

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting Minutes – 21st January 2026

Present:

Director- Resources: Ian Couper
HR Services Manager: Rebecca Webb
Staff representatives: Christine Howe, Christina Corr, Katie Thomas, Melanie Ferdaous, Louis Franklin, Tiranana Straughan
Technical Operations Manager: Mark Robinson
Customer and Digital Services Manager: Chris Jeffery
Customer and Digital Project Manager: Polly Simonds
National Graduate Management Trainee: Keiran Cockayne
Union representative: Dee Levett
Notes: Ruby Lewis

Circulation: Global

Chair for Meeting: Louis Franklin

1 Apologies

Anthony Roche
Martin Trotter

2 Restructure and Consultation

Copilot Policy – Copilot is Microsoft's AI powered tool. The free version is currently available to all North Herts Council staff, and some staff hold a license that allows them to have more functions. Common uses for copilot include writing and rewording emails, drafting documents, research and summarising information, generating pictures and analysing data.

We are consulting on the Copilot policy which is required to set out guardrails and guidance for safe and appropriate use. The policy was developed by the digital team with input from IT and feedback from staff has also been considered. The policy has been approved by the Director of Customers, the data protection officer, technical operations manager and IT services manager.

Q: Are there plans to give more staff the licensed version?

A: Yes, we are aiming to get more licenses, a budget has been put in, and we are waiting for the outcome next month.

Q: Are there examples of things people could use it for with the unlicensed version?

A: The policy will provide guidance on how to use it properly, or the best ways to use it. To go alongside the policy, we are working on a universal user guide for the free version that will come out after the policy.

Q: I would not be confident about whether something would be suitable to input into copilot or not, will there be any extra training or guidance?

A: The general rule of thumb is that anyone without a license should not put any sensitive data into the chat. As for training, we will be developing training resources in the coming weeks to give people more confidence.

Q: How do you get the license?

A: We are looking to get a hold of more, digital services decide who gets the license, the process will become clear once we have the budget.

Q: Is there a limit on licenses?

A: They are purchased on a person-by-person basis and therefore dependant on budget.

Q: Will there be an e-learning module?

A: It would be a matter of scope and timing, digital services may pursue this in the future. Microsoft produce a lot of online training that is really good and accessible, and this will be signposted in the guides.

3 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

None

4 NHC Update (including HR and Staff Wellbeing Update)

Learning and development – various opportunities coming up including manager bitesize sessions. Details available: [Upcoming events](#)

Neurodiversity network – this will be on the 26th February. The link will be share dvia Viva Engage and the Hub.

Annual leave – we are nearing the end of the leave year, please check your balance and the balance of your teams and arrange leave to be taken before the end of March. Carry over is back to normal at one week. Please take your leave as it is very beneficial for your wellbeing and productivity, if there are any issues please speak to your manager. For further details check the Hub: [Holiday Entitlement](#)

[Inclusion Group](#) – there is a review of inclusion group and we are looking at work works well and what could be done better. Please complete the survey to tell us what you think: [Have Your Say – Help Shape Our Refreshed Staff Inclusion Group](#)

EV lease scheme – this is currently being worked on and will go live in April time, more details to follow.

Corporate Peer Challenge – we have had the report this week which will go to scrutiny and cabinet, it is very positive.

[Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution](#) – the submission was in November, we are waiting for a decision from central Government about configuration and are expecting this decision around July.



Q: have we heard anything about pay negotiations?

A: there is no update since the last meeting. The unions claim in December was £3000 for each spinal point, or 10%, whichever was greater.

5 Employee Queries

Q: Concerns have been raised over the volume of company vehicles and Careline vans parking on the lower level of the car park. People with medical needs who need the ground floor spaces are struggling to access them.

A: Please forward this to the Parking Services team.

Q: The stairwells are also not clean, they smell.

A: That is a question for the waste team, the stairs were cleaned last month.

Q: The tea and coffee supplies on the 4th floor, many products have expired, and we do not know who they belong to so do not want to throw them away.

A: Please email property services. A reminder may be needed to all staff to throw away expired things and keep the kitchen areas clean.

6 IT update

MR: We had the IT systems power down last week. Another email will be coming shortly about another one. The new weekend will be the 7th February and comms will be sent out shortly.

The new roll out of the FOI system occurred, there have been a couple of minor tweaks already but please feed anything else back to the FOI team.

The new VPN will be rolling out gradually in the next month, you probably will not even notice the change, comms will also be coming for this.

The MFD's are being upgraded at the end of February or beginning of March.

7 Green Update

[1 Sustainability Briefing January 2026.pdf](#)

8 Ideas/Suggestions

None

9 Any other business

None

10 Chair of 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

Louis Franklin #4262 – Digital Services Officer

Tiranan Straughan #4842 – Housing Policy Officer

Katie Thomas #5021 – Digital and Customer Service Apprentice

Martin Trotter #4541 - Shared Service Contract Officer – Waste

Christine Howe#4832 - Client Services Support Officer

Melanie Ferdaous#4324 – Admin Support Officer