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28<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Martin,

**Re: Phase 9/2014 (46) – Council Re-organisation**

The overall proposals, if agreed, will result in the deletion of 160.1 full-time equivalent posts, the creation of 96.9 full-time equivalent posts resulting in a net loss of a further 63.2 posts. Since 2009 Waltham Forest has reduced the number of staff employed by approximately 963, an overall reduction of 26.75% of its workforce. However, Waltham Forest is currently employing 544 agency staff, according to a report provided to UNISON in December 2014, which equates to 20% of the current overall workforce. Unions condemn the use of agency staff when permanent members of staff are losing their jobs in almost every proposal. Unions call on the Management team to put an end to compulsory redundancies and to release agency staff to facilitate this.

Agency workers are generally employed on zero hours contracts so the Council policy of encouraging and promoting the use of agency workers will serve to increase the number of local residents employed on these exploitative and unfair contracts of employment

**Rationale**

The rationale for this phase of re-organisation outlines a number of principles and lists those relevant to these proposals as follows:

- Create a smaller, and wherever possible flatter organisational structure which the council can afford
- Prioritise staff resources on front line service delivery and reduce back office
- Reduce management structures to an appropriate level looking for opportunities to re-direct resources, reflect Member priorities and link functions to deliver greater benefits than the sum of their parts
- Agree our priority and non-priority services and invest and disinvest accordingly

**Regeneration and Growth**

The proposals for deletions in this area see a reduction in grades PO1 to PO4 with an increase in grades at both ends of the pay spectrum i.e. scale 3/SO2 and PO12. Rather than these proposals reducing the management structures to an appropriate level they appear to be increasing the salary gap between the highest and the lowest paid. There is an overall reduction of 12.5 posts, however, according to an agency list provided by HR, there are currently 93 posts filled by agency staff in Environment and Regeneration. Unions feel that this area should be looked at before making more permanent members of staff redundant.

## Employability Team

This is a relatively new team, some of the staff only being in post for 18 months. The team has been positively received and has achieved good, measurable outcomes. However, it is felt that problems arising from mismanaged contracts elsewhere have led to problems that have impacted on this team who feel scapegoated as a result.

A number of questions have been raised in this area of proposals; at the time of writing this response the following questions were still unanswered.

The current posts have attracted external funding from London Councils (£650,000) and Section 106 (£450,000). These monies were secured by the team to work towards self-funding. Where is that money now going?

The team currently deliver business and employability programmes in partnership with a number of strategic bodies and local businesses. Has consultation on the proposed reorganisation been carried out with our strategic partners on a borough wide level and more widely across the region and the London area as a whole?

Has an Equalities Impact Assessment been carried out? If so what consideration has been given to the negative and adverse impact on women and BME's who are disproportionately affected by this proposal within this team? Has such an assessment been carried out on the potential impact on minority groups and vulnerable people living in Waltham Forest?

How will the statutory responsibility for the delivery of employment support to children leaving care be delivered? This team has covered that Council responsibility to a high standard. The proposal though makes no mention of the statutory responsibility. How will the Council cover the obligations they owe to the children who have been brought up in the care system? Our members who cover this work at the moment have suggested that they might transfer to the Families Directorate where they would be located alongside workers who are working with children in care and they could carry that statutory duty with them.

As the current proposal is to delete the posts of the staff carrying out this function, has the Department of Education been consulted or notified as to how this statutory duty will be delivered in future?

The proposed restructure deletes all eleven posts in the current 'As Is' structure, but the majority of the staff are two or more grades below the proposed new posts currently proposed at PO5 so what opportunity will there be for 'at risk' staff to apply for the new jobs via closed or open ring-fencing prior to their notice period?

Our members are also aware that there are plans under consideration to transfer the work of this team to a social enterprise, possibly Enterprise Enfield. If this is the case then the Council should be considering TUPE transfers rather than allowing compulsory redundancies to occur. There would also be the benefit of knowing that the workers transferring know the local area and are experienced with regard to Waltham Forest residents and partners.

**AP9-3009** Members in the employability team have put forward an alternative proposal that UNISON supports to enable the local authority to uphold its statutory duty to act as corporate parent to its children in care.

## Asset Management and Delivery

The proposal to transfer workplace planning and major works to NPSL will impact on 4 members of staff and will therefore involve further consultation about TUPE arrangements if the proposal is agreed.

## Families

These proposals see the merger of Leyton and Leytonstone children's day centres and Walthamstow East and West children's day centres. Chingford day centre is not affected by these proposals. There will be a staff reduction of 2 PO6 posts, 0.3 FTE PO3 post, 1 PO2 post and 2.5 scale 6 posts with a reduction in hours for the scale 4 posts from 1 FTE to 0.8 FTE and an additional 1 PO4 post. There are potentially 4 employees at risk of redundancy. There are currently 125 agency staff employed in the Families Directorate according to the agency list provided by HR. Unions would expect these posts to be appointed to by permanent staff before agreeing to further redundancies.

It is not clear from the proposals whether service users have been consulted and what impact this may have on **local** day care facilities for young families. Unions can only assume, from the rationale, that children's day care services are non-priority and that the intention is to 'disinvest accordingly'.

## **Customer Services Unit**

The customer services area is proposing the second largest number of job cuts across the piece in regard to FTE's. The deletion of 21 scale 3 posts equates to 31 full and part time staff being at risk of redundancy. In addition, these proposals see the loss of 8.1 FTE SO1 staff and 4 SO2 FTE's with no alternative positions for them in the structure putting them at potential risk of redundancy. Some of the scale 3 staffs affected in these proposals have been on temporary contracts for 2 years following a previous restructure in this area (and downgraded from scale 5 to scale 3). The majority of staff in this area are of long standing and have twice faced the threat of redundancy which could result in the loss of their livelihoods.

Although the proposals state that all scale 3 posts will be deleted there is 1 Library attendant (plus 2 vacancies) scale 3, in post that carries out different functions to the Customer Service Advisors i.e. transporting books between libraries, this function is not covered in the new proposals.

In addition to the loss of jobs, our members have also raised concerns that the reduction in staffing levels in libraries could pose a health and safety risk to staff from lone working particularly as these are customer facing employees. There are currently 21 agency staff in this service area, if they were released then this would go some way to avoiding redundancies if the proposal is to place the scale 3 staff in an open ring-fence for the new scale 5 positions.

## **Finance**

Unions are concerned that a fund of £300,000 is to be set aside to facilitate an offsite resilience company (presumably an employment agency) to process some benefits claims when required rather than to use our fully qualified permanent members of staff. Again, permanent staffs are being put at risk of redundancy in favour of employing agency/temporary staff. Agency workers are generally employed on zero hours contracts so the Council policy of encouraging and promoting the use of agency workers will serve to increase the number of local residents employed on these exploitative and unfair contracts of employment.

## **Highways and Infrastructure**

The table on page 7 of the document shows a total reduction of 5 posts and an increase of 1 post. The posts proposed for deletion are graded at PO5, SO1, PO1 scale 5 and scale 3 with a new post created at PO3. However 3 of the posts proposed for deletion are vacant but this does leave 1 individual still at risk of redundancy.

According to the proposals line management responsibility for 5 FTE School Crossing Patrol staff, which equates to 15 individuals, will transfer from Project Development to the Highways Maintenance Network Manager. To date Unions have not seen a new job description that reflects these additional duties.

In conclusion these proposals continue to encourage Council practices that are of real concern to UNISON and our members. It appears that there will be more agency workers, more outsourcing and more redundancies.

Regards  
Christine Street  
Assistant Branch Secretary  
UNISON