

Essential Car Users Criteria Greatly Improved

UNISON are pleased to announce that following a meeting with the new chief executive **Michael Lockwood** and **HR Management**, negotiations have been reopened with the council and new proposals have been put forward which significantly improve those that originally went out to staff (in receipt of the **essential user car allowance (EUCA)**) in the council's letter dated 8th May 2007. The new proposals have been made as a result of the **concern** expressed during a number of meetings with affected staff groups and a **willingness** by **management** to recognize that concern and to work in partnership with UNISON to minimize the impact both on service delivery and affected essential car users, given, the current financial standing of the council.

Essential user car allowance will not be used for recruitment and retention or other purposes intended to provide a benefit to the post holder. The decision on which posts will carry an EUCA will be made by the relevant Director in consultation with the HR Manager, after considering the EUCA review checklist.

Employees who are not entitled to an EUCA will be allowed to claim a casual user allowance when using their own car on Council business. **Staff will be aware that the original proposal in Section B of the letter involved mileages in excess of 1500 miles pa. The proposed reduction of the figure to 800 miles pa (almost half of the original proposal) represents the most significant improvement.**

Additionally the criteria in Section C of the original letter has also been improved in that recognition is given both to genuine field workers and to disabled staff or those with health problems. Other criteria in respect of emergency call out staff is also included.

For more information see page 2 of this News Letter.

Membership Participation

The Council moves into full swing in reference to align the new structure, and allow for restructuring of many departments across the directives. It is of the utmost importance that UNISON have extra input from all departmental and workplace representatives in order to prevent the council fast tracking and avoiding full consultation with members and employees.

Membership participation is essential during these troubled times. Not participating is no longer an option.

UNISON MEET WITH THE NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Unison Branch Officers recently met with the new Chief Executive Officer Michael Lockwood. This meeting was the first of hopefully many to come and was in-depth, fruitful and the majority of the discussion was based on the provision of in-house services. Mr Lockwood focused on providing and improving pay and conditions for the staff of Harrow. Throughout these discussions Mr Lockwood's vision was focused on the work life balance that has been omitted from Harrow in the past. Also the possibility of sliding down from a 2 star rated council to a 1 star rating, this is—Contin page 2

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“ Criteria will be applied in determining which posts will attract the EUCA,”

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Essential car users criteria improved - Continued from the front page

The following criteria will be applied in determining which posts will attract the EUCA.

- A) The post involves an annual business mileage in excess of 2500 miles p.a. or
- B) The post involves an annual business mileage in excess of 800 miles p.a. and one of the following. The post holder is regularly required to :-
 - a) Transport passengers or bulky, heavy or high value materials/equipment/confidential information, or
 - b) Undertake significant journeys for which public transport would be impractical, or
 - c) Undertake visits to many sites where the use of a private vehicle is essential to carrying out of the duties in the job description, or
 - d) Undertake visits that could cause concern for safety (if other means of transport were used), or
 - e) Use their car at short notice, or
 - f) There are a lack of viable alternatives e.g. car share/courier/taxi/provided car (on a regular basis)
- C) In those cases where annual mileage for the post is less than 800 but it is considered essential and has been approved by the Director and HR. These cases include:
 - a) Genuine fieldworkers who meet two or more of the criteria above subject to incurring a minimum of 400 miles p.a. or
 - b) Disabled staff or those with significant health problems who meet two or more of the criteria above where alternative modes of transport are more problematic than for able-bodied staff (this will be determined by an Occupational Health assessment), or
 - c) Those who are required to operate on the Council’s Emergency Response Officer roster or are contractually required to operate on standby and required to attend for emergency call-out (where a council vehicle) is not supplied.

The original proposals were part of a Tri-partite agreement between Unison, The GMB and the Council. Consequently the new proposals are subject to GMB and CMT approval prior to final acceptance.

UNISON meets new chief Executive – continued from the front page

predominantly due to the savings and cuts that are required. Unison look forward to working in full consultation with Mr Lockwood and wish him every success in trying to turn the tide and hopefully replicating his success from his previous council. Common goals and objectives of achieving long term stability and improved ratings for Harrow were readily agreed.



NATIONAL PAY FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOLS

Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education, last week agreed that trade unions representing school staff and school employers would develop a national pay and conditions framework for school staff in England. The School Staff Working Group (SSWG) has been meeting for over a year and presented their second report at Easter. The Secretary of State

has accepted this and the SSWG will now be working towards developing a national structure. At this stage we will be trying to negotiate a structure that can deliver fairness and consistency for school staff and deals with the issues related to term-time working. (Source McAnea National Secretary Education Workforce)

A recent survey con-

ducted by Harrow Unison found that there is considerable confusion regarding pay and grades of support staff. The data showed that only 14% of respondents have a job description, and only 11% knew their grade. An overall of 60% of respondents to the survey reported that they **regularly worked extra unpaid hours.**

Weapons searches in schools

Legislation in the [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006](#) allows head teachers to search groups of pupils if they suspect one of them is carrying a knife. Heads are also entitled to use metal-detector arches and wands to carry out random, non-intrusive searches of pupils for weapons. These powers will come into effect in May

2007. There is no legal definition of reasonable force. In exceptional circumstances where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of the school staff may take the necessary action to prevent a pupil from, for example, hitting someone or throwing an object. Corporal punishment was abolished in 1986. (Source

www.DfES.gov.uk)

There have been concerns raised by support staff about these New Statutory Powers to search students. The advice form UNISON is;

‘Support staff’ except for security guards, Cannot be required to undertake or be a witness to searches as part of their job.

Higher level teaching assistants

There are only 54 **HLTA’s** currently who have been assessed or are going through assessment. This is an extremely small number when you consider the population of classroom support staff in Harrow. (Source Harrow weekly bulletin for Head teachers)

I am interested to find out what the obstacles are for Harrow teaching assistants to take up this training.

Are there jobs available for HLTA’s when qualified?

Are staff given the opportunity to gain the pre requisite qualifications?

Do staff have paid time off for training?

Lynne Ahmad Convenor for Education

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 020 8424 1795.

“Are there jobs available for HLTA’s when qualified?”





**“Unison members
have been
prominent among
the winners in the
past.”**

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your friend at work



New In House Training Courses for 2007

Introduction to Health & Safety

29th June Friday
09.30AM—12.30PM

Train the Trainer Workshop

Friday 26th October
09.30AM—12.30PM

Carrying out workplace inspections

Friday 30 November—09.30 –12.30

Negotiation skills for Reps & Stewards

Friday 31 August
09.30AM—12.30PM

HACCP for Catering staff

Friday 14th Dec.
09.30AM-12.30PM

All courses run at the Depot in the Unison training facility - Contact Ken McDonald on 0208 424 1795 or email. ke.mcdonald@harrow-unison.org.uk

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The search is on for the unsung heroes of our public services. Could you be one? If so, the Guardian wants to hear about it. Entries are now open for the newspaper's fourth annual public services awards. Unison members have been prominent among the winners in the past. Now firmly established as a benchmark of excellence, the awards were launched to highlight the huge range of public services and acclaim the inspirational work involved in delivering them day in day out.

They are open to private, voluntary and community bodies as well as public sector organisations, and span a number of different categories under two main banners; service delivery, and innovation and progress. A further award for good citizenship recognises voluntary efforts. The newspaper stresses that projects entered can be any size—it's not assessing the scale of success but the approach taken to overcome obstacles. **Entries close 20 July. (Contact the guardian newspaper)**

Stop Press !! Confusion surrounds GMB resignation

The reported sudden resignation of Sanjay Karia, Harrow GMB Branch Secretary has been greeted with surprise and shock by GMB members and UNISON alike. Sanjay had not always enjoyed the best of relationships with UNISON. At the time of going to press the council had reported that they had received verbal notification from GMB regional officers that Sanjay had resigned. It is hoped that his successor if and when appointed will work more closely with UNISON in the future to secure the best terms and conditions for all staff regardless of which Union they belong to. **At the end of the day Unions should work together for the common benefits of their respective members.** In the interim we welcome the opportunity of working closely with Don Horan GMB president and acting branch secretary.

Health and Safety report

Unison continues the fight for its members rights for Health & Safety. We have successfully raised issues regarding certain areas of the Civic Centre and the removal and the reinstatement of facilities within Central Depot.

Many sites have been visited but many more need to be monitored. If your area of work has issues, I would ask for you to inform your Unison Safety Rep, if there is no one appointed, then we ask that in these times of financial uncertainty that you take up the challenge and become a Rep. Unison will provide full training for you to undertake your role and you will have full support and backing from the branch.

Any Health & Safety problems or issues please do not hesitate to contact me at the Unison Office on Fridays 0208 424 1795. Mary Cawley.

UNISON BRANCH OFFICERS—RECEIVE COUNCIL AWARDS

John Rattray (Branch Interim Vice Chair) and Ken McDonald (Branch Education & Training Officer) both received certificates in recognition of their contributions to the valuable work that their respective teams had carried out during the year on behalf of the council and its residents. The awards were presented at the recent ceremony (June) by Harrow's new Mayor The Worshipful The Mayor Jean Lammiman and the leader of the Council Chris Mote. Harrow's new Chief Executive Michael Lockwood conducted the ceremony and warmly thanked all staff for their contributions to the work and success of the Council.

Equalities officer—Kerry Bubenzer

I have only been the Equalities Officer for Harrow Unison for a few weeks and I can already see why Harrow Council Employees are facing some of the most difficult times for some years. Not only are **Harrow Council Employees** facing re-organisation and **redundancies** it also seems that we are to be penalized for living and working in Harrow. This Council wants all Employees who live in Harrow and Work for the Council, to hand over their **personal details** to their managers. So they can keep a register and check monthly that Employees/Residents are paying their council tax. The information above is part of someone's interpretation of Lord Nolan's Seven Principles of Life; it reads more like part of the **seven deadly sins**.



Reasonable Adjustments, how do I access them?

Are you a disabled employee? Are you having problems getting reasonable adjustments made so you can work affectively and efficiently? Often I have heard the comment "we don't know where to get advice from" You may have already had discussions with your manager but have found difficulty in getting advice. Within the council Kevin Chambers who works for Harrow Association for the Disabled is available at Civic one on a Wednesday to advise and support disabled employees. Alternatively Access to work is available to give advice and carry out an assessment, in many cases this is

where Kevin will refer you. Before you approach the Access to Work Team you should have had a discussion with your manager about your disability needs. If you are having problems in this area then you can contact the Branch equalities officer Kerry Bubenzer for advice. To contact access to work initially ring the number below and an adviser will be able to help. Some basic information will be taken about your needs and then an arrangement will be made for a more in-depth assessment. This is likely to include a visit to your work place. A report will be prepared which you can

then produce to your manager regarding any adjustments that are recommended. It may be at this point that support from the trade union may assist in supporting any recommendations for reasonable adjustments. These may include depending on your disability: new software and training, special chair or workstation, computer equipment, and other environmental adjustments. This is just a small example of some of the recommendations that could be made. In certain instances there is funding for these adjustments in other cases the employer will have to pay. Reasonable adjustments include changes in work patterns or duties. **Contact number:- 020 8426 3110**

"The information above is part of someone's interpretation of Lord Nolan's Seven Principles of Life; it reads more like part of the seven deadly sins."





“LGPS will continue to be a final salary scheme, fully inflation proofed and increasing in line with the retail price index”

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Local Government Pension scheme-Latest news

The LGPS Benefit Regulations for England and Wales were laid on 4th April 2007 and are now law.

As most members will be aware these regulations have come about through extensive negotiations between Unisons national negotiation framework and the Government. The negotiations have been going on for over 3 years and the new scheme that is now on the books has significant improvements over and above the old scheme. The main improvements are listed below:-

- The LGPS will continue to be a final salary scheme, fully inflation proofed and increasing in line with the Retail Price Index.
- From 1/4/2008 the rate at which pensions build up for service will improve to 1/60th of pensionable pay x pensionable service rather than the current 1/80th.
- All members will benefit from the new scheme including those that have been given protection under the rule of 85(Unison are still in negotiation with respect to increasing the protection arrangements).
- Death in service lump sum increased to 3 x pay from 2008.
- Increased benefits for members made redundant after age 55 ie entitled to immediate pension not reduced by an early retirement factor.
- Members to have complete choice as to whether they take part of their benefits as a cash sum on their post-April 2008 service. They can take up to 25% of their benefits by exchanging £12 for each £1 pension given up.
- Pensions for unmarried partners introduced.
- Death in retirement lump sum increased to 10 years pension less pension payments made up to the point of death.
- If a member reduces their pay they can elect to take an average of the best three years in the last ten.
- Members will have the right to buy up to £5000pa extra pension but will not be able to start buying added years after April 2008.

The above outline is only a brief guide to the new LGPS. The council are holding a number of seminars to explain the improvements in depth. These are currently advertised on the council's intranet. Members that do not have access to the intranet can ring Greg Foley or one of his advisors at the civic centre for further advice. With many of the Private Sector blue chip companies queuing up to close their final salary schemes the above improvements are clear evidence of Unisons achievements on behalf of its membership.

Achievement Award Questioned

The Editor 28/04/2007

Management Journal Publication
 32 Vauxhall Bridge Road
 London
 SW1V 2SS

Dear sir,

We read with interest the short listing of Harrow Council as a finalist for the Municipal Journal L G Achievement Awards 2007. The category is for the Pay & Workforce Achievement of the Year Award.

As the Unison Branch involved in the process being submitted for said award, I feel I must make you aware of certain failings that have yet to be addressed:

1. The projected savings of 3.4m were not achieved. We understand only 1.3m was saved, thus forcing a re-negotiation of the contract with CAPITA.
2. Failure in the project implementation to meet Health & safety standards expected by Unison. Lack of urgency in addressing said issues.
3. Issues over effective control of the main contractor by the strategic partner.
4. Failure to address DDA issues effectively.
5. Ongoing concerns over staff stress caused by changes in operational practices.

Harrow Unison Branch would not normally offer any endorsement without prior consultation and in all cases, not until we are satisfied with the end result.

Yours faithfully
 Steve Compton



“This branch is committed to reducing the impact with regards to the savings this Council is currently undertaking.”

UNISON Branch Officers 2007

Chair (interim)	Bob Thomas
Vice Chair (interim)	John Rattray
Branch Secretary	Steve Compton
Asst Branch Secretary	Gary Martin
Asst Branch Secretary	Ron Gray
Treasurer	Deborah Hattam
Welfare Officer	Martin Nolan
A.P.F. Officer	Vacant

UNISON Branch Officers 2007

Education Officer	Ken McDonald
Health & Safety Officer	Mary Cawley
Asst Health & Safety Officer	Ron Gray
Equalities Officer	Kerry Bubenzer
Social Secretary	Pam Smith
Children's Services	Lynne Ahmad
Communications Officer	Richard George



Branch Secretary's column

Dear Colleagues,

This has been an extremely busy start to my term as Branch Secretary. Not only is individual member representation still a large and important part of my and other Branch Officers duties but, with the facility time cutbacks we are fighting a constant battle to keep abreast of the ever growing departmental reviews, organisational restructures, outsourcing and TUPE issues due to the financial difficulties the Council find themselves in.

This branch is committed to reducing the impact with regards to the savings the Council is currently undertaking. To this end, I am undertaking a restructure of the branch to mirror the new Council structure. In the near future all stewards will be contacted regarding their status and re-election if required. When the branch has full details of all active elected stewards across the Council, an election for Directorate convenors will be held. I will then ask the stewards from each new directorate to elect a convenor. The convenor will then become the focal point of contact between branch, management and stewards. This I hope will enable the branch to work in a more controlled, constructive and effective way.

On a sadder note, Lynda Anousis has resigned from the post of Branch Chair. We all wish her well and thank her for all she has done. On the interim the Branch Executive have appointed Bob Thomas as Chair and John Rattray as Vice Chair. Requests for nominations for these and other unfilled Officer posts can be made in writing directly to the branch using the appropriate nomination form where applicable. Vacant posts will also be advertised for election on notice boards across the Council.

Finally may I thank my fellow Branch Officers for their help above and beyond the norm recently, putting in many unpaid extra hours, which has given us a fighting chance to have a say in all that is happening.

Best Wishes.

The UNISON Office is Staffed by...
Admin Assistant Teresa Stanley (Part Time)
(Monday to Friday 08.30am– 11.30am)

Please remember to contact your Workplace Representative in the first instance and let them deal with any issues at the grass roots level.

Depot Office Tel: 020 8424 1795
Email : info@harrow-unison.org.uk
Website: www.unison.org.uk

This NETwork news letter was produced and edited by **Kanti Halai with contributions by Richard George** and other **UNISON members**.
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“This branch is committed to reducing the impact with regards to the savings the Council is currently undertaking.”

