

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 2, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2018 AT 3.00 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Sarah Dingley (Chairman), Bernard Lovewell, Lynda Needham, Martin Stears-Handscorb and Paul Clark*

In Attendance: *Kerry Shorrocks (Corporate Human Resources Manager), Keith Crampton, Dee Levett, Claire Morgan (Senior Communities Officer) and Amelia McInally (Committee and Member Services Officer)*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Christina Corr and Councillor Lisa Nash. Councillor Paul Clark substituted, as Councillor Sam Collins was no longer a substitute on the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

2 MINUTES - 27 JUNE 2018

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 27 June 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman announced that Members of the public and the press may use their devices to film/photograph, or do a sound recording of the meeting, but she asked them to not use flash and to disable any beeps or other sound notifications that emitted from their devices. In addition, the Chairman had arranged for the sound at this particular meeting to be recorded;
- (2) The Chairman reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question;
- (3) The Chairman asked that, for the benefit of any members of the public present at the meeting, Officers announce their name and their designation to the meeting when invited to speak.

5 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

The Corporate Human Resources Manager reported, as previously agreed, there was no Staff Consultation Forum held in August, due to a lack of expected attendance with it being school summer holiday time. The Corporate Human Resources Manager drew attention to the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held on 4 July 2018 and the Draft minutes of 5 September 2018 as follows:

Minutes – 4 July 2018

NHDC Update

The Corporate Human Resources Manager explained to the Committee that the purpose of NHDC update was to highlight points of interest that may be raised by officers, keeping staff abreast of larger projects that the Council may be involved, also any major changes that may have taken place in the Senior Management Structure. She explained that the other purpose of SCF was for consultation, an opportunity to discuss changes.

The Information Communication Technology Manager had presented a paper to SCF which had outlined the proposed IT restructure.

Human Resources Service Transfer Work had been discussed at the July SCF Meeting.

Staff had requested, and been provided with a reminder of the Christmas statutory days.

Draft Minutes – 5 September 2018

NHDC Update

Senior Management Restructure, the newly appointed Service Directors were moving ahead looking at, and putting forward proposals for their individual service areas.

There had been a very good return of Regular Performance Reviews.

SCF Email Inbox

Two volunteer SCF representatives had volunteered to monitor an email inbox as an alternative staff point of contact.

Employee Queries

The matter of the cleanliness of the Multi Storey had been raised a couple of times. Decorating work was due to commence very soon.

Property Services were investigating the idea of a helpdesk method in order that staff could report any problem arising, perhaps in a similar way to how the IT helpdesk was run.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held on 4 July 2018 and the Draft Minutes of 5 September 2018 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to consider any issues addressed by the Staff Consultation Forum.

6 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented the Information Note entitled People Strategy Update and drew attention to the following:

Pay

NHDC Payroll Service contract was ending in March 2020. Work was due to start, looking at alternative payroll service providers with an extremely organised implementation of that service.

In response to a Member, The Corporate Human Resources Manager confirmed that NHDC would almost certainly break away from the current payroll service provider, as it was felt that a service providing better value would be found.

Benefits

Employees Assistance Programme and Occupational Health contracts were being procured alongside Hertfordshire County Council, for which NHDC had benefitted, were also coming up for renewal. The timing was perfect, as Hertfordshire County Council was procuring a new framework, which meant alternative options would be considered through that framework and work had started on the specification of what NHDC required.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager introduced the Learning and Employee Engagement Manager who drew the Committee's attention to the following points:

Learning and Development

That this was work based on clarifying organisational values and behaviours. Linking that to a new simplified competency framework, and the RPR process was making good progress. The team were working closely with the Deputy Chief Executive, and had presented initial ideas to the Senior Management Team. Values and behaviours would be linked closely to the Corporate Plan.

The new Service Directors were being supported both in terms of their own development and the development of their new teams. In addition, a programme for the whole team would be starting soon, with the first workshop focussed on clarifying and agreeing Values and Behaviours. In particular, support was being given to the Commercial Service Director, in order to identify training and other opportunities that supported the commercialisation culture of work of his team which would then be carried out across the organisation.

Regular Performance Review

There was a 97% completion rate for Regular Performance Review that year, the highest since 2013. The Learning and Employee Engagement Team were on target to have the RPR process on the GROW Zone by April 2019. They would, alongside that, be looking to integrate more regular one to one's into the process.

Organisational Restructures

The 'Meeting the Challenge' brand was being used as a focus of training and development activity that supported change, but also considered staff wellbeing. Workshops and focussed wellbeing days, encouraging people to tap into the pool of NHDC Coaches and Mentors.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager continued by drawing the Member's attention to:

Organisational Restructures

There had been a lot of organisational restructure work going on and, as expected, with the changes at Senior Management level, the alignment to the new structure was taking place.

Absence

There were more long term absence cases reported, including a couple of staff with serious illness.

Flu Clinics were being held that week. A great number of staff had signed up for a flu vaccination, and it was hoped that this would help keep the number of winter illness down.

Appraisal Performance in July was up at 97% of Regular Performance Reviews collected. Inevitably, there would be a few appraisal completions that were submitted a little late due to people being absent. The Learning and Employee Engagement Manager stated that there would be, in future, a more flexible approach on the timescale of that particular agreement. NHDC were seeking to have Performance Reviews carried out approximately twice a year.

There had been a slight increase in turnover of staff compared to the year before, however, still very much in line with what was expected.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager drew the Committee's attention to the Absence Rates table on the report, showing over the twelve month rolling period, long term absence had been increasing. Short term absence rates had some pretty high months and it was expected there would be inflated figures over the winter months. The previous month was a very low month of short term absence, which was, however, encouraging.

IT WAS AGREED: That the information note entitled People Strategy Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the People Strategy Update.

7 AN EQUAL PAY REVIEW - INFORMATION NOTE

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented the Information Note entitled Equal Pay Review 2017 – Outcomes and drew attention to the following:

Equal Pay Review was looked at on a regular basis.

Equal Pay had been very stable for a number of years, and there was overall satisfaction that there were no significant inequalities. Staff in minority groups or protected characteristics were earning the same or, in some cases, more than the comparison group, showing no disadvantages.

Results from the 2015 report, where it had been noted there had been a significant increase in the number of staff for whom there was no information on certain protected criteria. Within the current payroll system, employees were able to input their own personal information if they so wished. Staff were reminded that the facility was there, and were encouraged to use it, in order that fair treatment was implemented. In some cases, any reasonable adjustments that may be required, could also be made.

Sixty six percent of NHDC employees were women, a high number, but typical of Local Government.

A Member questioned the report content, seeking clarification on whether part time staff were earning more than their full time colleagues and were she to assume that the full time people were apprentices (youngsters) and part-time employees more mature, (from late thirties/early forties) and on a different pay structure? As this would then beg the question as to why anyone would work full time if they could earn more by working part time?

The Corporate Human Resources Manager confirmed that a large number of NHDC staff worked part-time, and were more than likely to be earning at the top of their pay scale. Newer employees joining the workforce on a full time basis, would start on a lower level of the pay scale.

Whilst shared parental leave was quite heavily publicised, the take up of men sharing maternity leave with women was still incredibly low.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager referred to 3.4 of the report confirming the stated age profile of the workforce at NHDC. Apprentices were at that time, being recruited, which would improve the demographic of younger people joining the workforce.

Members of staff over the age of 65 had increased since the last pay review, but only by small numbers. There was still a fairly attractive pension scheme in place and although a significant point of Employment Law, which had removed the default retirement age, those that could afford it, were choosing to leave as early as possible.

It was confirmed that the percentage of members of staff in the Council with a declared disability, be it temporary or otherwise, had declined to declare such. In answer to a Member's enquiry, the Corporate Human Resources Manager stated that staff were encouraged to report a disability. Further stating, discussions had taken place in her department as to how to better educate employees on the understanding of disability criteria.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager explained to the Committee that Additional Responsibility Payments had been introduced many years ago. A fair mechanism, applied equally to both men and women. She stated, there had been an increase in the number of such payments currently being made, which reflected the insurance of appropriate reward for those taking on additional responsibility in terms of both workload and additional project work.

The Corporate Human Resources Manager informed the Committee that there was a working group gender pay gap in place. In terms of the starting salaries that had been offered to prospective employees, it was noticed that, women tended more to readily accept the bottom of the pay scale, whilst men regularly requested a higher grade starting salary within the pay scale. Part of NHDC's training programme was to educate managers on how to best to inform of the negotiability of pay, in order to offer a more level playing field. Exploring through the language used, to attract gender equality and development skill on objective criteria.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Information Note entitled An Equal Pay Review be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider An Equal Pay Review.

8 STRATEGIC FORUM DISCUSSION TOPIC

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented a discussion paper entitled Family Friendly Legislation highlighting:

Carers

There was a growing group of people who had a responsibility for elderly parents or relatives on NHDC's payroll.

NHDC offered flexible working hours, job share, home-working and flexi-time to accommodate employees who had a 'caring' responsibility.

A large number of women who had young children or elderly parents to look after were employed at the Council on a part time capacity.

New parents were offered:

- Maternity
- Paternity
- Adoption
- Shared Parental Leave

Free child care places were replacing the salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme.

Within the policy at NHDC, all members of staff had the right to flexible working hours.

The most common request came from women, who wished to reduce their working hours from full time to part-time after they had had a baby.

Special Leave

NHDC had a policy in place that allowed a member of staff, whilst not limitless, to have the right to time off in an emergency situation.

Time off for Dependants

Assistance available to a “dependant” member of staff time off in the case of an emergency

- Support Mechanisms
- Occupational Health
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Well@work Site on the Intranet – giving policies and practices. On going updates and changes were always being made to this site in order to provide up-to-date guidance, including developing Manager’s skill to spot the signs of serious personal or family health issues.

Exciting New Developments

- Grand parental leave
- Parental bereavement leave
- Carers’ leave
- Fathers’ rights

In response to a question by a Member of whether NHDC were quick to provide emergency cover, especially in small teams, The Corporate Human Resources Manager confirmed there was mechanisms in place, and a general willingness from staff to undertake extra hours.

Members discussed the paper further, during which they made observations endorsing the positive points that positive devices were in place for any member of staff to feel supported and have someone to talk to through experience of difficult times. Members were also extremely pleased that steps were being taken in Government to radically improve paternity rights.

IT WAS AGREED: That the discussion paper on Family Friendly Legislation be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the discussion paper on Family Friendly Legislation.

9 SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

Members considered what subjects should be discussed at future meetings and agreed the following:-

On-line Recruitment – How we are modernising the process for on-line applications.

IT WAS AGREED:

That the discussion topic for the meeting due to be held on December 2018 would be On-line recruitment.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to choose discussion topics of interest for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 4.03 pm

Chairman