

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 1 DECEMBER 2009

REPORT BY SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

8. TERMS AND CONDITIONS REVIEW

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

To inform the Local Joint Panel of staff concerns relating to the proposed variation to contracts of employment.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>That the proposals on terms and conditions be deferred until the next scheduled meeting of the Local Joint Panel and after consultation on the budget proposals has been concluded with the Staff Side .</b>
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1.0 Background

1.1 This is outlined clearly in the report by the Head of Human Resources.

1.2 Following one month's extensive consultation with union members UNISON advised the Council that a mandate for a collective agreement had not been achieved.

1.3 During the period of consultation, union members requested information on the staffing implications of the budget proposals and UNISON reminded the Council of the following resolution of the Local Joint Panel of 28 January 2009:

RESOLVED – that (A) a formal process of budget consultation on staffing matters between the Staff and Employer’s Side via the Local Joint Panel take place on an annual basis at the time of public consultation;

(B) the Head of Paid Service, Director of Internal Services and the Head of People and Organisational Services undertake meaningful, timely and appropriate consultation with Unison on workforce matters arising from the published budget proposals; and

(C) the Council reiterates its commitment to retain staff talent and relevant skills within East Herts Council and take what steps it can to avoid compulsory redundancies.

1.5 Consultation with UNISON on the budget proposals began informally on 17 November but the report due to go to the Scrutiny Committee on 1 December had not been finalised and to date UNISON has received no written communication relating to the budget.

## 2.0 Report

2.1 The Staff Side is concerned that the budget consultation process has not been concluded and that Council Members are being requested to make a decision on employee terms and conditions of employment without detailed knowledge of the staffing implications of the budget proposals. It is possible that the proposed measures may not be necessary at this point in time or that Council members may consider that the impact of the budget proposals on staff will be wide-ranging enough without the need to inflict further painful measures.

2.2 A presentation at the recent staff briefings suggested that a review of terms and conditions was necessary in order to avoid redundancies. However, it is clear that these proposed measures will not prevent redundancies since five employees have already been informed that their posts may be deleted and that they are at risk of redundancy. There could also be further compulsory redundancies in the future.

2.3 The outcome of the consultation exercise with union members is contained in the letter from UNISON to the Head of Human Resources, along with feedback containing direct quotes from employees. (Essential Reference Paper B pages 8.7 – 8.9) This indicates that employees are not

convinced by the management case and will not willingly accept nor can afford a detrimental change to their terms and conditions.

- 2.4 It is the view of the Staff Side that the imposition on employees of these proposed contract changes will cause irrevocable damage to employee relations. The changes will demoralise staff at a time when the Council needs to rely on their good will. With the C3W programme, efficiency savings, cuts in resources and shared services, staff are under increasing pressure to maintain satisfactory levels of service delivery. Recruitment and retention if not a problem now, is likely to become one in the not too distant future.
- 2.5 All staff accept the need for change. They work extremely hard and are loyal and committed in their roles serving the local community. They deserve to be valued and treated with respect. All the Staff Side would request at this stage is for the Council not to make a hasty decision without full consideration of all the budget proposal implications and detailed analysis of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference Paper 'A' (Page 8.4).

#### Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Jane Sharp, Staff Side Secretary

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives <i>(delete as appropriate):</i>	<b>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</b> <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i>
Consultation:	All union members
Legal:	Legal advice currently being sought from UNISON's solicitors.
Financial:	All employees are disadvantaged financially.
Human Resource:	All employees are affected by the proposed measures.
Risk Management:	There a potential risk of a recruitment and retention problem in the medium term.