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16 February 2011

Dear Minister

**RE: Your interview on Radio 4's Today programme**

I represent UNISON members working for Barnet Council and a number of voluntary and private sector organisations who provide services to Barnet residents on the behalf of the Council.

I have been contacted by a large number of members and residents about the content of your interview on the Today Programme this morning; in particular your policy that Councillors vote in open session on pay deals worth over £100,000.

Whilst I am sure we probably have different views about the future for local authorities, it does appear we both seem to agree on the issue about senior management pay, especially in times when public sector spending is under scrutiny and vital frontline services are facing direct and indirect cuts.

I am aware that you have received a letter (January 2011) from the Leader of Barnet Council seeking support, I am unaware if you responded favourably to her request? I also know you have had at least one letter from a concerned resident about some of the choices being proposed in our Council's Budget which is due to go before a Full Council meeting on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

Last week Barnet UNISON submitted the following Budget proposals:

1. The Council undertakes as a matter of **urgency a review of all payments** to staff not employed directly by the Council. Furthermore we recommend that the Council refer to the HMRC Guidelines in particular the advice to be found here that explains that "It's your responsibility to correctly determine the employment status of your workers - that is, whether they're employed by you or self-employed. This depends on the terms and conditions of your working relationship with each worker. It's important to get your workers' employment status right because it affects the way tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) are calculated for them. And it determines whether or not you have to operate PAYE (Pay As You Earn) on their earnings."

Read full details here

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/payee/employees/start-leave/status.htm>

2. Merge the Director's posts for Adults & Children's Services. This would enable any savings to be ploughed back into frontline services.

3. Delete the Deputy Director of Children's Service post. This would enable any savings to be ploughed back into frontline services.
4. Merge Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive Directorates; and reconfigure Assistant Director posts. This would enable any savings to be ploughed back into frontline services.
5. Reconfigure the Planning, Housing & Regeneration Directorate by reducing the number of AD posts. This would enable any savings to be ploughed back into frontline services.
6. Review the salaries for Directors and Assistant Directors with a view to restricting them to **a ceiling of no more than £100,000 p.a.** (the salary of a social worker is around £33,000 p.a.). This would enable any savings to be ploughed back into frontline services.
7. Delete the recently Enforcement and Operations manager post. This would enable any savings to be ploughed back into frontline services.
8. Implement the savings suggested by UNISON and use the money to save frontline posts, such as (no particular order) social worker posts, Sheltered Wardens, Youth workers, the Barnet Garden Project, Children's Centres workers or training and development posts.
9. Without any dialogue on any of our recommendations outlined above, UNISON is opposed to all job cuts and service reductions.

In your interview you chose to highlight two councils, Manchester and Trafford in order to make a point about choices. I would like to draw your attention to Barnet Council which already has a national profile as 'easyCouncil' and also has choices.

Our proposals provide Barnet Council with alternative choices which could safeguard many of the high profile frontline services which are currently at risk.

I would welcome any comments you may have on our attempts to try to mitigate some of the impact on those most in need of services in Barnet. I have not as yet had a formal response from the Council to our proposed Budget proposals, however let me know if you want a copy of their response in order for you to assess how Barnet Council is preparing to meet your initiative under your Localism Bill.

Yours sincerely



John Burgess  
Branch Secretary  
Barnet UNISON  
Cc: UNISON members

Enc: UNISON Budget report 2011/12