

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 6 DECEMBER 2011

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF THE STAFF SIDE

IMPACT OF RESTRUCTURES ON STAFF AND SERVICES

WARD(S) AFFECTED:     None

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

To make the Local Joint Panel aware of the impact of restructures on staff and council services.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL JOINT PANEL:</u></b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>That the report be noted and,</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>a report be submitted to the next LJP meeting providing details of the outcomes of all the recent restructures, including the total number of voluntary and compulsory redundancies and early retirements/resignations resulting from the restructures.</b>

1.0 Background

1.1 Following the Council's approval of the 2011/12 budget, the Corporate Management Team has sought to find large savings in staffing costs. This has been achieved by undertaking a series of restructures across the whole of the establishment. There is virtually no service area which has been left unscathed.

1.2 There has been some consultation with UNISON and with staff but apart from some minor alterations to proposals, there has been little prospect of preventing implementation of the proposals.

2.0 Report

2.1 This report focuses on just two examples of restructures, that of Community Projects and Democratic Services but it is important to

stress that these restructures are just two of many and are being replicated across the organisation. These particular proposals and a response by UNISON and a member of the Community Projects Team are attached to this report and illustrate the impact restructures are currently having on individuals, on the team and on service delivery. The main concerns are listed below:

## 2.2 **Restructure Fatigue**

Restructures are costly in terms of time, energy, morale and good will and the general well being of employees. Some staff have undergone several major restructures during the past ten years and some individuals affected by these particular restructures have been waiting nearly two years for an outcome to previous proposals. The whole process subjects employees to anxiety, uncertainty and stress and many have to go through a selection and appointment procedure in order to retain their job.

## 2.3 **Terms and Conditions**

UNISON is not in favour of reducing terms and conditions by stealth or downgrading jobs under the guise of a restructure. Jobs should only be re-evaluated if the role has changed significantly. Under or over stating a role and re-writing job descriptions with a view to changing a grade should not happen. Some posts in this particular example have been downgraded and yet there is no evidence that the requirements of roles have diminished.

## 2.4 **Redundancies**

The Council in its redundancy policy states that compulsory redundancies will be avoided wherever possible. However, in these examples and other restructures the Council far from avoiding redundancies is actively promoting them by the deletion of certain posts.

## 2.5 **Retention of 'Talent'**

UNISON takes issue with the assertion that restructure proposals provide opportunities for the Council to retain talent. Proposals that are going to result in redundancies and fewer jobs, cannot possibly achieve this aim. Two staff that UNISON is aware of (there may well be more) have already left the Council, knowing that there was no future for them in Communications at East Herts. Proposals cannot offer redeployment opportunities when every single service is contracting. There will be no opportunities other than lower paid jobs in areas where staff cannot use their skills and expertise to their full potential.

## 2.6 **Impact on Service**

The main purpose of restructures is to reduce staff costs. This is done in one of three ways:

- by reducing the number of staff employed
- by cutting their hours, or
- by rewriting their job description and downgrading their post.

Fewer staff cannot deliver the same level of service. Some services will completely disappear and others will be watered down so that they are not delivered to the same standard. Concerns about the impact this will have on council tax payers and on the community are well illustrated in the feedback from the Community Projects Team. This may be an inevitable consequence of the reduction in funding from central government but the Council should not be maintaining that services will be protected since this is clearly not the case.

## 3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Restructures have implications for all staff. The consultation process does provide an opportunity for UNISON and staff to raise concerns and influence outcomes in a very minor way. However, the consultation process has limited value when it has been made clear that members have already agreed savings in the MTFP and therefore staff resources will be reduced.

### Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Brenda Dodkins – UNISON Branch Secretary

Report Author: Jane Sharp – UNISON Service Conditions Officer