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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE MEETING ROOM 1, TOWN LODGE,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH DECEMBER, 2017 AT 3.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Fiona Hill (Chairman), Sarah Dingley, Bernard Lovewell, Lynda Needham and Martin Stears-Handscorb*

In Attendance:

Kerry Shorrocks (Corporate Human Resources Manager), Rebecca Webb (Human Resources Operations Manager), Dee Levett, Claire Morgan (Communities Officer), Amelia McNally (Committee and Member Services Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer).

Also Present:

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Christina Corr (Staff Consultation Forum) and Maggie Williams (Senior Human Resources and Contracts Manager).

20 MINUTES - 27 SEPTEMBER 2017

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee meeting held on 27 September 2017 be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

21 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

22 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed all Members and officers to the Meeting;
- (2) The Chairman reminded all present that, in line with Council policy, the meeting was being audio recorded;
- (3) Members were reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and were required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest which required they leave the room under Paragraph 7.4 of the Code of Conduct, could speak on the item, but must leave the room before the debate and vote.

23 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

The Corporate Human Resources Manager drew attention to the Minutes of the meetings of the Staff Consultation Forum (SCF) held on 4 October 2017, 1 November 2017 and the Draft Minutes of 6 December 2017 as follows:

Minutes – 4 October 2017

Workshop

This meeting included refresher training regarding the role of the Staff Consultation Forum Representative

There had been some discussion regarding the merit of an SCF email address, which would be investigated.

The SCF page on the intranet was the 10th most popular page for the period 1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017 with 1,198 page views.

NHDC Update

An assessment day for the Deputy Chief Executive role had been held on Friday 6 October 2017 and it had since been confirmed that Anthony Roche would take on this role.

The Flu Vaccination programme for staff was currently underway.

Members asked about take up of the flu vaccination offer

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that over 100 staff had taken up the offer so far.

The review of National Pay Scales would not be completed within the original timescales

Office Accommodation

Communications regarding the office accommodation project had been excellent.

Property Services were discussing with Heads of Service regarding desk, chair, equipment and storage needs

Careline had raised some concerns regarding safety when working at night regarding parking, as the multi storey car park would be closed.

Members queried whether any thought had been given to standing desks

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that some standing desks would be available.

Minutes – 1 November 2017

NHDC Update

The Corporate Business Planning Process was underway with efficiency and growth proposals being discussed at informal workshops during the week ending Friday 3 November 2017.

Work on the North Herts Leisure Centre was now completed and the official re-opening took place on 7 October 2017.

A simultaneous meeting of NHDC Cabinet and EHDC Executive was held on 16 October 2017 regarding the new waste contract bids. The successful bidder would be announced at the end of the stand still period.

I.T. Projects Update

I.T. were working on a lot of different projects, with HR being involved in several of them. IT projects including:

- New Buntingford Depot Waste Client Team – broadband and mobile technology;
- Uniform – moving the Planning, Building Control, Land Charges and GIS systems to a new provider;
- Work to fit out the new DCO with monitors, screens etc;
- AV equipment for the new Council Chamber – this will be started after the move back to DCO;
- Data protection – changes required following a review of the Data Protection Act;
- Penetration System Test – this went well, although there was some work to be done to strengthen firewalls;
- Passwords – Staff have been given guidance on how to make passwords stronger.

Proposed Restructure for Museum and Hitchin Town Hall

Both group and individual consultations were taking place regarding the proposed restructure. The consultation period regarding this proposal ran from 3 October 2017 to 9 November 2017.

Staff had raised a large number of concerns regarding the proposed restructure.

A Member asked whether an update regarding this proposed restructure was available as it would seem that the whole of the Museum Service was at risk of not meeting its obligations.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that the comments received during the consultation would be considered and that a decision had not yet been made.

Human Resources were closely involved and would follow due process with the outcome being shared initially with staff and then more generally.

Possible Relocation of Careline

It was planned that Careline relocate to DCO in April/May 2018. There were some concerns raised by staff regarding parking, smoking areas and tea/coffee making facilities

SCF Email Address

A dedicated email address for SCF would be introduced and a rota drawn up to ensure that it is monitored.

Employee Queries

Queries were raised regarding the restructure and job interview within the waste team. The Head of Service would be contacting the team in the next few days to discuss the restructure.

Draft Minutes – 6 December 2017

NHDC Update

The Local Government Employers had made a pay offer of 2% for 18/19 and a further 2% for 19/20. There will be bigger increases amounting to 9 percent for lower grades to take into account the rising rate of the National Living Wage.

This offer was tied in with the review of national pay scales which would result in a number of pay scales being removed

Office Accommodation

A spreadsheet indicating where departments were likely to be based in the DCO had been circulated and protocols regarding hot-desking and eating at desks were being developed.

Drop in sessions to answer any office accommodation queries would-be held on 15 and 19 December 2017.

An SCF Representative advised that, due to the temporary move to Town Lodge and the relocation back to DCO, they no longer represented a logical group of people and asked how this would be resolved.

The Corporate Legal Manager advised that this should be addressed at the next SCF meeting.

Smoking in the Workplace

Concerns had been raised regarding those working for Careline overnight and it was agreed that smokers should remain within line of sight of the building.

There was a discussion regarding the current policy regarding smoking in the workplace and the issues faced by staff who worked in the evenings, particularly regarding safety. Members were concerned that the safety of staff working in the evenings was considered. They did not believe that there should be a zero tolerance regarding smoking, but that a sensible and safe solution was found. It was suggested that a risk assessment be undertaken regarding this issue.

Final IIP Report

Publication of the report had been delayed due to concerns about the quality of the report provided. IIP have agreed to prepare a more detailed report at no extra cost.

Waste Management Restructure

A Unison Representative queried whether the restructure of the waste management team had been completed.

The Corporate Legal Manager advised that the restructure had been completed and all staff informed of the outcome.

IT WAS AGREED:

- (1) That the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forum held on 4 October 2017, 1 November 2017 and draft Minutes for 6 December 2017 be noted;
- (2) That the Corporate Human Resources Manager be requested to undertake a risk assessment regarding the safety of staff that chose to smoke when working in the evenings.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to consider any issues addressed by the Staff Consultation Forum.

24 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE: INFORMATION NOTE

The Committee received an information note entitled People Strategy Update

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that this was the annual report and drew attention to the following:

Recruitment

Recruitment had been an ongoing challenge due to turnover and a number of departmental restructures. Turnover figures were being monitored.

HR had worked with the team from EELGA regarding the recruitment and assessment for the appointment of the new Deputy Chief Executive.

The selection process for recruitment of senior staff was very thorough with applicants having to complete a rigorous assessment and day of events including lunch with Members, interviews and presentations.

Members noted that of the 6 people invited for a final interview 4 were female.

Feedback regarding the new improved short listing process had been positive and was now being used for the majority of vacancies. This process meant that applicant's applied online and this was then automatically directed through to managers.

Apprenticeships

The Apprenticeship Levy had been paid since April 2017 and funds were being used to train apprentices and would in future be extended for training to develop existing staff and Higher Apprenticeships would be introduced for career development purposes.

In response to a question the Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that the aspiration was to continue to take on apprentices at a lower level also into harder to recruit areas.

The aim was to invest in and grow people from within the organisation and to this end apprenticeships were available up to masters level.

The apprenticeship in itself was training and courses were purchased that supported the job that the apprentice had been appointed to.

NHDC was considering whether to join the Hertfordshire Apprentice Alliance however were attending meetings to gather information.

Equal Pay and Equalities

Equalities data was sent for publication at the end of January 2017.

Mandatory gender pay gap monitoring was introduced from the end of March 2017. with the first set of data needing to be submitted by 30th March 2018 Discussions were underway with Serco regarding reporting requirements and a solution was being developed by the SAP system which should be available by February 2018.

Work had commenced on the Equal Pay Review, the report would be presented to this Committee.

Pay and Benefits

The LG Employers announced that they would be reviewing the national pay scales and the results from this were now not expected until well into 2018. Councils have been advised to plan for potential pay increases as a consequence of the review.

The current Framework Agreement with HCC and Serco has been extended until March 2021. The provision of services to NHDC by Serco was now being scrutinised to ensure the new contract reflects our requirements and is value for money.

The Framework Agreement would not cover the provision of OH services beyond March 2019. It was being considered how OH services would be provided from April 2019.

It is expected that a new contract for the provision of EAP services to the Council will be required from April 2018 and arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure the continuation of this valuable service to employees without interruption.

In the middle of the year a new contract with a reduced commission rate was agreed for the provision of Kiddivouchers and the contract for Wider Wallet retail discount scheme was also renegotiated.

The contract for the cycle to work scheme ended in April 2017, but due to the low take up in recent years, it was decided not offer the scheme in 2017. The level of interest next year would be assessed before entering any new contractual arrangements.

IR35

Members asked how many people had been affected by the IR35 legislation

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that a maximum of two people had been affected.

Salary Sacrifice Schemes

Changes to the salary sacrifice car leasing schemes meant that benefits for this scheme were reduced except for ultra low emissions vehicles.

Since the changes to the scheme there had been no take up of vehicles and the scheme would be reviewed prior to the contract review date of 30 November 2018.

Pensions

Under the statutory requirements all those who have opted out of an employer's pension scheme have to be re-enrolled every third anniversary of the original auto-enrolment. This was undertaken by the Council in March 2017 with 31 individuals being re-enrolled however the majority of these have once again opted out of the scheme.

A triennial valuation of the pension occurred this year which resulted in an increase in the percentage contributions and lump sum being paid by the Council.

Learning and Development

A new learning and development management system, Grow Zone, was being implemented for e-learning and other applications which went live on 4 December 2017. This was user friendly and very interactive.

Regular Performance Review

95 percent of annual reviews had been completed within the set timescales.

A new set of competencies had been developed and were in use and a new organisational values, in the form of challenges, would be communicated and used to drive and support organizational change.

Policies

Several policies had been reviewed and published and associated documents had also been amended

Absence

The short term absence target was narrowly missed for 16/17.

Long term absence figures were very low and on a downward trend. Every case of long term absence was closely managed.

Members asked what support was offered to staff with mental health issues and whether preventative measures helped with attendance levels,

The Corporate Human Resources Manager advised that all staff could contact the Employee Assistance Programme for support and that managers were given training.

The highest level of absence was for muscular skeletal issues, however mental health issues did account for a significant level of absence. Preventative measures such as referral to OH and awareness training did help with absence levels and long term absences were well managed.

Flu Vaccinations

There had been a good take up of the seasonal flu vaccination programme.

2017 Audits

During 2017 there had been audits on 5 topics in which HR were involved.

25 DISCUSSION PAPER - LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

Prior to the item being discussed, Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb declared a declareable interest in respect of any discussions regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme, as he had a pension that came under this scheme.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager introduced a Discussion Paper on the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

She advised that the LGPS was one of the largest public sector pension schemes and that the London Pension Fund Authority was managed by Hertfordshire County Council

Employee contribution rates increased with the level of pay and there was a facility for employees to pay half contributions and receive half the normal pension benefits.

It should be noted that employees could only receive retirement benefits on the grounds of ill health if they were members of the pension scheme.

The employer contribution rate was 18.6 percent plus an annual lump sum of £1,006k.

There was a statutory requirement that all those who had opted out of the pension scheme be re-enrolled every third anniversary. 31 individuals were re-enrolled, but the majority of those opted out again.

There had been various iterations of the pension's scheme and pension benefits would be calculated on each scheme that the member had been part of.

The proposed exit cap had been delayed and there was no information on its planned implementation.

In response to a question the Corporate Human Resources Manager confirmed that employees could make AVC payments into the scheme.

Members noted that NHDC contributions were approximately £2.7 million and agreed that it was important that employees were encouraged to join a pension scheme.

26 DISCUSSION TOPICS

The Corporate Human Resources Manager reminded Members that the discussion topic for the March 2018 meeting was Apprenticeships (The future for apprenticeships, the Apprentice Levy, Public Sector Targets and Higher Apprenticeships).

Members considered that Coaching should be considered at the June 2018 meeting

IT WAS AGREED: That the discussion topic for the meeting of this Committee due to be held in June 2018 be Coaching.

Wednesday, 13th December, 2017

The meeting closed at 4.09 pm

Chairman