

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY ON WEDNESDAY, 27TH MARCH, 2019 AT 3.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Sarah Dingley (Chairman), Bernard Lovewell, Lynda Needham and Kate Aspinwall*

In Attendance: *Kerry Shorrocks (Corporate Human Resources Manager), Helen Bylett (Learning and Employee Engagement Business Partner), Dee Levett, Christina Corr, Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader) and Amelia McInally (Committee, Member Services and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *Anthony Roche (Deputy Chief Executive)*

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 13 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lisa Nash and Martin Stears-Handscomb.

Having given due notice, Councillor Kate Aspinwall informed that she would be substituting for Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb.

19 MINUTES - 19 DECEMBER 2019

Audio recording – Start of Item – 24 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 December 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

20 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 minute

There was no other business notified.

21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 minute, 9 seconds

- (1) The Chairman announced that this marked a significant day, in that, it was the last ever Council Meeting that Councillor Bernard Lovewell would be attending in his 20 years of service. Many thanks were extended to Councillor Lovell for all of his hard work and mentoring.
- (2) 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; and
- (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.

22 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 2 minutes, 18 seconds

The Corporate Human Resources Manager presented the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Meeting and drew attention to the following:

5 December 2018

- Last year following the Senior Management Restructure there had been a lot of organisation changes and senior manager changes.
- There had been an update on the Green Space Restructure.
- NHDC Update – Explained that major projects were reported by the Deputy Chief Executive when he was in attendance at SCF meetings.
- Two-year pay award had been agreed last year.
- There had been a very useful IT Update.

Members expressed concern over the use of initials only, which made the reading of SCF Minutes quite tricky. It was suggested that full names were used in future.

Audio recording – Start of Item – 6 minutes, 7 seconds

9 January 2019

- NHDC Update – Statutory Christmas Days
- 3 re-structures - Legal, Policy and Policy and Community
- Update on the progress of the Organisational Values and Behaviours
- Document Centre Changes
- Revenue and Benefits Changes

In response to a Members query, The Human Resources Manager clarified who was responsible for writing the SCF Minutes, explaining that there had been several changes in minute takers due to staffing restructure.

In response to a query about how Minute 7 of the SCF minutes had been worded, The Deputy Chief Executive explained for clarification, that the minute had been specifically looking at the position of Revenues and Benefits Department only. He further stated that they had been looking at Managers roles within Revenues and Benefits, how to change the way in which that department was working, in order to cope with staff reduction, that had, coincidentally happened to be more junior, making the possibility of a reduction of a Manager role. A decision on any reduction at Manager level would be made at Council on 7 Feb 2019.

Audio recording – Start of Item – 11 minutes, 16 seconds

6 February 2019

- Control Risk and Performance Restructure
- Suggested Plants that would be ideal to refresh the air in the offices
- NHDC Update – looking forward to the Museum being fully opened
- Pay rise reminder
- Staff Survey results had been received, which had resulted in a lot of communication with staff
- Varied Employee Queries

In response to Councillor Aspinwall's query, The Human Resources Manager stated that she did not have the exact figure with her that day, however, she estimated that the response rate of return of staff survey was around 75%.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held on 5 December 2018, 9 January 2019 and Minutes for 6 February 2019 be noted.

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

23 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE - INFORMATION NOTE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 13 Minutes, 38 Seconds

The Committee received a People Strategy Update Information Note presented by the Corporate Human Resources Manager as follows:-

The Work Plan had already been declared for the coming financial year, and updates would be provided to Members at the next Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee in June 2019.

Recruitment

The Human Resource department have had a very busy time during restructure through support of moves, changes and recruitment.

Equal Pay and Equalities

- A working group had been formed to consider actions to reduce the Council's identified gender pay gap.
- The report for 2018 would be published on 30 March 2019.
- The figures had shown that the figures had improved since 2017.
- An Action Plan had been developed.
- There was a 10% differential in the numbers of women at grades 9 and above.
- The workforce profile was 73% female – a positive opportunity to produce more of the leaders from existing staff.
- Career development of women, looking at succession planning of staff - survey of Staff to assess their career aspirations.
- Equality Data had been collected which had been published and was on NHDC's Website.

Pay and Benefits

- The year ahead would be extremely busy as the Human Resources department had started procuring for a new payroll service; and
- Implementation of that payroll service, ensuring a smooth transfer from one provider to another.

Pay

- The Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 had been published on the Council's website.

National Pay Bargaining – There would be a bottom loaded pay increase in April 2019, however this would be the last year of such an increase.

Benefits

There were 2 key contracts:

- (1) Employee Assistance Programme; and
- (2) Occupational Health

Regular Performance Review

- A new cycle was in process;
- Organisational Restructures; and
- The Learning and Development team were continuing to develop activities that supported change and workshops had been designed to support staff through those changes.

Absence

- Using the data provided from March last year enabled forecasting for the only month that was missing from the report;
- Short term absence was 0.75% over target, however November and December figures were considerably lower than perhaps expected; and
- Long Term Absence – by February there was no-one on long term sick leave.

In response to questions from Councillors Lovewell and Aspinwall, The Human Resources Manager advised as follows:

- There had been, as in the past, a significant take up for the flu vaccination program – well over one hundred staff had received.
- Whilst it was difficult to discern as to whether the flu vaccination had assisted with absence figures, it was felt it did indeed make a difference. The long term absence figures were low, and staff suffering from flu rather than a cold would be absent from work for longer.
- Pay Bargaining – National Living Wage Rate - different rates were applied to staff who were under the age of 24.
- Apprentices were not paid an apprentice rate, they were paid over £9 an hour alongside grade one employees.
- The Grow Zone System was used for Performance Reviews.
- Measuring of Absence – Best Practice Performance indicated the way in which information had always been gathered in local government, which was how NHDC compared themselves to other similar authorities.
- There was a scale of performance around local authorities in order to view how NHDC measured up.
- The data gathered was valuable when trying to improve absence rates across the organisation. Whilst, an alteration in the way that information had to be gathered, especially to define between the different services, through structural changes, it was very closely managed by HR with the added support of Business Partners.
- There was an Annual Workforce Development Survey carried out.
- The Deputy Chief Executive further stated the Best Value Performance Indicator allowed NHDC to bench-mark itself against other authorities.

24 STRATEGIC FORUM DISCUSSION TOPIC

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 29 Minutes, 27 Seconds

The Learning and Employee Engagement Business Partner introduced the paper on Learning and Employee Engagement Supporting Organisational Change. Helen Bylatt explained to the Committee that she was presenting the paper on behalf of Keith Crampton, The Learning and Employee Engagement Business Partner Manager. The Committee were informed as follows:-

Situated within the HR Department there to provide all of the Learning and Development for the Organisation.

Over the last 4 years they had introduced a number of initiatives supporting the organisation through change, which included workshops for both managers and all other staff. This was all carried out under the branding “Meeting the Challenge”, which was paramount to build resilience within NHDC.

Visible part of their team role was organising and deliver training, also took a lead on a number of other processes within the organisation.

The Team Mission Statement:

“To support the organisation, its employees and elected members, in achieving their learning and development goals in order that the organisation meets its strategic and operational objectives. In doing this we will strive to proactively engage, be flexible, responsive and innovative in our approach. We will recognise the need to communicate and provide opportunities for people in different ways to reflect their particular needs”.

Provision of assurance that staff, not only had the skills and knowledge to carry out their role, that they would also have the resilience to cope with changes around them.

There were a number of key initiatives:

- Values and Behaviours - worked very closely with The Chief and Deputy Chief Executive to engage with staff. An extremely positive response had been received.
- A new set of Values and Behaviours had been put in place.
- Leadership and Management Development - not only for the current Leadership and Management Team, but also for the Developing Leaders of the future.
- Introduction and Management Fundamentals Workshop, aimed to assist with the development of staff who were looking to progress into Line Management.
- A number of staff were already qualified in the PRINCE2 methodology, however, a new workshop, namely Practical Project Management had been introduced which assisted staff to practically apply their core skills to run a project.
- Regular Performance Review, (RPR) had replaced the Council's old appraisal scheme 3 years ago. 2019 would see RPR become a more regular process, which would embrace the new values and behaviours - A review of both performance and that of well being.
- There was an increased demand for both staff and Members to undertake essential learning. The Learning and Development team facilitated this through eLearning on the GROW Zone and Workshop training.
- Worked closely with all Service Directors to ensure all legislative requirements were covered.

In answer to questions from Cllr Kate Aspinwall The Deputy Chief Executive responded as follows:

NHDC Values and Behaviours:

We are's and I am's

We are together – I am considerate

We are continually improving – I am adaptable

We are forward thinking – I am innovative

We are customer focused – I am constructive

We are listening – I am open

We are performance focused – I am professional

Wednesday, 27th March, 2019

Used through regular responsive review process. Presently reflected the organisation's culture, going forward, the aspiration to continue.

The Organisational Values – worked closely with Managers after RPR's had taken place, enabling the challenge of behaviours and allowed discussion in a very positive way.

A potential discussion would take place in order that Councillors would be asked as to what values and cultures would need to be embodied, as, thus far the organisation values had been deliberately aimed at staff. Suggest that perhaps link expectations, rather than staff culture, which would fit in with staff objectives.

Councillor Aspinwall felt that this was a great platform in which to reinvigorate the Councillor Code of Conduct – she stated that the Organisational Values needed to be reflected by all. Councillor Aspinwall congratulated The Learning and Employee Engagement Team for all of their labour intensive work that they carried out.

25 SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 43 minutes, 50 seconds

Date of meeting – 19 June 2019

IT WAS AGREED: That the discussion topic for the next meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee would be as follows:

- (i) Occupational Health

The meeting closed at 3.45pm

Chairman