

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

03/07/2024

Present: Anthony Roche (**AR**), Ian Couper (**IC**), Jo Keshishian (**JK**) Claire Bernard (**CB**), Christina Corr (**CC**), Tiranah Straughan (**TS**), Dee Levett (**DL**), Mark Robinson (**MR**), Drew Betts (**DB**), Jo Doggett (**JD**), Frank Harrison (**FH**) and Harrison Mcleod – notes (**HM**)

Circulation: Global

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

1. Apologies

Louis Franklin and Rebecca Webb send their apologies.

2. Environmental health restructure

JD: Consultation for the restructure has started on the 12th of June and should finish on the 12th of July, a lot of the comments are positive, and the team has been informed on how to contact their union.

Environmental Protection & Housing (EPH) Team

We struggle to recruit Environmental Health Officers (EHO), so we have been operating on a skeleton crew and contractors which are supposed to be a short-term temp measure. Historically there has been long-term inconsistent leadership, strain on staff, low morale, risk to delivery of core functions.

Commercial team

Recognised increase in workload and demand and that is the current situation of EH

The aim of the restructure is to grow our own staff with career development and career progression by using existing vacant EHO posts to employ Technical Officers. So we can recruit people from grade 6 and develop them up to grade 10 allowing us to recruit from a wider and more local This should bring long term consistent management of the EPH team, more resources to deliver core functions

Phase 2 April 2025



Put in place carer grade scheme for Technical officers and regulatory officers to allow development over time.

Replace the air quality improvement officer and housing grant empty homes office posts in EPH.

Time scale: consultation ends on 12th of July with a meeting to report outcomes to the team, separate close of consultation meeting for posts that are affected, then begin recruitment in vacant posts. If there are no challenges, the appointment of new EPH manager at least one month before the departure of the current agency manager. Continuation of contractors in post on current arrangements where necessary to bolster capacity whilst growing our own. We hope to fill all phase one positions by December 2024 and then submit a growth bid in September to be approved by Q3 by SLT and then by Cabinet in February 2025.

No questions from the team

3. Changes to careline

AW: I'm here to present a contract change to admins and technology techs to their statement of particulars for the statutory hours between Christmas and new year and we are changing that to remove the line "to be taken between Christmas and new year" as Herts Careline do carry out work between these time periods and we will allow them to take the time elsewhere in the year. We have looked to make this change as demand increases so we need to accommodate. Any questions?

No questions asked.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

No matter arising.

5. NHC Update

IC: Anyone can help with elections please spread the word and thank you to those that have volunteered. We have started work on a new council plan that will be in place for the next few years will be coming out in September. In terms of recent decisions there is the de carbonisation of leisure centres which will contribute to addressing climate change and getting £7.7 million in grant money.

No questions asked.

HR and Employee Wellbeing Update

JK:

- No further updates on national pay negotiations at the moment
- We have a new Grow Zone being launched on 12 July – which is more intuitive and straight forward to use and includes single sign on.
- This coincides with the next personal development morning – 12 July – which will give everyone the chance to log on and spend some time getting familiar with the new system.
- Our updated recruitment webpages were launched about 3 weeks ago, we have modernised the pages, included staff photos and made it easier to navigate. If you haven't had a chance to take a look I would encourage you to do so, and we welcome any feedback or suggestions for further improvement. [Jobs and careers | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers)
- Holiday flex window opens in August and there will be more information available on the Hub for those who are interested in purchasing more annual leave.

No questions

6. Employee Queries

AB: One of my colleagues in waste asked as we have shifted over to EV vehicles so more chargers at DCO however there has been a few occasions where non EV vehicles are parked in the charging bays is there a way to stop this?

IC: We can send out a reminder for people to avoid these spaces.

CB: With more people in the office there is less availability in the meeting rooms and room 2 floor 5 has been taken out of the meeting room booking system. Can we have it back?

MR: it is a storage room now and a further conversation with IC will need to be had but if there is missing equipment in meeting rooms, please log a ticket

AR: People can use my office as a meeting room if I'm not in DCO. Also to look at whether the Chair's room could become a meeting room.

TS: On days like today the car park is busy even on the top floor what should employees do if the car park is full and get a ticket from having to park on lower floors?

IC: we have been issuing some passes for the lower levels but we will look into a wider expansion if there are going to be a lot of events in Letchworth. We will also look to see when these happen so we can issue warring's about coming in.

7. IT Update and Queries

Finished installation of CCTV camera outside the main entrance due to the issue a couple years ago and we are going to roll out a new helpdesk within the next month and I will be contacting key people in the organisation to road test it, it is more simplified and easier to use now, and I might coincide that with the next staff briefing to quickly show it off.



Increase number of requests for working abroad in IT but RW and I spoke about a new policy HR are looking at. There are technical restraints, on specific countries, but I believe a new policy is coming.

150 new users on windows 11 but a follow up on questions are being asked so we are re-sending the video that explains it.

Training days looking for more requests on what staff need help with and want me to go over on these training days.

AB: I have had one from a user we have very old screens in Buntingford is there any plans to upgrade?

MR: No plans or budget to install new screens currently, its something we can look into but next year we have a bigger budget so maybe we can look at it next year but no promises

AR: Is there any way we can switch the screens round, as not all DCO desks are used at one time?

MR: Off the top of my head, I don't believe so, but I will need to do a quick review. Might have to look at on average how many people use screens at Buntingford so please put a request in and we will see what we can do.

IC: With overseas working it looks like short holidays maybe and only in the EU due to tax and HR implications.

8. Digital Services Update

9. Building Services & Facilities Update

No specific update.

MR: Any updates on floor 3?

IC: Nothing currently to report.

10. Green Update

No Green Update this time so we will be hopefully doing the next proper briefing for SCF and other platforms for August.

11. Ideas/Suggestions

CC: Can we have guests on top of the agenda next time

HM: Of course

DL: Please can we update the link on the agenda for the previous notes



**North
Herts**

Council

Hm: Of course

12. AOB

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

Tiranan Straughan #4842 – Housing Policy Officer