



UNISON response

to the proposal to

cut Street Cleansing staffing

General Functions Committee

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Barnet UNISON

Barnet House

1255 High Road

Whetstone

N20 0EJ

Telephone: 020 8359 2088

Fax: 020 8446 5245

Email: contactus@barnetunison.org.uk

www.barnetunison.me.uk

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Dear Councillors

I speak on behalf of Barnet UNISON members working in Street Scene.

As the employer, I expect you will agree when street scene services don't work well, it quickly becomes obvious:

Waste uncollected is not a pretty site, but it can quickly become a serious health hazard for the residents of Barnet.

Barnet Unison is aware of the Budget cuts identified for Street Scene.

But before the senior officer proposal is rubber stamped, I want members to reconsider the staff cuts outlined in **Paragraph 1.10**

Street Cleansing are cutting **18 posts** which represents a **19 per cent cut** in the workforce.

This workforce is one of the lowest paid in the Council,

For example a street cleaning operative earns between £18,375 to £18,657,

Barely above the London Living Wage.

Our members just don't understand why the workforce must be cut.

They see the ongoing reliance on agency workers either for frontline workers, or to fund the ever changing senior management structure.

I note in 2016/17 Street Scene services spent £2.6 million on agency/consultants.

There is still an over reliance on agency/consultants both in Street Scene and in the Council.

I note with dismay that the final total agency/consultancy spend for 2016/17 was £21.9 million another increase from the previous year.

To low paid workers, such spending seems just wrong, especially when the cut are made in the name of efficiency.

Here are a few questions from our members about waste of money.

Since the move to Harrow and the closure of Mill Hill depot, part of the workforce is operating out of Harrow.

Harrow based staff have been given fuel cards to use.

The cost of the fuel card is far more expensive to our own fuel which was available at Mill Hill Depot.

There is a small fuel tank from Mill Hill sitting in Harrow waiting to be connected, however the Ad Blue tank was left at the old depot.

Members are asking:

“How much extra are we paying for fuel?”

“Why is the fuel tank not connected at Harrow?”

“Who will pay for the Ad Blue tank to be set up in Harrow?”

In the new Oakleigh depot let me tell you about the Goods Lift.

The problem is that whilst it is called a Good Lift, it isn't, it is a disabled lift.

A new lift is having to be installed.

“Who is paying for this cost?”

I could go on.

I now want members of this committee to stop for a minute and reflect on the increasing number of housing developments. According to the Councils website there are and I quote:

“....seven major schemes already underway in the borough, to deliver **27,000 new homes in the next ten to 15 years.**

Finally I want to share with you that I have been meeting street scene workers one day a week for the past 18 months.

I'd like this committee to know they are a workforce you should be proud of, I know I am.

There has been a great deal of change:

- amongst the senior management team over the past two years,
- threats of privatisation and
- the inexplicable decision to operate services out of Harrow depot and the ongoing complexity and waste of resources that brings,

Yet they, the frontline workers continue to turn out to work when most of us are asleep in our beds in order to keep our borough clean.

I know it's a long shot but I am here this evening to ask the committee to reconsider the proposal to cut the workforce.