

Shared Services Programme Change Management Proposals – UNISON response

The following is UNISON's initial response to the proposals. The submission is made in the understanding that further discussion with a view of reaching agreement will take place in the future.

UNISON consulted widely with members and the following are views put forward by them.

General

UNISON as you are probably aware, but, it is worth reiterating has worked closely and constructively with the Shared Services Project Management Board from the inception of the Shared Services project. UNISON supports the initiative and welcomes the fact that it is a 'public public' enterprise with a stated objective of delivering resilience and better services to the public. We also welcome the fact that this project is not simply a crude cost cutting exercise rather is an attempt by both councils to realise the benefits of collective provision and reallocation of resources to front line service improvement.

Consultation and Negotiation

In principle UNISON does not have a problem with harmonising terms and condition of staff. This we agree will eliminate potential unhappiness of staff working together but on different terms and conditions and pay. We feel though that it might have been more prudent to attempt harmonisation after Shared services had been established. This we feel would have given the Joint Committee the ability to focus on the key of objective of ensuring a smooth transition and service delivery from day one.

None the less UNISON is willing to work with the joint committee to establish a new pay and grading system with the understanding that pay lines will not be drawn to try and make cost savings. All other harmonisation discussions should be left for a later date and hence, staff should move in to the new posts on their current terms and conditions.

Methods of Consultation and Negotiation

UNISON is against the attempt by the project board to set up parallel consultation structures. The proposal to have a Management/staff forum is viewed by UNISON members negatively. In recent meetings held by UNISON with members (at both councils) it was voted unanimously that UNISON reps should not participate in the Management/ Staff forum.

The forum and the role of the none union representatives in the JE steering committee is seen as an attempt to undermine the trade union by giving none union representatives the same status as the union. It was stated that if the project board wished to consult non union members on any proposals then an email could be sent to all staff asking them for a view on the said proposals.

What is being asked for is what Shared Services is attempting to do, that is to do things differently. If the Joint Committee believes that working with an

organised body of staff with well trained representatives with support at a regional and national level is a good way of Negotiation and consulting with staff then there is no need to set up a forum that by its very existence seeks to dilute the union's status.

Therefore, our suggested way forward is to have one committee that is the Union/Management Committee and that the attached UNISON model Recognition and Procedural Agreement is adopted as the basis for its operation. This document broadly covers the current status UNISON has in Watford BC.

Evaluation, Pay Grading

As stated previously UNISON does not have an 'in principle' problem with a new pay and grading scheme for shared services. Further, we welcome the choice of the NJC (Gauge) scheme. It should be noted though that there will be three different pay and grading schemes used by the two councils, with the potent risk of equal pay challenges.

We have put forward the view that UNISON reps should be involved at the earliest stage including evaluation, which normally is a joint process. This we feel will give the process the needed transparency and will not be perceived as just a management initiative. Rather, will help staff realise that JE is a neutral process that attempts to rationalise why an employees job should be in a particular grade and pay point.

Proposals of the new pay and grading structure as stated will be negotiated between the union and the Joint Committee. The proposals will then be put in front of the membership and will be balloted on before being signed off by UNISON.

UNISON is against non union representatives being part of the steering committee.

Redeployment of staff to new structures

UNISON welcomes the approach taken to minimise job losses through out this process. The work done so far through the vacancy management protocol has been generally successful and is a notable achievement of joint working.

We would also welcome a request for voluntary redundancies at the earliest stage in order to avoid compulsory redundancies. It is understood that criteria will need to be agreed with the requirements of the business taking priority.

Deployment to structures

There was much discussion and debate about why staff are not being slotted in to posts rather than the proposed method of the jobs being offered as suitable alternative employment.

If staff were slotted in to posts there would be no reason to have a 4 week trial period. The members were split in their response to this matter with some

wanting to be slotted in to posts and others feeling that a trial period would be useful. It was suggested that both options should be made available to staff.

We are seeking clarification on the rationale for the approach taken in this regard.

Redundancy and redundancy payment

It was clearly expressed by members that they want the redundancy process to be governed by their own council's procedures.

Relocation

Members would like the following principle to be also considered within the context of relocation.

- Where services require an on-site presence at each council or there is a need to be mobile staff may be able to be based at a particular office where appropriate. All requests are fully considered but approval would be dependent on the ability to meet service demands

The point was also made that even though compensation for travel time was welcomed that issues such as child care arrangements would still have a major impact on employee's ability to relocate. Pragmatic solutions including redundancy will need to be considered in these circumstances.

The detailed proposals in regards to relocation should be subject to further negotiation.