



## **Staff Consultation Meeting**

**07 March 2018**

**Present:** David Scholes, Anthony Roche, Kerry Shorrocks, Claire Morgan, Dee Levett, Maggie Williams, Ben Glover, Emma Jellis, Rebecca Webb, Sue Collett, Ian Couper, Vic Godfrey, Christina Corr (Chair), Debbie Hiscock, James Watson, Preeti Binning (Notes)

**Apologies:** Dee Levett, Ian Cooper, Vic Godfrey, Debbie Hiscock, James Watson.

**Circulation:** Global

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### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Dee Levett, Ian Cooper, Vic Godfrey, Debbie Hiscock, James Watson.

### **2. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

Previous minutes were agreed.

Waste Services -The Buntingford office refit for the Joint client team has been completed. Staff have TUPE transferred from East Herts and the team has moved to the Buntingford depot. The waste contract transfer from Veolia to Urbaser is ongoing and focusing on the round optimisation, The Buntingford depot and Urbaser are working with Veolia.

### **3. NHDC Update**

Insight has published a final budget position for 2018-19 and it was stated that a balanced budget for the year has been agreed by Council.. The financial position has been aided by the £1.5m saving from the new joint waste contract. Consequently the position for 2020/2021 where £4m of savings and £3m use of reserves were required has improved somewhat.

The group were informed that the shareholder sub-committee is set to meet during the week starting 12 March 2018 for the Part 1 and a Part 2 report for a housing company to be formed. The Committee has confirmed the recommendation not to explore the buy to let option but to explore further the conversion and development of existing properties. The first property to be considered will be Harkness Court where the options of splitting the building into 2 houses or 4 flats are being reviewed. This will be project 1 and going forward, there will also be further work to develop projects 2, 3 and 4. An opportunity has been put to the Council to undertake a joint venture to regenerate Hitchin's Churchgate Shopping Centre. This would entail a 'face-lift' to the existing shopping centre, improving the quality of the units available and in turn making them more attractive to retailers. The scheme would also see improved public open space and investment in Hitchin's historic market.

At a recent Council meeting, Councillors agreed to support the principle of this joint venture, with the Council as funder of the regeneration.

Further work will now be undertaken to examine the detail of the proposals and negotiations with the developer, Shearer Property Group, will now be progressed on the terms of a potential joint venture. Consideration is being given to whether funding can be secured from a Local Enterprise partnership. Full Council will have final approval on the terms of any proposal.

Furthermore, regarding Hitchin market, Cabinet has been asked to support a potential return of the operation of the market by the Council and this work is ongoing if it were to come back in house. There will be TUPE implications for the staff working there transferring back into the Council.

The trade unions are consulting with their members on the pay offer. They expect to announce the results by the middle of March. Under the Equality Act 2010 employers with 250 or more employees are required to publish statutory gender pay gap calculations every year. NHDC is typical of a shire district Council where there tends to be a largely female workforce with an emphasis on admin roles with part time and flexible working. With a large number of our front line services i.e. waste, leisure, grounds being outsourced, most of the lower paid jobs traditionally occupied by men are not included in our gender pay gap figures. This distribution of employees creates a negative gender pay gap which would be greatly reduced if these outsourced functions were being done in house. What is important is that there is a justification for the gap and why it exists and that actions will be considered to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all those who desire it. The gender gap is not to be confused with equal pay. We have equal pay data going back to 2007 and, over the years, we are satisfied that there have been no significant inequalities. We are working on an equal pay review now and the results will be reported later this year, but we do not believe this will raise significant concerns regarding equal pay.

#### **4. Senior Management Restructure**

An information note was sent out to all staff and one to one meetings with Heads of Service have been undertaken. DS is writing to Heads of Service and Corporate Managers to issue job descriptions and person specifications which have been evaluated externally by Hay. Arrangements for formal meetings during the week commencing 12 March 2018 are underway and the opportunity for group consultation will be offered. Consultation will close on 21 March 2018. It was stated that the job matching exercise would take place during week commencing 12 March 2018. The outcome of this will be known in early April and slotting in and any interviews will then take place.

New service directors will then look at their services and make any necessary adjustments within them. The efficiencies achieved from the senior management restructure would reduce the need for a second phase of proposals. The key rationale for the changes and their detail was sent via a global email last year, the priorities for the future and resourcing issues were then factored into the final proposal.

#### **5. Office Accommodation Update**

The building is working well 2-3 weeks into the move. A film fitted to the windows and blinds are being trialled to reduce glare and prevent some parts of the ground floor from being overlooked. Concern was expressed regarding the move of Careline into DCO and into another service area and whether the service will continue. It was suggested the move was a logical one which would make the Council far more integrated, and there were no proposals to make changes to the service, but the concerns were acknowledged and the management team offered to meet with the service to discuss these. A visit could also be organised to the new location to help reassure staff as to the practicalities of the arrangement.

## **6. I.T. Projects Update**

SCF asked that a big thank you is given to the I.T Team with the move across to DCO, from all staff. I.T has fitted out rooms at the DCO. The screens in the meeting rooms can be used to reduce the amount of paper being used. The I.T team have done a good job for years. All committees will go paperless by the end of the year. It is on a workplan to go more paperless to save costs and to make things more efficient.

Action: Plan to go paperless, going forward.

## **7. Employee Queries**

It was asked about Bike racks at the DCO building and when they would be replaced. We would look to try and put bike racks for visitors at the front and have staff Bike Racks at the back and will be followed up with Howard Crompton. It was asked how the move would affect the Careline services and it was clarified that they would remain as an emergency service to the NHDC.

It was raised if anything could happen further around emergency services for Careline. It was said that moving forward we would be looking to grow the area of emergency services and investigate the area further. It was suggested as an idea to perhaps have some sort of trial arrangement.

There was a concern around resourcing at Careline and its dependency on short term temporary staff. DS stated that the Council tried not to rely on agencies so other ideas should be considered. It was also suggested that with the move to the DCO it may help staffing for Careline by having a possible larger pool of staff to draw from.

## **8. Chair for next meeting**

The chair for the next meeting is CM in the case of a reserve of JW.