

## Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

04/05/2022

**Present:** Anthony Roche (**AR**), Rebecca Webb (**RW**), Emma Jellis (**EJ**), Andrew Betts (**AB**), Alice Ashbrook (**AA**), Dee Levett (**DL**).

(Fallon Rumball-Nunan (**FRN – notes**))

**Circulation:** Global

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### 1. Apologies

Ian Couper, Christina Corr, Toby Le Sage, Debbie Hiscock

### 2. Matters Arising

None

### 3. NHDC update

#### HR Update

The next Personal Development Morning is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May, the focus for this month is Finance and to support this we have a number of resources available.

#### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 10.00am – 11.00am**

Ian Couper will be presenting a session about Financial Sustainability. This one-hour, interactive session will help us to understand what financial sustainability means, why it is important, and how everyone can help the Council achieve it. It will also include an overview of how the Council is funded, how we manage what we spend and deliver good value for money. This will be held via Zoom and joining instructions will be sent out just ahead of the session next week.

Book your place on the GROW Zone here: [Financial Sustainability: Financial Sustainability for All Staff \(learningpool.com\)](#)

#### **VAT eLearning Module**

In addition to this session, a new VAT eLearning module that has been launched – this should be completed by all staff who raise purchase requisition orders or sales invoices, use a purchasing card, or who just want to find out more about VAT.

Click here to access the module: [VAT: NHC VAT eLearning Module \(learningpool.com\)](#)

#### **Risk Management eLearning Module**



We also have the Risk Management eLearning module which should be completed by all Risk Owners or Risk Assignees, if you are unsure if you are in either of these categories, please contact Tim Everitt.

Click here to access the module: [RM: Risk Management eLearning \(learningpool.com\)](#)

The popular Think Productive – The Way of a Productivity Ninja workshop is taking place again on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Click here to book: [Prod Ninja: The Way of the Productivity Ninja Virtual Workshop \(learningpool.com\)](#)

Benefits Review: Employees are encouraged to complete the upcoming survey around our current benefits and HR welcome ideas for any potential new benefit ideas. Further information on staff benefits can be found on the intranet under [Staff benefits](#) and some are covered in the [Employee Handbook](#).

#### Wellbeing Update:

Mental Health Awareness Week 9<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> May

Reference to the preventing work related stress article featured in Insight – read it [here](#).

Reminder of internal support available to staff and managers including:

[The Employee Assistant Programme](#)

[GP appointment Service](#)

[Mental Health First Aiders](#)

[Accredited Internal Coaches and Mentors](#)

#### NHDC Update

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May is election day, staff will be updated on result as soon as count is completed.

Following on from the previous minutes, the Ukraine housing is ongoing.

**Question:** Do we have any updates on figures relating to the Ukraine housing?

**Answer:** As of W/C 25<sup>th</sup> April in North Hertfordshire:

- 117 Visa's approved (34 have arrived in UK)
- 94 Sponsor households matched
- 209 Ukrainian refugees matched in total

In wider Hertfordshire 1064 Ukrainian Refugees have been matched into 612 homes

#### **4. Employee Queries**



**Question:** Given that covid isn't going away and the period of time people can be testing positive, will the Council remain flexible where parents have a child at home off school/nursery with covid?

**Answer:** This is something that HR and Senior Leadership team are discussing and will feedback in due course.

**Question:** For children in childcare, changes to hours need to be done at least a month if not 6 weeks in advance and subject to availability i.e., any increase in hours might not be possible initially or even at all. With the shift to increased office working (and increased commuting time), sufficient notice should be given so that parents can make any necessary childcare arrangements.

**Answer:** We appreciate that making changes to childcare arrangements require notice and managers and employees are encouraged to have open discussions on this issue.

**Question:** I understand there may be the wider council aim for people to go back to the office 1-2 days per week. Can part time workers do less days in the office i.e., 1 day (subject to service needs)? For full time workers the reduction in office days from 5 to 2 days is quite a drop (40%) but for part time workers say on 3 days per week 2 office days would be 67% of time. Can this be proportional to the hours worked?

**Answer:** We believe there are benefits in working from the office and benefits in working from home and it's about finding the right balance. There has been guidance around returning 1-2 days per week and in practice this should be based on what works for both teams and individuals. If someone part time feels that the arrangements are not suitable for them this should be discussed openly with their line manager.

**Please keep these questions coming we hope to publish a document that will provide clarity for employees and it is useful to know the thoughts and concerns to focus on.**

## 5. IT Update

*Provided by Toby Le Sage subsequently to the meeting.*

### IT Update

The new Vodafone contract is now in place. If existing staff or new staff require a mobile phone or a data SIM card please can Managers complete the Mobile phone application form on the following intranet page [Mobile Phones | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#) Managers will be required to provide a cost code before IT can activate the SIM card. Existing phones and tablets, if any member of staff is experiencing connection issues, please reboot the phone/tablet, if the connection issue persists following the reboot please log a call and IT will investigate.

### Cadcorp upgrade

A business case has been submitted for the upgrade of Cadcorp to version 9. There are a number of improvements that the new version will offer staff. Once the business case has been approved work will start to upgrade the software. IT will be in contact with certain members of staff when planning the upgrade.

### Helpdesk



IT are still working with a reduced number of staff on the IT helpdesk. IT will work to assist staff that have high priority helpdesk requests, however there may be some delay in responding to some helpdesk calls during this period of reduced staff.

**Question:** When will all the desks at Buntingford have docking stations installed?

**Answer:** Remaining desks to have docking stations installed by the end of June.

## 6. Green Update

*Prepared by Alice Sims*

The terms of reference for the Climate Change Officers Groups have now been reviewed and finalised. The policy team will arrange for the next meeting of the group to take place in the near future

- The carbon baseline report, which sets a baseline of carbon emissions for 2019/20 has been updated to include smaller sites and buildings. This will be used to measure our carbon reduction progress against.
- The Policy team have completed an assessment of the Environmental implications contained with any decision-making papers that were presented to Cabinet/Council from the last civic year. This review ensures that any impacts either on environment were adequately assessed, and mitigating action put in place where practical, including any impact assessments that were completed throughout the year. During the civic year 2021/22, three environmental impact assessments were completed and included in reports to cabinet, Council and for delegated decisions. These were for:
  - The Grounds Maintenance Contract Review
  - The decision regarding Land South of Clare Crescent, Baldock:
  - The County-wide Solar Group Purchase Scheme

North Herts Council will be represented by a stall at the Hitchin Eco-Fair on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May. Materials are being collated to promote some of the work that the Council has, and is, doing. This includes the North Herts climate change infographic; posters to promote the HEAT energy app, Herts Sustainable Periods, and the WWF carbon calculator

## 7. Building Services Update

Questions were welcomed.

## 8. Any other Business

### SCF Membership

Dee Levett will be retiring from the CSC but will return to the SCF meetings in her TU capacity.

A discussion followed regarding recruiting SCF members, if you would like to join or are a manager who thinks you know just the person please encourage them to talk to an existing SCF member or HR.

**Action:** Add ideas/suggestions as standing item to the SCF agenda.

**Chair for next meeting – Alice Ashbrook**

**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

**Christina Corr** #4325 - Senior Technical Officer Revenues and Benefits

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

**Alice Ashbrook**#4235 - Community Protection Apprentice

**Louis Franklin**#4262 – Admin Support Officer