

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

02/03/2022

Present: Anthony Roche (AR), Ian Couper (IC), Rebecca Webb (RW), Emma Jellis (EJ), Christina Corr (CC), Vicki Wood (VW) Dee Levett (DL), Toby LeSage (TL)

(Fallon Rumball-Nunan (FRN – notes))

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Vic Godfrey, Debbie Hiscock, Nicola Viinikka, Andrew Betts

2. Matters Arising

Welcome to the new SCF Employee Representative – Vicki Wood.

SCF Employee Representatives are in the process of organising a meeting with the communications team to discuss future SCF Communications.

3. NHDC update

Council Budget has been agreed for 2022/23. No significant changes to the draft versions except additional one-off spend on Green Space Wilding Projects, and the Outdoor Pool.

Improvements have been made to the Council Delivery plan, by linking strategic projects to the Council plan for 2022/27 with more clarity, The Council Delivery plan will go to approval to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny in March.

Hitchin District and County By Elections will take place on 10th March.

Planning has also begun for the May Election and Electoral Services will be reaching out for volunteers to assist with these.

HR Update

The pay award for April 2021 has now been agreed. An increase of 2.75% for Grade 1 only, 1.75% for Grades 2 - 12 and 1.5% for chief officers (Grades 13-16) will be applied to the payroll in time for March salaries and backdated to 1st April 2021.

Updated pay scales are now available on [Pay scales | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

Members thanked HR for the quick turn around to make this available in March Payslips.



The 2022 pay award negotiations have not yet begun so agreement will take some time.

The next Inclusion Group meeting will take place on Tuesday 8 March between 12pm - 2pm. The focus of this meeting will be on religion and how your personal beliefs and religion impact upon your experience of working at North Herts. The meeting will be formatted as an open discussion and all council staff are invited to join the discussion at any level they feel comfortable doing so.

The Staff Recognition Awards are open- closing date for nominations for this round is Friday 11 March 2022

Another Productivity Ninja Workshop has been organised for 19th May 09:30am- 11:00am. [Click here to book.](#)

Wellbeing Update

The events in Ukraine will have personally affected all employees in some way.

If you require further support at this time, you can visit www.my-eap.com, speak to a Mental Health First Aider and/or sign up to the Headspace application using your North Hertfordshire Council email address.

We have obtained Mental Health E Learning from Mind Charity that will be available for employees and managers via Growzone in the coming weeks.

4. Employee Queries

Various queries were submitted regarding the relaxation of Covid restrictions and how this will impact working in DCO:

We have a corporate responsibility under Health and Safety Law to keep our staff safe and we have to take account of the impact of covid on employees. The Government may be relaxing measures but legally we are required to keep everyone safe. Therefore, it's very challenging to get this balance.

As of 04/03 as an organisation our guidance is currently to do all to protect colleagues and their families who may include high risk individuals, so therefore no changes to the restrictions in DCO. Throughout the pandemic, guidance from Public Health Hertfordshire has been sought and we are awaiting the latest guidance. Views will be sought from employees via SCF and other channels before implementation. Further correspondence and updates to be communicated in due course.

Are people thinking about the effects of long covid on employees?

Thankfully The Council has seen very few cases of long covid. The HR team are prepared to support managers and employees with any cases that arise..

Have we got any contribution from the authority for household expenditure?

For all contracted home-workers, general homeworking expenses (including broadband) can be claimed via Employee Self Service up to a maximum of £16 per month.

5. IT Update



Cyber Security Reminder:

Anything suspicious could mean anything as we are all very much in a connected world, some examples are:

- 1) 3rd Party supplier requesting access to systems when it hasn't been approved by you.
- 2) Your user account getting locked out when you haven't been trying to login.
- 3) Your password being changed without your knowledge.
- 4) More targeted and 'believable' emails going to staff/managers with attachments or links to viruses.
- 5) Large number of files being deleted or corrupted.
- 6) External suppliers attempting to send files for us to run/install to fix a bug (which then deploys a payload/backdoor).
- 7) Sophos anti-virus warnings / detection pop up – please log these on the IT Helpdesk giving as much detail as possible on what you were doing at the time and a screenshot of the message.
- 8) Be extra vigilant when reviewing your Personal Email Manager (PEM / Clearswift) held messages and make absolutely sure these are genuine before releasing them.

There is also a perceived increased risk with Microsoft Teams due to attackers getting hold of just one user account and password then sending 'files' to other users within the organisations for them to click and open. We have tried to make the system secure by only allowing Teams access from NHC Equipment and/or Android for Work but there could still be new attack vectors that we are unaware of.

In July 2021 your personal development session focused on Cyber Crime and Cyber Security. If you need a refresher or did not complete it in July this is a reminder to please take a look at the modules on GROW Zone. [Click here.](#)

Freedom of Information Requests:

IT are receiving high volumes of requests; please could these be answered promptly to allow the IT team to process correctly.

6. Green Update

Solar Panels on the District Council Offices are now connected and generating electricity.

In the process of installing four electric charging points in the DCO car park. Careline have two electric vehicles on order that will replace petrol ones.

Parking Services Team are in the process of investigating opportunities for more charging points to be installed in NHC car parks for public use.

Climate Change Implementation group last meeting included:

- Climate Emergency UK published a score for all councils. We have reviewed the score we have achieved and will take actions where we think they are relevant.
- Climate Change Officer Group have been newly formed to implement changes on a more practical level.

If anyone has any ideas, suggestions are welcome.

7. Building Services Update

Questions were welcomed.

8. Any other Business

CC to attend the JSCC meeting.

Chair for next meeting – Dee Levett

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):

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