



Say no to 'public sector cuts and no to the "modernisation" changes.

HARROW COUNCIL ATTACKS LOW PAID IN "MODERNISATION" OF TERMS & CONDITIONS

Why the attack on the low paid?

Here we go again, more cuts to terms and conditions but once again the Council says it's all for your own good because they are "modernizing" them and it needs to save money.

We do not doubt that as a result of the spending cuts, Council's need to make savings but not all Council's like Harrow spend extortionate amounts of money on consultants, agency staff, 'ad-hoc' overtime, sickness payments etc. For instance;

- A recent Freedom of Information request revealed that in 18 months Harrow Council spent approximately **£16 million** on consultants!!
- In 2010-11, the annual bill for Councilor's personal allowances was over **£800k**, many of whom have highly paid and full-time professional jobs and, surprise-surprise, they are **not** being affected by these cuts!
- The use of Agency staff in 2010-11 was in excess of **£11.3 million**
- In the last financial year management recklessly spent **£2.4 million** on 'ad-hoc' overtime payments because they cannot configure services to meet the needs of our residents efficiently. What a waste of money!
- The continued addition by the Administration to the Council's **£7 million** reserves does nothing for the residents of Harrow or the low paid

Given all this, and the £700 million annual budget the Council spends, it is proposing to sack 5,000 employees and impose draconian changes to your terms and conditions which will only save £750k over two years. It doesn't make sense does it?! During the negotiations your UNISON Branch representatives highlighted that these changes are unnecessary, unjust and are a direct attack on our low paid and frontline members with a disproportionate impact felt by female workers.

Modernisation "The changes are unnecessary, unjust and unfair"

Organize!

“LET’S TALK” (YEAH RIGHT!)- COUNCIL AND GMB TRADE UNION WALK AWAY FROM MODERNISATION NEGOTIATIONS

Shocked and appalled

Members will have noticed the huge media attention the Council’s stance on ‘Modernisation’ has attracted with the front page of the Harrow Observer (26th January 2012) reporting that the Council pay cuts intend “to save £750,000” and could mean the instant firing and re-hiring on worse terms and conditions of employment for our entire Council membership base.

UNISON have been shocked and appalled at this aggressive stance, especially when UNISON entered negotiations with the GMB and the Council in good faith in May 2011. Options were discussed within these meetings with no formal proposals forthcoming from the Council until mid November 2011. At this stage of negotiations UNISON was more than accommodating and offered an alternative approach which sought to mitigate the worst effects of the Council changes to terms and conditions whilst protecting our members contractual enhancements. The negotiation team believed that they had time to agree the niggly areas which needed further discussion but we were totally surprised at the GMB’s hasty withdrawal from negotiations rendering talks up to that point useless.

As both recognized unions are needed for agreement, the Council closed down the negotiation process stating that they would now take the issue directly to the workforce by way of a one-sided and undemocratic ballot and consult with staff. The implementation schedule means that a consultation and ballot could mean the dismissal of 5,000 employees and re-hiring of them on worse terms and conditions than had been proposed and discussed in negotiations. This is completely unreasonable, legally risky and unnecessary. We have continued to lobby the Authority and request that they return to the negotiating table so that we can finish what we had started in May last year.

What the modernising proposals mean for you?

- **Contractual Allowances:** Around 1,100 staff currently receive contractual enhancements across all areas for overtime and weekend working. The modernising proposals plan to remove all these enhancements. The Council figures show that some low paid staff could lose up to 55% of their take home pay and so a basic pay cut of 1% across the board (as the Council posited in negotiations) is certainly a more equitable option for a vast proportion of the 1,100 staff who are set to lose far more. These changes will disproportionately impact low paid staff and many are female workers who rely on unsocial hour’s enhancements and overtime to make a living wage. The changes have a negative equality impact.
- **Compensatory ‘buy-out arrangements:** The buy-out arrangements are a paltry sum compared to what members could lose longer term in the remaining years of service and the compensation takes no account of the impact reductions in pay have on members who pay into the Local Government Pension scheme.
- **Any 5 of 7 working day week:** Members maybe required to work evenings and week-ends without any additional pay and on plain time from working any 5 of 7 day working week i.e. commence Saturday and end Wednesday (inclusive).
- **Redundancy:** Drastic reductions are planned for the existing redundancy scheme. The halving of the redundancy entitlement will be phased over 2 years and could potentially effect every member because it will be cheaper for the Council to get rid of staff.
- **Essential Car User Allowance:** The changes propose the removal of the Essential Car User Allowance (ECUA) which will hit our Care Managers and field staff meaning members contracted to use their cars for work purposes will have to cover the increased insurance and maintenance costs out of their ever decreasing pay packet.

UNISON & HARROW RESIDENTS 'CALL-IN' NOTICE SHAMEFULLY REJECTED BY HARROW COUNCIL

A **BIG THANK YOU** to all those members and Harrow residents who signed the Call-in Petition submitted to the Council On Friday 27th January 2012.

Harrow UNISON Local Government Branch utilised the Constitution of Harrow Council and submitted a 'Call-In' petition to the Council's legal department concerning the Cabinet decision which could lead to the sacking of the entire workforce, approximately 5,000 staff.

A summary of the effects of the changes was reported in last week's edition of the Harrow Observer (January 26, 2012) in which UNISON highlighted that the alterations have the potential to cause financial misery for hundreds of our members and could lead to their re-engagement on far worse terms and conditions.

The 'Call-In' notice was signed and supported by over 300 Harrow residents in full compliance with the minimum number of residents required to 'call back' a Cabinet decision so that it could be scrutinised by a mixed panel of elected Councillor's.

The notice was submitted because the Council had not complied with its legal obligations in regard to equality, had not disclosed information during negotiations under collective bargaining arrangements and ,among other reasons, the decision could lead to the dismissal of the workforce which is completely unreasonable, unnecessary and legally very risky.

In 'calling-in' the decision, it was UNISON's intention to make the Leader Bill Stephenson and his Labour Administration see sense and resume discussions with UNISON so that issues in negotiations could be resolved around the table and not on the front page of newspapers.

However, we were informed by Harrow Council that our 'Call-in' notice had been refused on the grounds that it was 'unconstitutional' and did not allegedly comply with the Council's criteria as being valid on the assertion that the format had not been adhered to, despite the fact that a clear challenge had been presented on equality grounds (potential human rights challenge).

Harrow Council's position on this matter is reprehensible and in defiance of the democratic rights of the 300 residents who signed the 'call-in' notice. It is disappointing that the 'Call-in' process has been manipulated to drive through decisions that have been made without due process or regard to human rights.

BROKEN LABOUR GROUP PROMISES

At the last election the Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Stephenson and his Deputy Leader Cllr Phil O'Dell made promises to the people of Harrow .

If you remember their **promise as a Labour Group is to "protect terms and conditions of staff"**.

Well, that promise fell to the wayside as their proposals could mean 5,000 dismissals and re-employment on worse terms and conditions for their staff.

TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY??

Members will be interested to know that the Cllr responsible for the Modernisation madness is Cllr Graham Henson, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services.

In his elected trade union role he protects trade union members terms and conditions on a full time basis working as a Regional Convenor for the Communication Workers Union (CWU), the union that represents post workers and telecommunication staff.

UNISON wonder what his members and bosses, General Secretary, Billy Hayes and Deputy General Secretary, Andy Kerr would say if they knew he was planning to dismiss over 2,000 union members?

*****IMPORTANT BRANCH MEETING PLEASE ATTEND*****

MODERNISATION TERMS & CONDITIONS BRANCH MEETING

WEDNESDAY 15TH FEBRUARY

**CIVIC CENTRE
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

12-1PM

The Branch has organised a special Branch Meeting for all UNISON members to discuss the Modernisation proposals, what this could mean for you, and information concerning what your Branch is doing in response to the Council's attack on your terms & conditions.

Important motions will be discussed at this meeting so we urge all to attend, to debate and discuss a collective way forward.

NEW BRANCH WEBSITE UP AND READY FOR USE

The Branch has invested a substantial amount of money and time in upgrading our website to avoid the disappointments that members previously complained about.

We also believe that this is the most effective way in which to communicate events and vital information to you over the coming months and in the use of Branch Officer's time which is severely stretched given the huge workloads and cuts in facility time.

As events on the Modernisation to your terms and conditions change on a daily basis we urge all members to visit our site for more information and regular updates. The address is;

www.harrow-unison.org.uk



To Play the monthly prize draw go to www.unison.org.uk/octopus



For bookings to UNISON Croyde Bay go to www.croydeunison.co.uk

The **UNISON** Office is staffed by:-

Office administrator: Varsha Patel (Full time)
Admin assistant: Teresa Stanley (Part time)

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

Contact Unison via:

**Unison Office
Central Depot
Forward Drive
Harrow, HA3 8NT
Telephone: 020 8424 1795**

OR

Via E-mail: info@harrow-unison.org.uk

This news letter was produced and edited by Charlie Sumner with contributions from UNISON members.

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