

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

06/04/2022

Present: Ian Couper (IC), Jo Keshishian (JK) Emma Jellis (EJ), Christina Corr (CC), Vicki Wood (VW) Andrew Betts (AB), Alice Ashbrook (AA), Dee Levett (DL), Toby LeSage (TL)

(Fallon Rumball–Nunan (FRN – notes)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Anthony Roche, Rebecca Webb, Nicola Viinikka, Debbie Hiscock

2. Matters Arising

Welcome to the new SCF Apprentice Employee Representative – Alice Ashbrook.

3. IT Restructure

Following feedback from the IT Consultation this has been put on hold and will be raised at SCF in due course when the updated proposal has been finalised.

4. NHC update

Welcomed any questions on the recent return to work communications.

Two schemes currently in place to aid Ukrainian Refugees.

Ukrainian Family Scheme: If a refugee has family in the UK. This doesn't require any initial support from local government but there may be a need to provide services.

Homes for Ukraine: Working alongside County council to support refugees move in to homes in the district. North Herts have one of the highest number of matched hosts and refugees in the county with approx. 52 matches (at time of last set of data, likely to change).

County Council provides an initial payment to the refugee on arrival and DBS checks on the hosts.

Environmental Health team are providing property checks ensuring safety prior to refugee's arrival. NHC will also have a role in helping refugees integrate and settle into a new country.

Benefits team will be making the 'thank you' payments to the hosts of £350 per month (for up to one year).



NHC Communications team are working alongside other local councils to signpost residents to the information available.

HR Update

Annual Leave for 2022/2023

For those with leave left at the end of March 2022 there is automatic carry forward to the 2022-23 leave year, for up to one week's annual leave (up to 37 hours depending on your weekly contracted hours) which was available from April. Any additional leave (over the equivalent of one week's leave) has now been calculated and uploaded manually by our payroll team at Liberata.

Wellbeing Update

April is stress awareness month with this in mind HR would like to remind you of the support available:

[Headspace for work application](#): access to 1,000+ hours of content designed to help you manage stress, fall asleep, exercise mindfully, remain focused, and more. Headspace also has child-friendly content for those of you with young ones.

[Click here](#) to sign up with your north-herts.gov.uk email address.

[Employee Assistance Program](#): around the clock access to confidential, independent, professional information and emotional support.

[Vita Health Group Wellbeing classes](#): access to wellbeing classes, completely free of charge to employees. These classes focus on creating an environment that empowers employees to proactively manage their physical and mental wellbeing.

The classes will be delivered digitally, covering a number of topics including Working well at home, improving sleep, managing stress and anxiety and diet and nutrition. For further information, or to book a class please [click here](#).

[Mind eLearning](#): courses have been designed by the charity MIND and introduces mental health and wellbeing, covering key topics such as what is mental health and wellbeing, common mental health problems, what factors impact our mental health, how to care for yourself at work, how to build resilience and how to support others.

5. Employee Queries

None

6. IT Update

Desk booking:

Desks have returned to normal on floors 4 and 5 so you will now be able to sit directly next to colleagues. Please continue to book via the smart way desk booking system so as to monitor usage.

IT Helpdesk:

Please allow more time for non-urgent queries due to low staffing levels.



If anyone has any old or damaged NHC IT equipment please can you log an IT Helpdesk Ticket to organise its return.

Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations requests:

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

7. Green Update - Prepared by Alice Sims

A Roadmap to Net Zero is being produced for North Herts Council which will map how the council will achieve net zero by our target date.

A Climate Change Officers group is in the process of being set up. This will include key officers across the Council to ensure that the climate change response is coordinated and implemented across services collaboratively.

The Policy Team are currently working to produce a review of the Council's Carbon Emissions and Climate Actions in 2021. This will include an estimate of carbon emissions produced by the Council during the year, in comparison to our carbon baseline year of 2019 /20 and will also include a review of the Council's progress in achieving the proposed actions of the Climate change Strategy.

Climate Change and Sustainability communications over the last month have included:

- The promotion of the Herts Energy Advise Tool App
- The promotion of a carbon calculator, encouraging staff and residents to receive an estimate of their personal carbon footprint as well as suggestions as to how they can reduce this
- The promotion of Herts Sustainable Periods by Hertfordshire Waste Partnership – a new scheme which offers 15% off reusable period products to all Hertfordshire residents to tackle period waste as well as other issues around women's health and period poverty

There was a question about whether we had considered having "living walls" on our buildings. IC said that he was not aware of it having been considered. We do not have many buildings that we have control over and are looking to retain. There would be complexities with all our buildings (e.g. listed building status, structure) but could consider it as part of any future building projects.

8. Building Services Update

Questions were welcomed.

VW: Have you considered removing desk phones and consequently saving on related contracts?

IC: This is something that has been looked into, such as internet phones and plugging headsets directly into laptop.

9. Any other Business

None

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

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer Revenues and Benefits

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

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

Vicki Wood#4158 – Planning Officer

Alice Ashbrook#4235 - Community Protection Apprentice