

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 2/3, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH DECEMBER,
2019 AT 10.00 AM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Kate Aspinwall (Chairman), Keith Hoskins and Claire Strong*

In Attendance: *Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Kerry Shorrocks (Corporate Human Resources Manager), Maggie Williams (Senior Human Resources and Contracts Manager), Dee Levett (Unison Representative), Christina Corr (Staff Consultation Forum Representative), Dylan Bailey (Democratic Services - Work Experience) and Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

24 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Audio Recording – 2 Seconds

As a result of Councillor Kay Tart, Chairman of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, having sent her apologies for absence, it was required that a Chairman be elected for this Meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Keith Hoskins, seconded by Councillor Claire Strong and;

RESOLVED: That Councillor Kate Aspinwall be elected Chairman of the Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – 53 Seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kay Tart and Terry Hone.

26 MINUTES - 3 OCTOBER 2019

Audio Recording – 1 Minute 9 Seconds

The Unison Representative sought clarification from Item 21 on the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 October 2019 and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 3 October 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

27 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – 2 Minutes 40 Seconds

There was no other business notified.

28 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – 2 Minutes 49 Seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting and introduced Dylan Bailey who was in attendance at that meeting as he was at North Hertfordshire District Council on work experience.
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chairman 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.

29 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

Audio Recording – 3 Minutes 33 Seconds

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised the Committee of the matters discussed at the Staff Consultation Forum held on 2 October 2019 and 6 November 2019, as follows:

- The NHDC update;
- Property Services update;
- Employee queries;
- IT Updates;
- Document Centre Restructure

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kate Aspinwall;
- Councillor Claire Strong; and
- Councillor Keith Hoskins.

Members entered into a discussion relating to an employee's query at the SCF Forum around vacancies being advertised internally only before they are advertised externally and as to whether or not this should be the case.

In response to questions raised, the Corporate Human Resources Manager and the Service Director – Resources confirmed that:

- Self-service issues linked to the current payroll system would be resolved with the introduction of the new payroll system;
- Lots of staff helped out at the Parliamentary Election in December 2019 as well as many staff being left in the office to cover those who were involved with the Election; the overall response from staff was good;
- Staff were able to clean their desk with cleaning equipment if they wished.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forum held on 2 October 2019 and the Draft Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forum held on 6 November 2019 be noted.

30 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Audio Recording – 19 Minutes 45 Seconds

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented the information note entitled People Strategy Update and Annual Report 2019 and advised the Committee of the following:

- An update on the progress made in the last quarter on the People Strategy 2015-2020;
- The Local Government Employers would be releasing a new Workforce Development Framework during Spring/Summer 2020;
- It was proposed that the Council would adopt the framework in order to create a workforce development plan and create the People Strategy during the Autumn/Winter 2020/21.
- Recruitment had been busy that year with a total number of vacancies advertised during the period January to November 2019 at 93;
- There were 12 Apprentices working at the Council;
- April 2019 saw the end of a two year pay deal of 2% with higher increases for the lowest paid to meet the rising rate of the National Living Wage and to work towards it increasing up to the rates expected in 2020;
- The Payroll project had placed a huge demand on the Human Resources team;
- The iTrent system was more modern and user friendly and would allow Officers and Councillors to submit expenses and view payslips via mobile devices;
- The Employee Assistant Programme was available to Officers and Councillors; recent data obtained showed reasonable use;
- A new staff recognition scheme had been introduced;
- There were more trained Mental Health First Aiders;
- The Employee Handbook would be redesigned in order to modernise it and make it easier for staff to find information;
- Work was going to be undertaken to streamline HR Policies;
- The Short-Term absence target of 3.50 for 2018/19 was exceeded by 0.60 days;
- 106 Staff took up the Flu Vaccination;
- The Annual joint funded Unison and NHDC Children's Christmas tea party took place on Friday 13 December 2019 which 20-25 children attended;
- Appendix A illustrated the Staff Turnover Rates;
- The absence rates from November 2018-October 2019 were discussed.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong; and
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall.

In response to questions raised, the Corporate Human Resources Manager provided the following:

- The absence rate in July 2019 was higher than expected at that time of year; this was looked into;
- The Flu Vaccination was not available to Councillors;
- Support was offered to Staff on Long-Term Sick;
- Pay negotiations were still ongoing. However, it would be unlikely that people will see an increase in their pay in April 2020.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Information Note entitled People Strategy Update and Annual Report 2019 be noted.

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

31 INFORMATION NOTE - EQUALITIES UPDATE

Audio Recording – 41 Minutes 32 Seconds

The Senior Human Resources & Contracts Manager presented the Information Note entitled Equalities Update and advised that the data within the Information Note was nearly a year old as, owing to absence, the information was not able to be brought to an earlier meeting of that Committee.

The Senior Human Resources & Contracts Manager advised as follows:

- The data was required to be published, in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, in January 2020 on the Council's website;
- Further explanation was provided on the statistics on page 36 of the Information Note at Paragraph 3.1.1.1 – 3.1.1.3.
- The figures illustrated that the make up of the Council's workforce, joiners and leavers by protected characteristics remained very stable with few changes;
- There had been a significant increase in the number of long term sickness cases in 2018;
- There was an increase in leavers in 2018 to 58 which compared to 46 leavers in 2017 and 60 leavers on 2016;
- The Council's Gender Pay Gap figures for 2018 had been submitted in March 2019 and the full Gender Pay Gap Report was attached as Appendix 2 as well as being available on the Council's website;

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Keith Hoskins; and
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall.

In response to questions raised, the Senior Human Resources & Contracts Manager and the Corporate Human Resources Manager advised the following:

- Actual numbers would be given as well as the percentages in order to clarify the percentage of female employees in the workforce;
- Data relating to how far employees commuted in to work and the number of employees who lived within the District could be obtained;
- HOP (Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal) into Hertfordshire was a one-stop shop for those wishing to upskill in Hertfordshire;
- An employee's Marriage Status was one of the 9 Protected Characteristics that meant it was statutory to publish data relating to this;
- An Ethnicity Pay Gap would be required to be published in the future;
- Software to ensure job adverts and interview questions contained gender neutral language was being looked into;
- There was not an issue with Equal Pay at the Council; there is an issue with The Gender Pay Gap.

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

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

32 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER - SALARY SACRIFICE SCHEMES

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 33 Minutes 4 Seconds

The Senior Human Resources Manager presented the Strategic Discussion Paper – Salary Sacrifice Schemes and advised as follows:

- A Salary sacrifice or salary exchange scheme was where an employee has agreed to exchange part of their salary in order to obtain a non-cash benefit from their employer;
- Prior to 2017, the Council offered a number of benefits under the salary sacrifice scheme;
- Childcare vouchers had now ceased but were available to employees still within the scheme;
- Halfords Cycle2work Scheme was a live benefit;
- Buying more Annual Leave was a benefit that was being looked into.

The following Members asked questions and entered into a brief discussion on the subject of buying and selling annual leave;

- Councillor Keith Hoskins;
- Councillor Claire Strong; and
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall.

In response to questions raised, the Corporate Human Resources Manager, the Unison Representatives and the Service Director – Resources advised the following:

- Selling Annual Leave was not something that would be recommended as it was important for Staff to take time out of work;
- Staff were encouraged to use their Annual Leave entitlement;
- It may not be affordable to sell back annual leave.

IT WAS AGREED: That the discussion paper on Salary Sacrifice Schemes be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the discussion paper on Salary Sacrifice Schemes.

33 FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 47 Minutes 35 Seconds

IT WAS AGREED: That the discussion topic for the next meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee would be:

- Career Development, Talent and Succession Planning.

The Next meeting of The Joint Staff Consultative Committee would be held on Wednesday 11 March 2020 at 10:00am.

The meeting closed at 11.57 am

Chairman