



# East Northamptonshire Council

## Personnel Sub Committee - 9 June 2009

### Review of the Staff Forum

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#### Summary

This report advises Members about a review of the Council's Staff Forum and asks Member to agree the terms of reference for a new formal employee communication and consultation group.

#### Attachment(s)

Appendix A - Draft terms of reference for the recommended new formal employee communication and consultation group "XChange"

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### Report to Personnel Sub-Committee - Review of the Staff Forum

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 This paper provides information about a review of the Council's Staff Forum. It includes a recommendation on how formal communication and consultation with employees should take place in the future, and asks the Personnel Sub-Committee to agree the recommendation.

#### 2.0 Introduction

2.1 The Staff Forum is the five elected employee representatives who attend the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF). The last meeting of the JCF was on 17 April 2008 and the Staff Forum does not currently have any elected employee representatives.

2.2 This review was requested by employees who were previously representatives on the Staff Forum. They asked for the review because the Council doesn't currently have a formal employee communication and consultation group and when the Staff Forum was in place:

- Employees did not know who they were or what they did.
- When employees did contact the Staff Forum it was often to discuss inappropriate or trivial matters.
- They didn't feel valued.
- They didn't feel management formally communicated and consulted with them about important things taking place in the Council.

#### 3.0 Current position

3.1 Employee communication and consultation currently takes place through a number of mechanisms including:

- Project groups involving employees from all service areas.
- Discussions with UNISON.
- Placing information onto EUNICE.
- Team meetings.
- One to one meetings.

3.2 However, the mechanisms identified above are not agreed replacements of the Staff Forum.

## **4.0 The project group**

4.1 The project group set up to review the Staff Forum included:

- Katy Everitt Organisations Development
- Palden Dorje Environmental Services
- David Tipler Resources
- Denise Beard Revenues and Benefits
- Pauline Matheson Organisations Development
- Heather Dunsheath ICT
- Ian Peters ICT
- Zena Ireland Environmental Services
- Anna Walker Policy and Community Development
- Sue Devonshire Customer Services
- Kirsty Squires Environmental Services (facilitator)

4.2 Their review looked at:

- The terms of reference for the Staff Forum.
- How formal communication and consultation currently takes place.
- Why the Council needs a formal mechanism for communication and consultation.
- How formal communication and consultation should take place in the future.

## **5.0 Review Findings**

5.1 The project group agreed that the current terms of reference for the Staff Forum are not effective and lack clarity about its role. The project group said that because of this it encouraged employees to submit inappropriate and trivial matters to the Staff Forum which included things like requests for toilet wipes and air conditioning. The project group said that this resulted in the Staff Forum being seen as somewhere to “moan” rather than discuss, and exchange views on, important issues taking place within the Council.

5.2 The project group said this wasn't what the Staff Forum wanted and it resulted in them feeling under valued by both employees and management.

5.3 The project group agreed that they think formal employee communication and consultation needs a fresh start which should include:

- Employees being involved and contributing to key business decisions so that they have an opportunity to influence things that will affect them.
- Employees having their views listened to and seeing that their views are taken into account.
- Increasing upward and downward communication about important matters.

## **6.0 The Project Group Recommendations:**

6.1 The project group recommends that a new formal employee communication and consultation group is created called XChange (pronounced exchange).

6.2 XChange will communicate and consult with employees on collective issues relating to:

1. The development and revision of policies and procedures affecting

- employees.
2. Changes to terms and conditions of employment.
  3. Issues that will have an impact on the Council's employees e.g. significant change to the Council's organisational structure.
- 6.3 The project group believes that by defining areas to be formally communicated and consulted on, it will encourage a meaningful exchange of views and ideas between management and employees.
- 6.4 The project group also suggests that XChange removes the need for the JCF to take place. Instead they recommend that items communicated and consulted on by XChange are reported by the Strategic Management Team to the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- 6.5 Attached at Appendix A is a copy of the draft terms of reference for the recommended new arrangements. A summary of the recommended terms of reference is detailed below:
- A new formal communication and consultation group called XChange.
  - An employee representative for each service area who is nominated by their service area.
  - Items considered by XChange to be reported on by the Strategic Management Team to the Personnel Sub-Committee.
  - Increased focus on the purpose of XChange to remove subjectivity and encourage meaningful communication and consultation.
  - XChange will not consider general ideas. If general ideas are received by XChange, they will be submitted to the Council's employee suggestion scheme, Bright Ideas.
  - Employees will not be able to stand as an employee representative if they have current formal warnings. This includes formal warnings for capability (sickness absence/work performance) and disciplinary matters.

## 7.0 Personnel Sub-Committee – Recommendation for Action

- 7.1 The Personnel Sub-Committee are asked to agree the terms of reference for XChange and the recommended arrangements for a new formal employee communication and consultation group.

<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy</b>		
Good Quality of Life	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good Reputation <input type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	High Quality Service Delivery <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong Community Leadership <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of our Customers and Communities <input type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Financial</b>	There are no financial implications at this stage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be financial implications – see paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is provision within existing budget	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may have potential for income generation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Risk Management</b>	An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference -	<input type="checkbox"/>

	inherent risk score -				
	residual risk score -				
<b>Staff</b>	There are no additional staffing implications				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Additional staff will be required – see paragraph				<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>	There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph				<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Legal</b>	Power:				
	Other considerations:				
<b>Person Originating Report:</b> Katy Everitt, Head of Organisational Development					
<b>Date:</b> 01 June 2009					
<b>CFO</b>		<b>MO</b>		<b>CX</b>	

(Committee Report Confidential Rev. 21)

### Terms of Reference – XChange

#### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of XChange is to make sure effective communication and consultation takes place between employees and management on collective issues relating to:
- a) the development and revision of policies and procedures affecting employees;
  - b) changes to terms and conditions of employment;
  - c) issues that will have an impact on the Council's employees e.g. significant change to the Council's organisational structure.
- 1.2 XChange does not have any decision-making power but can influence decisions in the above areas through the exchange of views and ideas.
- 1.3 XChange will not consider general ideas. If general ideas are received by XChange, they will be submitted to the Council's employee suggestion scheme, Bright Ideas.

#### 2.0 XChange membership

- 2.1 Membership of XChange will be:
- One employee representative, below Head of Service level, from each of the following areas:
    - Customer Services
    - Environmental Services
    - ICT
    - Planning Services
    - Organisational Development and Chief Executive's Department
    - Policy and Community Development
    - Resources
    - Revenues and Benefits
  - One trade union representative
  - Chief Executive (or Executive Director)
  - Head of Organisational Development (or Personnel and Payroll Supervisor)
  - One Head of Service (attendance will be rotated between all Heads of Service, excluding the Head of Organisational Development).

### **3.0 Election of Employee Representatives**

- 3.1 To become an employee representative employees must nominate them self. If more than one nomination is received for a service area, a ballot will be held within the service area. The employee with the most votes will be the employee representative for that service area. If the highest scoring votes are tied, a name will be drawn from a hat (or another suitable item).
- 3.2 Employee representatives will serve for two years, or until their resignation.
- 3.3 If an employee representative resigns an election will be held to fill the vacancy.
- 3.4 At the end of their two year appointment, employee representatives can nominate themselves again.
- 3.5 Employees will not be able to stand as an employee representative if they have current formal warnings. This includes formal warnings for capability (sickness absence/work performance) and disciplinary matters. If an employee receives a formal warning when they are already an employee representative they must give up their appointment. This will be managed by the Head of Organisational Development.

### **4.0 Election of Union Representatives**

- 4.1 To become the union representative on XChange the employee must be a member of a union and must nominate them self.
- 4.2 If more than one nomination is received the union will hold a ballot of union members and the employee with the most votes will be elected. If the highest scoring votes are tied, a name will be drawn from a hat (or another suitable item).
- 4.3 All other rules regarding the appointment of a union representative are the same as those for the appointment of an employee representative.

### **5.0 The Chair**

- 5.1 The Chair serves for 12 months and is elected by XChange members.

### **6.0 Duties**

- 6.1 Members of XChange must ensure that they:
  - Collectively represent employees;

- Consult and canvass the opinions of employees about issues that will have a major impact on them;
- Consult with employees over suggested agenda items;
- Inform employees of matters discussed at XChange meetings and seek their views and opinions;
- Take part in other meetings that are relevant to XChange;
- Raise the profile of XChange.

6.2 Members of XChange will be responsible for deciding how they put these things into action.

### **7.0 Meetings**

7.1 Meetings will take place as required but at least once every two months. At least four employee representatives and the Head of Organisational Development (or Personnel and Payroll Supervisor) must be present for a meeting to take place.

### **8.0 Setting the agenda**

8.1 The agenda for an XChange meeting will be agreed by the Chair and the Chief Executive at least one week before a meeting takes place.

### **9.0 Status of conclusions**

9.1 Draft minutes will be circulated to XChange members for comment, before a final version is released to employees.

9.2 The conclusions of XChange will be reported to the Strategic Management Team (SMT). SMT is responsible for providing feedback on the consultation with XChange to the Personnel Sub-Committee.

### **10.0 Voting on issues**

10.1 XChange will try and reach conclusions by consensus. When this isn't possible, the members of XChange will have a formal vote on an issue, indicated by a show of hands. If there is a hung vote the Chair will have the deciding vote.

### **11.0 Communication with employees**

11.1 Any matters arising will be communicated by XChange members to all employees using the most appropriate method available. This will be decided during an XChange meeting.

11.2 Information will be provided on EUNICE to ensure employees are kept informed about items discussed by XChange.

### **12.0 Development and support**

12.1 Management will give XChange members reasonable time off during the normal working day to fulfil their role as an employee representative.

12.2 Management will provide support to ensure employee representatives have the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours to undertake their role as a member of XChange.

### **13.0 Review**

13.1 XChange will review its terms of reference annually.