

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

06/07/2022

Present: Anthony Roche (**AR**), Rebecca Webb (**RW**), Ian Couper (**IC**), Emma Jellis (**EJ**), Alice Ashbrook (**AA**), Andrew Betts (**AB**), Louis Franklin (**LF**), Dee Levett (**DL**) (Fallon Rumball-Nunan (**FRN – notes**))

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Christina Corr

2. Restructures

Emergency Planning proposed move to Resources with no changes to the individual roles. Reasons include:

- Better linked to Resources
- The new executive member for Emergency planning is Cllr Albert, IC already liaises with Cllr Albert on other matters so would prevent duplication.
- Sarah Kingsley (SK) will be the lead officer on Climate change, and this will allow more time to focus on this.

Consultation has started and no representative asked to be on SCF during the consultation period (in line with the policy) and all involved in agreement with the changes. Consultation to end W/C 11/07.

3. Matters Arising

None

4. NHC update

HR update:

Benefits Survey:

Thank you to everyone for taking part, there was a good response rate and the HR team are currently analysing the results and suggestions provided. More information to follow.

Policy Updates:

The 'Special Leave' policy has been renamed '[Other Absence](#)' policy this is inline with the titles on itrent. The policy also now includes support for employees volunteering outside of their roles at the Council.

The [Probation Period policy](#) has been updated in line with many other local authorities. The probationary period will apply to all new starters, including those with continuous service.

Pay Award 2022:



NH attended the Regional Pay Briefing and have provided feedback. The National Employers will begin negotiations with Unions. The pay claim is for an minimum increase of £2000 or current rate of Retail Price Index (RPI) on all spinal points, whichever is greater.

Wellbeing Update:

[Headspace for work application:](#) Staff are still able to sign up for a year's free premium access to the Headspace app.

[Mind eLearning](#) E learning Grow Zone from the Mental Health charity Mind.

HR team are finalising [Financial Wellbeing Intranet page](#), sign posting staff to support due to the cost-of-living increase. There has also been a soft launch process for salary advances. These will be for emergency costs, if you have an unexpected cost that could cause financial strain, please speak to your manager or email Hrhelp.

Check out the [monthly newsletter](#) from Employee Assistant Program, this month focusing on 'Getting ready for summer; travel, holidays and keeping it all together.'

NHC Update:

Shaping our Future (SOF)

Have been working with Communications team on the values logos, linking them with the new council branding and adding meaning with a strapline.

Refreshed values graphics below:



Welcomed any views or comment. The values will be taken to the Steering Group for views and approval. Following on from this, IC will be looking to discuss SOF with SCF and other employee led groups for feedback and the action plan in more detail.

5. Employee Queries

Q: Will there be a further staff benefit survey for feedback on the new proposals?



A: Within the survey there were a few potential ideas that employees could comment on and the free form boxes also allowed for people's views. If there are outstanding questions, this would be considered.

Q: With regards to the benefits survey, I don't feel that the survey was clear on how to answer any benefits that may not be applicable for yourself personally, but you felt were useful to the authority, or other colleagues.

A: The introduction in the survey asked everyone to fill out from own personal perspective. This was our first time using the Microsoft Form platform and it was a large-scale survey, so any feedback is welcomed to improve for next time.

Q: Currently we get £16 for homeworking, is this fair that full time and part time employees receive the same amount?

A: Response provided post meeting:

The homeworking allowance is intended to cover expenses relating to homeworking including broadband, heating and other associated costs. As not all these costs relate to the amount of time worked (you can't get a part time broadband contract, for example), it seems appropriate that the allowance is linked to the individual rather than their hours worked.

Q: If you have a non-working day on a Bank Holiday, is this included in your allowance?

A: Full time staff are entitled to paid time off for all public holidays and part time staff will receive a pro rata entitlement. RW to pass on calculation to the individual.

Q: There has been no update on IT Restructure in the SCF meetings?

A: As the timing did not correspond with closure of consultation period and upcoming SCF meeting details of the restructure were forwarded to the SCF inbox on 26/04/2022 this was forwarded to members for discussion/comment. AR added that the initial consultation was brought to SCF and the staff recommended changes. The consultation was paused to consider these suggestions and the proposal was changed on that basis. Those are the changes that would have been communicated by email.

6. IT Update

None

7. Green Update

Prepared by Alice Sims

Net Zero Week

Net Zero Week is taking place across 2-8 July 2022. Throughout the week, Council communications will highlight the net zero targets that North Herts Council have set as part of our climate change strategy, promoting our work that contributes toward achieving those targets, and promoting the actions of community groups that are contributing to reducing carbon emissions in the district. An updated version of the climate change strategy infographic has been produced to demonstrate more recent actions taken by the Council to address climate change. This can also be viewed on the Council's climate change web page.

Cabinet Panel on the Environment

The upcoming Cabinet Panel will take place on Wednesday 20 July and will focus on the theme of biodiversity. The Policy Team will provide an update to the panel regarding the HCCSP Biodiversity Sub-group. Andrew Mills, North Herts Council's Greenspace Manager, will provide an update on recent Council initiatives, and members from the Green and Growing Network have agreed to present at the panel on some initiatives that



they are currently involved in, and have been asked to consider the question 'How can residents get involved in helping local nature' as part of their presentation. Residents are also invited to sign up to participate.

Solar Bulk Purchase Scheme

North Herts Council have partnered with iChoosr and other local authorities to provide Hertfordshire residents with an opportunity to be part of a solar bulk purchase scheme. This will enable residents to install solar panels (and battery storage and EV charging if desired) installed at their homes at a reduced rate due to multi-purchase discount. This scheme will launch at the end of August 2022.

Upcoming Letchworth Green Festival

Letchworth Green Festival will take place on 10 September, between 10am – 4pm at The Wynd and The Arcade in Letchworth. The Council will have a presence at the festival to engage with residents on what the Council has and is doing to tackle climate change and increase sustainability, as well as encourage residents with actions they can take in reducing the district's overall emissions

Climate Change Officers Group (CCOG)

The Climate Change and Sustainability Officers Group met on Wednesday 15th June. As this was an initial meeting, each team provided updates on what relevant work they are completing. This information has been collated by the policy team and will be recorded against our climate change strategy proposed actions. A discussion was also had around teams providing support to assist the comms quarterly plans for climate change.

AR added that this month is Plastic Free July and at the LGA Conference, climate change was one of the main focuses. SK and Cllr Jarvis attended and have lots of ideas that will be communicated soon.

8. Building Services Update

Welcomed questions.

Reminder

- When using a desk on the 1st, 4th or 5th floor, you must book it using the desk booking system. [Desk Booking System | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)
- On the 1st floor and one side of the 4th floor, we still have every other desk out of use. These desks cannot be booked and must not be used. If a team wants to sit together then please use the other side of the 4th floor or the 5th floor.
- Clean and sanitise desks before and after use.

Leadership team have agreed to continue to offer free testing to those in customer facing roles, will be reviewed in March 2023.

If anyone has any issues, please email these to propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk

9. Ideas/Suggestions

LF raised a suggestion for more allotment space as there are currently no availability in the district and would aid with the cost of living and bio diversity to local residents.

AR commented that the Baldock Allotment Society would like to expand into some adjacent land and that is currently ongoing but would highlight this to SK.

10. AOB

- SCF members thanked Helen Bylett for organising the meeting chairing workshop.

Chair for next meeting – Louis Franklin

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

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

Alice Ashbrook#4235 - Community Protection Apprentice

Louis Franklin#4262 – Admin Support Officer