

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

06/03/2024

Present: Anthony Roche (**AR**), Ian Couper (**IC**), Rebecca Webb (**RW**), Claire Bernard (**CB**), Louis Franklin (**LF**), Christina Corr (**CC**), Tiranah Straughan (**TS**), Dee Levett (**DL**), Mark Robinson (**MR**), Drew Betts (**DB**), Andrew Mills (**AM**), Robert Orchard (**RO**), Caelan Ballard – notes (**CB**)

Circulation: Global

Chair for Meeting: Louis Franklin (**LF**)

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

Restructure Notices

Green Spaces Restructure

- The restructure aims to reflect significant changes to working practices and responsibilities of the Green Spaces team since the development of the current structure in 2004.
- The proposal includes one the transformation of an Area & Monitoring Officer post to an Environment and Tree Officer post which will report to a Senior Tree Officer post, also renamed from Parks & Open Spaces Officer.
- The roles now largely work with tree maintenance and wildlife reserves across the district, and as such will finish being regraded later this month to reflect new responsibilities and risks handled within the roles. Both roles will be career graded to reflect additional qualifications relating to arboriculture.
- The restructure will also facilitate the reduced working hours for a member of the team going forward. There is no change to the remaining Area & Monitoring Officer roles, but these will now cover the entire North Herts district.
- The restructure is cost neutral as funding will come from reduced monitoring of the Grounds contract.
- The consultation commenced on Tuesday the 5th of March with an aim to be implemented from the 1st of April. The proposals have been approved by the Leadership Team and the Environment and Tree Officer post is due to be evaluated next week. No feedback from the team has been received so far.

Catering Team Restructure

- There has been a review of operations since the creation of the last structure for the Catering Team was approved in 2023, with the addition of the café at North Herts Museum and café kiosk at Bancroft Gardens and the restructure follows recommendations set.



- The Café Kiosk in Bancroft Gardens will now be operated on weekends and school holidays only, as would be most financially beneficial for NHC. The new operating hours will be implemented for the coming summer season.
- Howard Park Kiosk will be managed in-house for a year as the current contract with SLL is ending. Both Kiosks will operate for 31 weeks during the summer season, with the Howard Park Kiosk operating 7 days a week during this period.
- The proposal outlines the creation of three Seasonal Kiosk Assistant roles; one will be allocated to the Bancroft Café Kiosk and two to the Howard Park Kiosk. These Seasonal Kiosk Assistants will operate on different hour contracts.
- One vacant Catering Supervisor post will be removed as it is no longer needed. The remaining Catering Supervisor and two Catering Assistants will be allocated to the North Herts Museum Café. An overtime budget of 16 hours per week has also been allocated for the 31 weeks both Kiosks will be operating.
- This restructure will not include any redundancy or change to working hours of existing staff. The consultation has now opened, with the Seasonal Kiosk Assistant role to be evaluated on the 7th of March.

Q: Has the team considered acquiring the kiosk at Letchworth Outdoor Pool in Norton Common?

A: This is not currently being considered as the kiosk is integrated into the new leisure contract.

2. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Q: What were the figures for the DCO solar panel cost savings raised in January's notes?

A: The solar panels have generated just over 10MW hours of electricity in 2022 and 2023 respectively, which has saved around £2000 in electricity each year. However, the amount of electricity generated will vary going forwards as it is dependent on the sun's intensity at any given point.

3. NHC Update

- The new budget was approved at Council last week, with no big changes. Some important items were raised; NHC has been successful in getting Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding which will allow for the decarbonisation of the leisure centres in the district and will include more solar panels and heat pumps. The budget has also allocated funding for the extension of the fitness facilities in Royston Leisure Centre and may also include the building of a learner's pool. The plans for leisure facilities are included in the capital program and some additional resources are being sought to help deliver these plans.
- The new budget also suggests an average pay increase of around 4%. Various ways of balancing the council budget are being explored for future years to lessen the shortfall expected.
- The Council has a Health & Safety group who meet quarterly to highlight health & safety concerns and raise issues. There are nominated representatives on the group,



but they cannot always attend. Looking at ways to encourage engagement and more representatives, as the group does have an important role.

HR and Employee Wellbeing Update

- The [Staff Survey](#) is open until the 28th of March and all staff are encouraged to complete it. All responses are anonymous, and the feedback will really help to gauge staff views on working at NHC and identify areas for improvement, so please have your say. Staff completing the survey will also have chance of winning one of ten £10 gift vouchers!
- An NJC pay claim has been received from the unions which includes a pay increase of £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points, reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government, a two-hour reduction in the working week, with no pay detriment, an additional day of annual leave for personal well-being purposes (with term-time only staff also receiving a full day rather than a pro rata amount, that they can use at any time, including term time), and a phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years but sooner if possible. It may be some time before an agreement is reached. NHC will be attending the regional pay briefings in May.

Q: Some staff may not be aware that there is a new Health & Safety group and not know about the quarterly meetings. Could an article be published on insight to raise awareness of this?

A: Yes, an insight article can be made to explain what the group is and what is covered in the meetings.

4. Employee Queries

Q: There is an issue with the salaries being offered for roles in the IT team. It was recently noted that some trainee posts advertised at other local government organisations are offering salaries higher than trained staff at NHC. Could this be reviewed by HR?

A: HR can review this and see what may be done to aid recruitment to our own IT vacancies.

5. IT Update and Queries

- A new CCTV camera is being installed outside the front DCO entrance following the fire damage caused from an incident last year.
- The ICT Systems & DCO-wide power down is now planned for the 23rd of March, and a global email will be sent out to advise staff of this. The power down will facilitate the installation of electrical work relating to EV Charging and other essential ICT electrical work.
- A new system for Finance is coming in August, it would be greatly appreciated if anyone would like to be involved in the testing process. The new system being introduced will be much more efficient and user-friendly.



Q: What is the progress of the upgrades to the Council Chamber and meeting room 2?

A: The concrete cutting work and other pieces have been finished in both the Council Chamber and meeting room 2, and the AV in meeting room 2 is also fully installed. Instructions on using the new AV will be sent out soon. The microphone unit installations for the Council Chamber have been rearranged for Monday the 11th of March, after which the upgrades should be complete.

6. Digital Services Update

- The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system went live on Monday 19th February. A thank you to staff for helping to make this such a smooth roll-out, and for providing feedback to the Digital Services team. If you need any assistance using the CRM, you can contact:
 - The Digital Services team Digital@north-herts.gov.uk
 - The Customer Services team CRM@north-herts.gov.uk
 - Digital Champions ([Digital Services Team \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com))
- The Digital Services team have now started work on the wider digital programme and further updates will be provided on the new Digital Transformation page on The Hub over the coming months.

7. Building Services & Facilities Update

- On Monday, a fault in the electrics of the roof of floor 2 caused a power outage across the DCO and tripped the heating on all floors. Heating has now been fixed on all floors of the DCO except floor 2, which will be fixed as quickly as possible.

Q: Have the new EV charging points been installed?

A: This is still in progress due to an issue with the electrics which has pushed back installation to the 13th of April, but confirmation on this will be sent out closer to the time.

Q: Despite previous communication about office etiquette, there are still reports of individuals eating strong-smelling at their desks instead of the designated canteen area. There have been other complaints of individuals smoking just outside of the DCO building. Could another email be sent out reminding staff of the expected office etiquette with eating in the office, as well as the smoking policy?

A: Yes, another email can be written to remind staff of the expectations of office etiquette regarding eating at desks, as well as the smoking policy.

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

8. Green Update

- Updates from March's Environmental Briefing include:
 - The Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 is now live, and details can be found on the [NHC web page](#). Residents can sign up via the HUG website or by calling the Energy Saving Trust.
 - The second round of Solar Together has now closed. 185 households in North Herts have accepted their Solar PV recommendation. The average 14-panel system within the scheme is 34% cheaper than the typical market price

for an equivalent system. Installations have now begun, with 213 completed in Hertfordshire so far.

- The Climate Hive now has 355 subscribers and continues to update users with the latest climate activity such as HUG2 updates, the latest surveys and consultations, funding, and skills opportunities.
 - NHC has been successful in its application for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and have now signed the Grant Offer Letter. The council have secured up to £7,743,224 from the fund for decarbonisation measures at leisure facilities in North Hertfordshire. These measures will include air source heat pumps, solar panels, and energy efficiency measures like insulation. A press release, agreed with Salix, has been released on [the website](#).
 - The Woodland Trust is giving away free trees to UK schools and communities. Applicants can apply for different tree packs. Apply before August 2024 at [Woodland Trust](#).
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- The full briefing, including other grants, discount schemes and updates is available to read on [the Hub](#).

9. Ideas/Suggestions

None.

10. Meeting Free Friday Feedback

- The Leadership Team are continuing to collect feedback on the new Meeting Free Friday initiative. There is a question on the initiative in the [Staff Survey](#), so staff are asked to share their thoughts when filling it in.

11. AOB

Q: Staff recently received an invitation to a JSCC meeting. What was this meeting and who is allowed to attend?

A: JSCC is the Joint Staff Consultation Committee which meets monthly to discuss HR topics and includes a discussion on what has been raised at recent SCF meetings. Recently an invite was sent out to all staff by accident, but an SCF member is invited to attend these meetings as a representative of the group and to ask and receive questions.

Chair for next meeting – Christina Corr

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

Tiranan Straughan #4842 – Housing Policy Officer