



'MODERNISATION' UNISON ASK- ARE WE REALLY 'ALL IN THIS TOGETHER' ?

Inside this issue: A Rough Guide to the 'Modernisation' Questionnaire & Branch motions regarding Consultancy expenditure and Councillor Allowances reductions.

A call for fairness & equity

A **UNISON** proposal calling on reductions in Councillor's Allowances drew support from the Conservative Group at the Employee's Consultative Forum (ECF) on Wednesday 18th April 2012.

At a time when the elected representatives of the Borough's residents are asking its staff to accept massive reductions in pay, or at best a 2.5% across the board cut, UNISON reminded ECF that **if we really are 'all in this together'**, as the Prime Minister says we are, then **Councillor's should practice what they preach and accept annual reductions in Councillor Allowances as part of their contribution to the savings required in the 'Modernisation' workforce consultation.**

This proposal was underpinned by UNISON members in the 'Modernisation' Branch Members meeting convened on Monday 23rd April 2012. A copy of the motions passed at this meeting are contained further within this newsletter.

Members will note that Councillors are allocated annual allowances for undertaking their elected duties and, as UNISON highlighted in February's edition of 'Organise', the **Council spends over £810k** on the 63 elected members of the Authority. Like our members, Councillor's work hard for the Authority most have full or part time jobs and so they should shoulder some of the financial pain that members are likely to suffer.

The Leader of the Council draw a basic annual allowance of over **£31k**, the Deputy Leader receives **£20k** and Cabinet members receive **£20k**. The basic allowance a Councillor receives is **£8,160**.

The removal of over time enhancements, standby payments and the halving of Essential Car User Allowances will hit 1600 staff. However, the 'Modernisation' proposals exclude any impact to the 63 Councillor's who represent the employer. This is unfair, unreasonable and must be redressed. The Labour Leader, his Deputy Leader and the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder had to be reminded by Councillor Osborn of the Conservative Group that there should be a greater sharing of the financial burden as it clear that the lower paid will be disproportionately impacted by the cuts to pay and conditions.

UNISON called for a greater degree of fairness and equity and we were reassured by the Leader that all staff will be treated equitably and that the Council does want to reach a collective agreement.

Organise!

-'MODERNISATION' WORKFORCE PROPOSALS- A ROUGH GUIDE TO ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire guidance

In the 'Modernisation' Branch Meeting held on the 23rd April 2012, members asked if we could instruct them how to answer their consultation questionnaires. Branch representatives advised the membership that they could not tell members how to complete individual questionnaires because each member will have differing financial circumstances, varying lengths of service and will work in different workplaces. However, the Branch have summarised its position on each of the sections formatted within the questionnaire below helping members to make an informed decision.

Remember, this is a summarised guide but as members found out in the Branch meeting on Monday, you do not have to complete each of the questions if it does not relate to your personal position. You can mark 'no' if it doesn't affect you, or leave the question blank. If you take a personal view that you think the proposal is unfair and unjustified, enter 'no'.

Note books at the ready school members

The Council is consulting with you about changing your terms & conditions. However, the Council cannot impose the changes, as was previously suggested by Human Resources, without the final sanction and decision of your school governing body. Every member could be affected by reductions to sickness payments, the redundancy scheme and some will lose out in the removal of overtime enhancements. School members need to be aware of this.

The UNISON alternative– a 'Hybrid' approach

UNISON suggests that all members complete **Section 4** of the questionnaire and support the Branch call for an alternative to the two proposals. Harrow Branch firmly believes that a negotiated combination of the 'Modernisation' proposal and the basic pay cut is a fairer and equitable deal for our members which can only be negotiated with UNISON through a collective agreement. **We urge our GMB colleagues to adopt this approach for the benefit of all union members before it is too late.**

1. Modernising Proposals

Working Arrangements, Time Off and Payments (questions a-d)

The Council wishes to introduce flexibility as to when hours and days are worked according to Service requirements. This could mean working any 5 of 7 working day week without additional pay and changes to the Flexitime system according to the needs of individual services.

The proposal is to pay flat rate and **we are vigorously opposed to the complete removal of enhancements for overtime and weekend working.** The complete removal of enhancements is unreasonable and this proposal will affect up to 1,100 staff, many are low paid and who could see pay reductions up to and over 20%.

The proposal to increase annual leave by one day is seen by UNISON as a 'smokescreen' to soften the blow of other cuts. The extra day's leave will be paid to schools staff over a 52 week period and will be of little benefit to them.

We are vigorously opposed to reductions in Sick pay and Industrial pay. The Council has no right to alter these conditions because they are negotiated nationally.

Grading Structure and Salary Progression (questions a-e)

UNISON informally agreed with the proposal to smooth the current grading structure because it has no financial impact on members. We support the introduction of the London Wage which is long overdue and will mean a pay increase of 6.25% for those in H 1 **(continued next page)**

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who will move up several spinal points.

UNISON support a cut in the Chief Executive's and Corporate Director's pay and the forfeiture of pay awards for senior officers but believe the reduction should be greater and proportionate to salaries. **We are vigorously opposed to applying salary progression to those members who are 'performing satisfactorily' and who are not subject to formal procedures.** This could be discriminatory and unfair to members who are genuinely on long term sick. It is also reliant on managers/HR to use the procedures fairly and consistently which is not being done; last year's trip to ACAS for failure to follow employment procedures exemplifies this.

Mobility (questions a-d)

UNISON are opposed to the halving of the Essential Car User Allowance and the application of HMRC mileage rates to existing casual and essential users. Field workers should be fully compensated for using their cars for Council use. UNISON support a review of the eligibility of the existing scheme which the Branch tabled as a counter response in the original negotiations. If applied correctly, there would be no need to cut the lump sum allowance because only those members who are required to use their car for work purposes will meet the criteria.

Other Changes (questions a-e)

UNISON accept the need to harmonise Standby Rates but this would only be acceptable dependent on the roles that the proposal impacts and with an increase in compensatory payments. **UNISON are vigorously opposed to the proposal to slash the redundancy scheme to the Government minimum.** This proposal impacts all staff and will make it cheaper and easier to sack members with long service as from 1st April 2014. This proposal also does not contribute to any savings within the 'Modernisation' proposals and poses a significant risk to our members employment security.

The proposal to reduce pay protection from 3 years down to 1 further increases the risk of salary reductions in future restructures and 'organisational changes' and erodes the provisions in the 'Single Status' agreement. **We are opposed to this proposal.** The compensation scheme proposal will be made to those who lose out through Overtime, Car Allowances and Standby Rate changes. Compensation will be made to members who lose more than 2.5%. The compensation payment is only a one-off, is short-relief and does not take into account the huge percentage losses in pay members could lose and the effect this will have on their Local Government Pension in retirement.

2. Alternative Proposal

An alternative to these cuts is an across the board pay cut of 2.5% for those graded H 3 and above. Some members could lose out substantially and may see this as a fairer alternative to the 'Modernisation' proposals but the Council have given no commitment that 'Modernisation' will not be attempted at a later date if this option is implemented. UNISON do not support pay reductions but we support a proposal that is tapered to our members earnings so those at the bottom shoulder less of the burden and those at the top contribute more in proportion to salary.

3. Other Proposals - Single Employment Contract for all staff

UNISON is concerned that the Council is curtailing the negotiating process and using this as a blatant opportunity to enact 'Employment Policies and Procedures' changes, amendments to Work Base and Hours of Work alterations without formally negotiating with the trade unions. We oppose this blanket approach and advocate a return to the negotiating table to discuss the Council's proposal regarding a 'Single Employment Contract'.

4. Any comments or alternatives you would like us to consider?

As stated overleaf, UNISON believes that 'Modernisation' is grossly unfair and damaging to our members terms and conditions. A fairer and more equitable alternative is the 'Hybrid' approach which seeks to combine 'Modernisation' with the pay reduction proposal and can be achieved through negotiations with UNISON and (hopefully) the GMB via a collective agreement.

'Modernisation' Branch members meeting 23rd April 2012– Motions

Over 100 members attended the special 'Modernisation' Branch meeting. Members were presented with a slideshow presentation, aired their concerns and agreed two motions.

Motion 1- Grotesque Consultancy expenditure in Harrow Council

This motion notes the significant and grotesque expenditure Harrow Council has spent and continues to spend on the use of external Consultants, Consultancies and self-employed Associates to assist highly paid public servants in the delivery of services to the residents of Harrow. This unhealthy obsession has done nothing for workplace moral and has served to devalue and undermine our members input and contributions into how the organisation should be developed.

Harrow UNISON members refer to a Freedom of Information request and note with disgust the revelation that in an 18 month

period Harrow Council spent £16 million on Consultants and Consultancy fee's.

UNISON members object to this example and the significant levels of current expenditure the Council chooses to spend on Consultants whilst it considers imposing unnecessary, unjustified and unfair cuts to their financial livelihoods through the 'Modernisation' to terms and conditions workforce consultation. This motion also draw's attention to the action UNISON is taking in response to the cuts to terms and conditions in Swindon Borough Council highlighting and seeking redress to the outrageous £1 million spent on Consultancy fee's, a sum considerably smaller than the millions spent each year in Harrow.

It also notes with repugnance the apparent 'revolving door' of openings made to Consultants with their appointments and continuous replacements. As a result, UNISON members struggle to cope with unfilled vacancies and work in poorly devised and under resourced structures that have been sold to the Council by major Consultancy companies under the moniker of 'delivering guaranteed efficiency

savings'.

The 'Modernisation' proposals, in their current form, are draconian and seek to save £1 million off the backs of lower paid Council workers in the withdrawal of contractual overtime enhancements, halving of essential car allowances, reductions to sick pay and cuts to the redundancy scheme. The alternative members are being asked to consider is an across the board 2.5% pay cut which is disproportionately unfair and takes no account of lower paid members ability to sustain a liveable existence and to keep their heads above water.

This motion calls on the Leader of the Council to reconsider the levels of Consultancy expenditure identified and clarify the fairness in asking whether lower paid members of staff, who can ill-afford cuts to pay and conditions, should financially support the ongoing abuse of Consultancy utilisation by highly paid senior officers of the Authority. The membership seeks a formal written response from the Leader of the Council without delay and request that a copy of this motion is sent to the local press and the General Secretary of UNISON, Dave Prentis.

Motion 2- Harrow Councillor's should 'share the pain' and 'lead by example'

UNISON members note with concern and disbelief that the 'Modernisation' proposals exclude any financial impact on Harrow's 63 elected Councillor's.

At the Employee's Consultative Forum (ECF) on the 18th April 2012, UNISON tabled a formal suggestion proposing that Councillor's should shoulder some of the financial burden through the reduction of Councillor Allowances as a reflection of the financial pain and sacrifices our members could potentially have to endure.

UNISON reminded the cross party panel that, as a public sector organisation, and in accordance with the Prime Ministers declaration that 'we are all in this together', Councillor's annual Allowanc-

es and payments should be reduced as part of their contribution to the savings required in the 'Modernisation' workforce consultation.

It is symbolic, right and proper that the employer (and representative of the residents of Harrow) should 'lead by example' and 'share the pain' as was echoed by our members in the quorate 'Modernisation' Branch Meeting convened on the 23rd April 2012.

UNISON members ask that the Branch Executive Committee circulate this motion to all 63 Harrow Councillor's for their comment and response. It also seeks a formal response from the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and is to be considered in support of the formal proposal made by UNISON at ECF within the 'Modernisation' workforce consultation.

Harrow UNISON Local Government Branch