

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

01/11/2023

Present: Ian Couper (**IC**), Rebecca Webb (**RW**), Claire Bernard (**CB**), Louis Franklin (**LF**), Christina Corr (**CC**), Dee Levett (**DL**), Caelan Ballard – notes (**CB**)

Circulation: Global

Chair for Meeting: Christina Corr (**CC**)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Drew Betts, Mark Robinson, Daniel Crowhurst and Vicky Kent.

2. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

None

3. Careline Restructure Notice

- The proposed restructure outlines the creation of a new Assistive Projects, Procurement and Performance Manager post. The creation of the proposed new role will address key objectives within Careline with regards to performance management, analysing data and improving service delivery by tracking KPI's and enabling evidence-based decision making. The role will involve procurement management through optimising the procurement process and negotiating with vendors in line with the organisation's needs. In turn this will lead to cost savings and operational efficiency. The role will also involve project management through overseeing project lifecycles, enhancing success rates and mitigating risks in line with the organisation's strategic objectives which will support the growth and innovation of Careline.
- No other service areas are directly impacted by the proposed restructure. The proposal has received positive feedback from the team and the consultation period is due to close on Monday 6th November 2023.

4. NHC Update

- Cabinet will be meeting in the middle of this month, one of the bigger items going to Cabinet is a report on the new Waste Contract as the contract bids received so far have been much higher than the budget. As such the council is looking for new options around the specifications of this contract. Due to details on costing and bidders, the report is subject to commercial confidentiality.
- Meeting Free Fridays have been officially launched after receiving and considering all the feedback from Councillors.
- The Council has not released any statements on the current conflict in Israel and Palestine. Information will be sent to Councillors this week regarding any potential tensions in the community or protests in the local area. If staff are aware of any issues, then please let their manager know. Staff are also reminded that the Employee



Assistance Program is available for advice and emotional support 24/7. The EAP can be accessed here: [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\) | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#).

HR and Employee Wellbeing Update

- An update was given on the 2023 pay negotiations which at the time of the meeting were ongoing. (Following the SCF meeting there was a further update confirming the pay award had been agreed: This award will be reflected in November salaries and the increase will be backdated to 1 April 2023. There are a small number of employees on additional responsibility, pay protection or in receipt of IT standby and these payments will be rectified for December pay. [Updated Pay Scales](#) can be found on the intranet.)
- The next Personal Development Morning will be held next Friday morning and focuses on sustainability. Managers have been sent information about the events being held. There is an online interactive sustainability themed session being hosted by our Climate Change & Sustainability Manager, and a training session held by IT on Info@Work. There is also an upcoming workshop on the 16th of November about Effective Meeting Skills which will work in line with Meeting-Free Friday. This workshop is available to book on [GROWzone](#).
- For World Mental Health Day on Tuesday the 10th of October, an Insight article was put together to raise awareness and signpost all the mental health support and training available for staff. The article is available to read on [Insight](#).

5. Employee Queries

Q: Officers have reported that used cups and belongings are still being left in meeting rooms. Can a reminder be sent for all staff to be ensure they do not leave anything in meeting rooms and that desks and meeting rooms are tidied after use?

A: A global email will be sent to remind staff on the expected etiquette for the tidying of meeting rooms and the washing up of dishes.

Q: The organisation settings on Outlook calendars have recently been adjusted to automatically change hour-long meetings to 50 minutes, and 30-minute meetings to 25 minutes. This requires members of staff to manually adjust the appointment length each time and can be counterproductive as a time-saving measure. Can clarification on the purpose of these new settings be provided, and could the old settings be restored to stop staff having to manually edit meeting durations?

A: This was a joint decision by Leadership Team and ties into effective meeting practices to support the Meeting-Free Friday initiative. The setting allows staff to consider the length of time needed for their appointments and can make meetings more efficient. The new setting also spaces out meetings with short rest breaks in between which can improve staff wellbeing and time management on workdays with back-to-back meetings. The implementation of this setting was outlined in the global email about Meeting Free Fridays. Further staff feedback on the implementation of these settings is welcome.



6. IT Update and Queries

Q: As staff are now returning to work in the office more regularly, can the small meeting rooms be updated with larger TV screens?

A: The meeting rooms with a person capacity of 2-3 already have screens quite large for the size of room. There are currently no plans or an allocated budget to replace these screens. If there is a suitable requirement to increase the size of these screens when IT are due to replace them, getting larger TV screens will then be considered.

Q: Some of the larger TV screens in meeting rooms are also at a height which mean they cannot be used comfortably. Are IT able to add adjustable arms to these TV screens?

A: Due to the weight of the TV screens in the committee meeting rooms and the council chamber, it is not possible to safely make them height adjustable. However, if this query concerns the larger screens in meeting rooms 3 and 4 of each floor, IT can change the height of these screens. The screens are currently close to their maximum height, but these can be lowered if necessary. Lowering these screens will involve removing the screen from the base so this is not something staff members would be able to do themselves. Due to the requirement of a floor mounted stand for these meeting rooms and the size/weight of the TV screens, a flexible height adjustable stand like the brackets installed onto the desk monitors in the DCO would not be suitable.

If staff would like to request any TV screen to be height adjusted or to discuss access requirements with IT, please contact Daniel Crowhurst or log a ticket on the IT Helpdesk.

7. Building Services & Facilities Update

- Floor 3 of the DCO has been cleared well and a lot of good work has gone into making it ready for letting. However, there have been multiple incidents of office items being dumped on this floor. Staff are reminded that Floor 3 is not to be used as a storage space at any time and to take responsibility for emptying the items left on this floor.
- The previous interest received in letting the Floor 3 has not been taken further, so the space will be marketed again to find a suitable letter.
- Whilst tables in the Committee Rooms (meeting rooms 2 and 3 on the 1st floor) can be moved (please consider health and safety when moving tables), they should be returned back to their standard layout at the end of each meeting. If they are able to, staff are asked to leave a donation in the honesty box when using the sanitary items provided in the women's toilets. Donations will help to re-stock the provisions so that it can continue to be self-funding. Staff are also very welcome to contribute items or additional donations too.
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- **Q:** Some of the desks in both meeting rooms and office spaces of the DCO do not look like they are being cleaned after use. Can a reminder be issued about this too?

A: Yes, staff will be reminded about cleaning desks before and after use. This can be included in the global email to be sent out about meeting room etiquette.



Q: There are a lot of items and stationary left on Floor 3 such as folders and envelopes, can these be reused by staff?

A: Yes, staff should seek to use these leftover folders and envelopes still on Floor 3 before ordering new ones. This will help the Council to finish clearing out the floor, is cost-effective and is better for the environment. These folders and stationery items should not be left for recycling if they can be repurposed.

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

8. Ideas/Suggestions

Q: Is there a picture of the correct layout for the meeting room on Floor 1? If so, could this picture be printed out and put in the meeting room to remind staff how the room should look?

A: Yes, something like this can be provided.

9. AOB

None

Chair for next meeting – Louis Franklin

Have something to say?

If you have an issue that 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 phone extension):

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer Revenues and Benefits

Claire Bernard #4323 - MSU Admin Support Officer

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

Louis Franklin #4262 – Admin Support Officer

Vicky Kent #4396 – Community Protection Apprentice