

**Staff Consultation Forum Meeting Minutes – 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Present:**

**Director- Resources:** Ian Couper  
**HR Services Manager:** Rebecca Webb  
**Staff representatives:** Tiranán Straughan, Louis Franklin, Christina Corr, Christine Howe, Katie Thomas, Melanie Ferdaous  
**Technical Operations Manager:** Mark Robinson  
**Union representative:** Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews  
**Director – Customers –** Jo Dufficy  
**Director – Place –** Nigel Smith  
**Notes:** Ruby Lewis

**Circulation:** Global

**Chair for Meeting:** Louis Franklin

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**1 Apologies**

Martin Trotter, Dee Levett

**2 IT update**

MR: Our penetration test was carried out last month, identifying the lowest number of issues we have ever had. Where there were issues, these were mostly regarding common words being used. There are already plans underway for the further issues identified.

We are in the process of updating our core directory and updating the last of our 2016 servers, we are engaging with departments around this.

We rolled out 330 laptops in 2025/2026, and we are now in full device support.

Our helpdesk survey for 2025/2026 came in, feedback was positive and we are looking at some improvements.

The Information Team received 206 FOI requests for quarter 1 this year.

Q: Is there access to computers if you do not have your laptop at DCO?

A: No, laptops are built to the individual. If a user forgot their laptop, they would need to go home and get it. To build a laptop, the turnaround is 2/3 hours if everything goes smoothly.

**3 Restructures**

JD: Nigel and I are here to discuss a restructure currently in consultation for MSU and parking. For MSU, the proposal is to decentralise and transport the support directly into the teams. This is to provide a direct capacity to service teams, in preparation for LGR and there was a residual aspect to the Leadership Team restructure that was to reduce the span of parking. Consultation opened on the 20<sup>th</sup> April and is running until the 20<sup>th</sup> May. We had a Unison representative at the consultation meeting and have had formal and informal 1:1's with those who are impacted. Within the team, MSU has 4 distinct areas, one is parking. The proposal



is that the team leader and their team will move into Nigel's area, those supporting Regulatory will move into the directorate and report to Linda Hopkins as the team leader. The people that support housing will move into Regulatory and those who support Green Space will move to that team. There is a Systems and Support Officer role, this will move into IT. The final team that deal with land charges, legal support, parking permits and fleet vehicles will move into Customer Services. An alternative proposal has suggested it may be a better fit to move into the Legal Team, which will be considered as part of the consultation. Further down the line, fleet vehicles and parking permits will move into waste. In terms of the process, there has been some good constructive discussions and no significant objections. There have been some questions around timings with LGR and questions of if we should wait, but this is to help prepare for LGR. We are collating feedback as we go through, and this will be shared with everyone involved.

NS: Louise Symes currently has a very wide span of duties. In the first instance we are looking at giving the team clearer focus and remit. We also want to simplify reporting lines and arrange into two teams. As part of that, we are redefining some roles and key posts. We are running in parallel as one consultation with the same closing and opening times. Staff have been generally supportive.

Q: How will dismantling the MSU create capacity, where will the increase in capacity come from. Service areas will only have a finite amount of support, if staff remain within the MSU, the level of support given to service areas can be adjusted as required.

A: In terms of capacity, it is not increasing headcount, it is working closer with service teams and them having the support more on hand. In 2024 the Careline admin support moved out of MSU and joined Careline, and that has worked really well. They work much closer together and can communicate more effectively. It has had a really positive impact. It's expected that the benefits would be replicated. The workload and priorities have changed as part of this. In practice, there are generic Job Profiles, but people work in specific areas. This is also about putting people and teams in the best possible position ahead of LGR, and there is a lot of work to prepare for that.

Q: Are there any jobs that will be affected with job losses?

A: There is one post currently at risk, the MSU manager. They are involved in the consultation, and we are doing everything we can to look at alternative roles.

#### **4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting**

None

#### **5 NHC Update (including HR and Staff Wellbeing Update)**

We have approved some new posts in IT and HR in response to LGR and the increase in workloads in these two teams.  
There are upcoming elections in Royston.



## North Herts Council

Provisional payslips are now available in Itrent. It will clearly say when it is provisional, but this should help us prevent and pick up on any errors early on.

May is women's health month: [Women's Health Month: Supporting Health, Wellbeing and Understanding](#)

There is upcoming bitesize training for managers and an RPR briefing. [Upcoming events](#)

We have now launched our new applicant tracking system, to replace our recruitment tool. We currently have two systems running but will be releasing guidance and training for managers shortly to transition to the new system.

Q: Is there an update on the pay award?

A: Currently there is no update, I will keep everyone updated.

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### **Inclusion Group Update**

The Hub pages for men and women's health have now been updated: [Men's Health](#)  
[Women's Health](#)

There will be a follow up insight article in June about PCOS – polycystic ovary syndrome.

A short video was shared in the staff briefing, and REW resources are available on the hub: [Race Equality Week](#)

Digital Inclusion was discussed, the staff survey will be going out later today and the residents survey next week: [Have Your Say On Digital Inclusion Work – Staff Survey Now Open](#)

The first women's network meeting is on the 12<sup>th</sup> May at 10:00 via teams. Please contact the policy team if you would like to join.

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### **Employee Queries**

All members of SCF will now have access to the inbox so urgent enquires can be picked up quicker.

### **Green Update**

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[2 Sustainability Briefing February 2026.pdf](#)

**9 Ideas/Suggestions**

None

**10 Any other business**

None

**11 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](mailto:propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - [SCF@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto: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