

## Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

01/12/2021 DRAFT Minutes

**Present:** Ian Couper (IC), Andrew Betts (AB), Dee Levett (DL), Emma Jellis (EJ), Rebecca Webb (RW), Christina Corr (CC), Debbie Hiscock (DH), Vic Godfrey (VG), Anthony Roche (AR), Oliver Charter (OC)

**Circulation:** Global

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### 1. Apologies

Maggie Williams  
Nicola Viinikka

### 2. Matters Arising

No Update

### 3. NHDC update

The Union have rejected the Employers pay offer and carrying out a Ballot which will end on 14<sup>th</sup> January. Further guidance will be issued to employees in the new year once it is known what the next steps are.

RW gave a reminder that all staff members are welcome to attend the Inclusion Group. The next meeting is on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 12:30 and the discussion is on Sex, Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment. The Inclusion Group is fully supported by the Leadership Team and IC meets with members to pass feedback on.

There have been some queries from staff who have been trying to balance childcare and work as some children have caught Covid and are needing to isolate. Annual leave, Flexi and unpaid leave can be options however we encourage staff to discuss flexibility with their manager.

RW gave a reminder about the virtual wellbeing classes. The details are on the intranet and they are free of charge for employees. Details can be found by using the following link - [Virtual Wellbeing Classes | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

Following review by the Leadership Team, staff will have the Right to Request Flexible Working from day one of employment. This allows employees the right to request changes to the way they work including number of hours and working pattern,

There was an amendment to the Working Time Regulations (WTR) which allowed additional annual leave to be carried forward due to increased workloads relating to Covid-19. This amendment also covers the next year and gives the provision, if needed, for annual leave left from the current leave year to be carried forward for one more year (April 2022 – March 2023). The Leadership Team recognise that workload has continued to be significant for some teams particularly where resourcing issues have prevented individuals

from taking leave and are keen that no employee loses their leave. As a result, the following has been agreed:

- at the end of March 2023, carry forward will be limited to the **lower of 148 hours** (or the pro-rata equivalent of 4 weeks for part-time staff) and the **amount you carried forward in March 2022** (although if that is less than your weekly contracted hours then you can carry forward up 1 week)
- at the end of March 2024, carry forward will be limited to the **lower of 74 hours** (or the pro-rata equivalent of 2 weeks for part-time staff) and the **amount you carried forward in March 2023** (although if that is less than your weekly contracted hours then you can carry forward up 1 week)
- From March 2024, the normal policy of a maximum of 37 hours (pro-rata equivalent of 1 weeks leave for part-time staff) carry forward will apply in line with the Holiday policy.

IC provided an update on the response to the pandemic. It was noted that some staff are taking a relaxed approach to the current Covid rules in the office. Covid cases in the district and the levels of sickness at NHC related to Covid are on the rise and the rules are in place to keep staff safe, so must be followed.

Any sickness that is a result from taking up the Covid Vaccine is recorded through the normal process on iTrent but will not be included in any sickness triggers.

AR gave a reminder that Cabinet will be deciding the draft Budget later this month.

#### 4. SCF Terms of Reference Update

The survey was issued on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and responses are required by 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2021. Reminders will be sent out in between these dates and results will be discussed in the January SCF meeting. There will also be an article in December's edition of Insight.

#### 5. Employee Queries

**Question:** A member of staff is wanting to do some charity/volunteer work but is wondering whether they can do it during their working hours or do they need to make the time up or use flexi etc?

**Answer:** Pre pandemic NHC was looking at a volunteering policy for these kinds of situations and it is unsure what stage this got to. Please pass onto HR to respond.

**Question:** How do we book off Christmas eve?

**Answer:** The following advice has been sent out globally:

“Christmas Eve\*

Finally, a reminder that the main council services will be closed on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> December as an additional day off. This should be booked as **Other Absence** in iTrent using the absence type “Paid Leave NHDC” and using the absence reason as “NHDC Time off in Lieu”. Note that using Other Absence will not affect your annual leave entitlement.

\*Some service areas will continue to be operating over the Christmas period, e.g. Careline, and those working in these areas should speak to their manager about alternative arrangements.”

**Question:** The office isn't warm despite the temperature displaying 23 degrees? Staff have been sitting at the desks with their coats on. They have turned the temperature up, but it doesn't get warmer.

**Answer:** We have looked into the issue in Careline, and it appears to be improving. It may be down to more fresh air coming into the building to stop the spread of Covid and it will take a few minutes for it to warm up. Property Services to investigate.

**Question:** With more teams looking at getting Electric Vehicles (EV), are there plans to install more EV charging points across the district and at the DCO?

**Answer:** Yes, there are plans to install four charging points at the DCO. We have also been looking at plans to install more in our car parks.

## 6. IT Update

The Laptop Rollout is now the final stages and will hopefully be finished before Christmas.

There are more docking stations being rolled out at the DCO and HTH. IT are still waiting for more deliveries of docking stations but there isn't huge demand for them in the DCO with an average of 20 people a day across the floors.

IT have arranged cover across the Christmas Closedown to support any IT issues that occur for staff working during the closedown period. VG to publicise contact information.

Normally passwords are required to be changed every 90 days but as of last week this requirement has been relaxed so that staff come back after Christmas and can log in.

Staff and members that use Dell Password Manager will have received an email from IT with details on moving them over to Microsoft Authenticator.

IT are working on a tender for the Microsoft License Agreement for next year.

**Question:** Is there any update on the room in Hitchin multi-storey car park?

**Answer:** Yes, it will be going live from 13<sup>th</sup> December. Parking Services should be contacting Property Services to discuss arrangements.

**Question:** Are IT working on anything in the background that is causing applications like Northgate, Excel and Word etc. to run slow?

**Answer:** Information at Work and Northgate still run off of Internet Explorer which is an old browser which could cause speed issues. We are working to improve these applications.

## 7. Building Services Update

Property Services have been fogging the building, including any meeting rooms, toilets, stairwells, and communal areas, with a solution called 'Shield Me' which is proven to kill Covid and other bacteria.

## 8. AOB

No Update

**Chair for next meeting – Andrew Betts**

## 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](mailto:propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk)

Alternatively you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - [SCF@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:SCF@north-herts.gov.uk)

### **Representatives (and extension):**

**Emma Jellis** #4312 - MSU team based on Floor 4

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

**Nicola Viinikka** Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

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