

**Previous recommendation to Cabinet**

*Maximise efficiencies through in-year staffing and operational changes as they occur.*

**Consultation responses from Members of the Public**

- None on this issue

**Consultation responses from Working Groups, Unions etc**

- The report which went to Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and the Road Shows that Christine conducted, also in September, has made sure that the highest number of staff possible are aware of the dire situation we find ourselves in. We have shared the staff suggestions with Unison members and, naturally, after 4 years of a pay freeze and a derisory 1% pay rise this year, not many, if any, are keen to see their pay and working conditions affected still further. We do recognise the financial situation that we are in but doubt if any manageable pay cuts will cover the shortfall in funding.
- The proposals for savings this year seem risk free, however, Councillors must be aware that “different ways of working” = cuts, less officers available to help residents and the ones that remain feeling overworked and undervalued. Morale has never been lower.
- Of course, some of the increases in charges are controversial with the public, indeed the majority of Unison members employed here are also residents and voters. Given the cuts in Central Government funding to Local Government and increases in inflation it is about time that the Council Tax was increased and this is something that the Unions have consistently advised for the past 4 years.
- The prospect of much larger savings required in 2015/16 is more challenging and we would hope that management will consult with us and discuss ways to minimise the pain for employees of the Council. Many times we have suggested that voluntary redundancies are sought in the first instance. If more cuts are on the way after 2015/16 then we realise that the Council will be reduced to providing only statutory services. We should be preparing for this and ensuring that the staff who want and need to stay in employment here are assisted to do so and those who would prefer to leave, can. It is the fairest option. A few years ago we suggested a programme of job shadowing and training for all staff to a good standard in Microsoft programmes so that they could move relatively easily from one department to another. The Unions are able to provide some of that training to their members which would reduce the costs to the Council. We understand that experienced staff are valuable and expensive to let go, but they will leave eventually and younger less experienced staff will have to take their place. It is surely better for this process to start now while we are in a better position. We also understand that some roles are highly technical and these officers

could not be replaced so easily. Many other councils have taken this approach with success and have managed to reduce the wage bill.

- Savings can also be made (although small) from contractual perks for senior managers. Lease cars larger than a Ford Fiesta should be paid for by individuals. Unison also would like to see Councillors refusing to claim any expenses over and above their allowances. Claiming for Broadband sets a poor example to everyone else.
- We all hope that no more expensive mistakes are made and that the use of external consultants and agency staff is kept to an absolute minimum. We have faith that our senior managers are capable and adequately remunerated to deal with the challenges ahead.
- Additional response from Mike Nelson, UCATT Midlands Regional Organiser
- For the attention of Christine Fisher – Chief Executive

Dear Christine,

I understand the Authority is currently examining possible ways to make savings in response to further funding cuts. I have also been informed you have not ruled out the possibility of redundancies.

I am sure you will appreciate how difficult it is for trade unions to offer any opinion which could impact on potential job losses. It is equally difficult to form a measured response to a proposal, expressed in such general terms, without a clear understanding of what it is that the authority actually intends to do. Whilst UCATT's specific interest is of course, Property Services and what your intentions are, it would be helpful if we could have sight also of the detail for the eight other area listed in Cabinet papers, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2014.

I would hope all of this will be fully discussed with the trade unions at our Executive Meeting on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 when we can together agree an appropriate time – scale for consultation on these proposals, particularly as we note the timetable included at 6:1 in the papers which has not yet been agreed by all parties.

We also note your proposal 3 at appendix 1A and await a detailed explanation about this. You should be aware UCATT would be concerned about any proposal which could take monies away from the HRA to support other areas.

At an appropriate time, and should it prove to be necessary, UCATT has a number of proposals to bring forward. However, these would not include any lessening in numbers of the craft-worker team which we believe to be already at minimum levels required.

UCATT continues to be concerned about the ability of the authority to maintain quality services following on from previous cuts. Any further discrimination in staffing levels, wherever these might take place can only achieve the dysfunction operation we have consistently pointed to.

I look forward to meeting with you at the Executive where we can further these discussions.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Nelson

UCATT Midlands Regional Organiser

### **Consultation responses from the Executive Consultation Meeting**

- **Salary Sacrifice:** reported that the uptake of the Computer and Smart TV scheme had been low and that a re-launch is planned in October.
- Issue raised regarding the introduction of Mobile Working Project stating that the £70,000 expenditure was unjustifiable in the current climate.
- The Efficiency Reviews were worrying as it could be detrimental to workers health. His members are already working many unpaid hours due to cuts and live in fear of losing their jobs.
- Members are horrified at the prospect of any reduction in take home pay. Issues such as car lease payments to staff and Councillor allowances should be looked at before staff are asked to make other sacrifices. For instance those with car leases could receive a basic payment and then top it up if they chose.
- Members would broadly be in agreement with a Christmas closure. Members would not want to see a reduction in sick pay or make a contribution to their uniform.
- Did not agree with any of the suggestions made as pay for his members is already too low to start making further cuts. He added that these suggestions must have come from those on higher salaries.
- That times have changed and therefore the lease car scheme needed to be looked at.
- Members would not accept any cuts to terms and conditions.
- Enforcing a closure over Christmas and asking staff to use their holidays is unfair, particularly to those with children and childcare to think of. Suggested that the Council could meet staff half way by contributing to their holiday. Overall would support the closure, but would need more detail before could agree to this.
- Agree with flexible working in principle as it is voluntary. Also highlighted the point that flexible retirement might realistically only be open to those aged 60 and over due to the potential capital costs involved, and would ask that this be made clear to employees when promoting this pensions discretion.

### **Consultation responses from the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party**

- None on this issue

## Consultation responses from the Policy Development Group

- None on this issue

### Officer Comments

- Staff were asked at the Chief executive's roadshows to put forward ideas for potential savings / efficiencies. A number of these ideas included possible reductions in the terms and conditions of service for Council employees. UNISON are clearly not supportive of such proposals.
- All car allowances and Lease cars were recently reviewed (in 2012) and considered in detail after consultation with the recognised Trade Unions. Lease cars or Essential user allowances are only paid to employees who meet the agreed, specified criteria. The Lease car contributions made by the Council are already restricted to "benchmark" vehicles and the contribution is also linked to the CO2 efficiency of the car chosen.
- Members are entitled to claim expenses for the provision of telephone and broadband facilities under the current Members' Allowance Scheme on production of receipts. The Members' Allowance Scheme is agreed and reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). When these items were last reviewed in September 2011, the IRP recommended a reduction in the level of payment which was implemented in April 2012. All allowances are kept under continual review by the IRP.
- Corporate Leadership Team is monitoring expenditure on both external consultants and Agency staff to ensure this is managed appropriately.
- These indeed are difficult times and as you know I have always been committed to working with the Trades Unions whilst recognising your primary role for your Members. Clearly we would welcome any alternative or additional suggestions on how to meet the financial reductions we are facing
- Car Policy: stated that officers had met to discuss this matter further, but had not yet had the opportunity to meet with the Trade Union. A report will be produced to CLT around how to manage car allowances moving forward, and this will then be forwarded to the Trade Unions for consideration.
- The Mobile Working is being funded by the HRA Budget. The budget proposals relate to the General Fund.
- Capital investment needed to be made to improve and grow services and officers are happy to correspond regarding facts and figures.
- There are tough decisions to be faced. There is not enough money to keep all services running as they are at the moment. Every effort will be made to find partnering opportunities, but if the funding isn't there, there will have to be closures.
- The Council are currently in talks with Ashby Town Council with regard to running the toilets there, and there may be other opportunities for partnership working.
- The proposed Christmas closure would not be voluntary and it would require employees to save holiday or build flexi time to cover those days
- Promoting the flexible working arrangements currently on offer to staff would not achieve significant savings, but might be able to help a minority of staff to create a better work life balance while contributing to salary savings (where the business case in individual circumstances could be justified)
- The financial implications of early retirement are complex and that he is currently gathering data around pensions so that more accurate information can be provided about the potential capital costs that might be applicable
- Where access to flexible working is requested, careful consideration should be given to business needs before the request is granted.

## **Recommendations**

1. The proposals in the original Cabinet report of 24 September related to the deletion of vacant posts. It is recommended that this saving be accepted.
2. Further opportunities for rationalising and refocussing services will be considered by officers as part of the Planning for the Future Programme.
3. Comments/proposals made during the consultation will be considered by officers as the Planning for the Future Programme progresses. Those which are viable will be progressed.
4. All staff suggestions have been collated responded to and presented back to staff through internal communications.