was to be proposed as a part time post, for 18 months and will focus particularly on transformation in relation to customer services. This post will be advertised. More information will be addressed in the staff briefing.

It was asked how employees would know when each SCF was to be held was asked. The SCF is held on the first Wednesday of every month, this is stated on the SCF intranet page – there was a short break due to the lockdown but there is now the ability to hold the meetings over zoom and so they will continue on the first Wednesday of every month as stated.

CB will also put a reminder on the notice board when the agenda goes out to SCF members.

A query on homeworking expenses being raised during the colder months to cover heating was put forward.

Many Councils are currently not offering any type of home-working expenses despite asking employees to work from home full time, there are currently several benefits offered to NHDC employees and there is a limit to the amount that can be offered without tax implications but IC will look into it.

Chair for next meeting – Christina Corr

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

Issues relating to property e.g. broken lift, non-flushing toilets, etc. must always be reported to Property Services in the first instance: propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk

Alternatively you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - SCF@north-herts.gov.uk

Representatives (and extension):

Lea Ellis #4830 - Community Engagement team based on Floor 3

Ben Glover #4248 - Planning team based on Floor 3

Emma Jellis #4312 - MSU team based on Floor 4

Allison Fox #4203 - Technical Support Officer based on Floor 3

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer R&B team based on Floor 5

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer (Waste Management based at Buntingford)

