

Feedback from the S188 Consultation Meeting on 23 November 2012

1. Harmonisation of terms and conditions of employment

Management and UNISON have consulted over terms and conditions of employment and management have agreed that all former Southgate staff stated in the consultation document will be given harmonised conditions of employment and receive the same entitlements as the former Barnet Staff. All new staff employed by the College will also be given the same conditions as the former Barnet College.

UNISON asked that this harmonisation of conditions also be given to all former Southgate staff (who are not in the consultation document, i.e. technicians, classroom assistants etc) in order to ensure equitable practices and be in line with senior management, curriculum managers and teaching staff, that the same practice must be applied to all Business Support Staff.

Management explained that when looking at costs and when trying to align salaries on scale structures it was not easily done as the two College salary scales were not the same or in-line. Management stated that as job evaluation was due to commence in January 2013 that it would be advisable to wait until then as this would be the best method of ensuring that all jobs are graded at the correct level and the correct salary allocated.

UNISON asked Management to harmonise all the other terms excluding pay such as annual leave, compassionate leave maternity pay etc to the former Barnet conditions with effect from December 2012. Management are seeking legal advice regarding this and will inform us at the next meeting.

2. VS/VR Update

UNISON asked whether the affected staff in Accommodation have been informed of Management's decision regarding VS/VR. Management response was that a decision had been made regarding all the applications and the individual would be informed either on Friday afternoon or the latest on Monday 26 November.

UNISON asked which area was there likely to be compulsory redundancy and whether another VS/VR package would be offered and advertised to staff.

Management responded that potentially there were four areas where less posts than people. This was Customer Services, Learner Services, MIS and International. Management wanted to only offer the VS/VR package to the staff within these areas, however after discussion with the Unions regarding the potential opportunity of bumped redundancy, Management agreed to extend the VS/VR package to all staff

for one week, commencing from Monday 26 November until Friday 30 November 2012.

UNISON stated that there were also a number of appeals outstanding. Management apologised for the delay and confirm that they would be dealt with early next week.

3. Salary Protection

Management confirmed that the arrangements for merged College regarding salary protection were stated within the Organisational Changed and Redeployment Policy, "Employees at a given level will normally be given priority consideration for posts at that level. However, if posts are not filled by employees at that level, employees at higher grades may be considered for lower graded posts. In relation to posts not more than one grade below the employee's old post the College salary protection arrangement will apply."

Employee's who are redeployed to a lower graded job will continue to receive a salary equivalent to contractual earnings of their previous post. Protection will include one subsequent pay award but will not include subsequent pay awards and London Allowance increases or annual incremental increases until the protected earnings equate to the earnings of the new job.

UNISON asked Management to identify the total number of staff that could potential decrease more than one salary scale. Management said that this could affect five postholders. UNISON asked that salary protection be extended to these 5 postholders. Management agreed for this restructure process only that protection would be extended to cover individuals whose salary will drop up to £4,000 per annum until their protected earnings equate to the earnings of the new job.

4. Declined VS/VR applications

Management have agreed that if staff have applied for VS/VR and have been declined and they are then unsuccessful following the selection process then the Voluntary Redundancy incentive will be honoured.

5. Deferred application for Accommodation Team

UNISON asked when the deferred Accommodation staff will be informed of Management's decision regarding their VS/VR applications. Management response was that they were looking at the new proposals from the team and would update the individuals by Friday 16 November, with the aim of making firm decisions regarding their application by the 23 November 2012.

Management have confirmed that they will be responding directly to the individuals who have requested assimilation into proposed new jobs within the accommodation section.

6. Queries from members and raised by UNISON

UNISON asked whether staff on fixed term contracts finishing on 31 December should be extended until the end of the appeal process in January 2013 in order for them to fully participate in the restructure and selection process. Management agreed.

UNISON queried over proposed dates of interviews as they conflicted with the outcome and appeal dates. Some interviews were proposed to take place on the 20th and 21st December, and some on 4th January. These dates conflicted with the proposed date of the outcome of the interviews which were to be communicated to staff on 20 December 2012 and any appeals against the selection outcome was proposed to take place week beginning 7 January 2013.

Management responded that the Outcomes would not be communicated until 21st December 2012 and that they would review the dates that have been proposed for interviews in January 2013. Management would like all interviews to take place by 20th December 2012.

UNISON also raised the concern that members were anxious about travelling time allocated to get to an interview at GP especially if they did not drive. Management agreed they would look at the interview schedules and discuss with line managers the best campus to hold the interviews and about allocation of time required for travelling.

Discussion took place regarding whether time could be given to staff completing application forms and the equitable amount of time to be given. Agreement was made that staff could remain at College after work until 9.30pm to use facilities to complete application forms.

UNISON asked for clarification regarding ring fencing process. Management confirmed that staff that had been identified for ring fenced jobs would be interview for all jobs ring-fenced. After the 21st December when all outcomes of interviews have been communicated to staff Management will look and try to offer suitable redeployment posts to staff that were not successful at ring-fenced interviews and to staff who have not applied for any posts in order to mitigate any compulsory redundancies. At the end of the process if there are still posts available then these jobs will be open for recruitment.

7. Selection Process

Management presented to all Unions the proposed selection process. UNISON queried the appropriateness of language used and the ability to be able to score equitably some of criteria used in the person specification. UNISON questioned that some of these criteria could be easily challenged at an Employment Tribunal. Management agreed to review.

Regarding the proposed deduction of 10 points for absence UNISON stated why the process was used last summer on point allocation for the number of absences and the length of absences was not being re-applied as this was deemed to be fairer than one off 10 point deduction for 4 or more episodes of sickness absence in the previous 12 months.

Feedback from the S188 Consultation Meeting on 23 November 2012 Cont'd

Selection Process cont'd

Unions questioned the rationale regarding meeting every line of qualifications required. For example, if educated to Level 3 and do not have GCSE English to Maths at Level 2 then they would not receive any marks, UNISON said that some marks should be allocated as the individual has obtained a higher qualification. UNISON has requested that Management review and amended their proposed selection process and bring it forward for discussion at the next S188 meeting on 30 November.

8. Proposed New Terms and conditions of employment.

UNISON noticed that Management had the following paragraph in all the proposed job descriptions:

NOTE: Please be aware that the duties and responsibilities outlined above not exhaustive nor are they shown in the order of priority or frequency. **They do not form part of the post holders contract of employment.**

In Business Support contract of employment on section 2 – Duties, sub-section 2.2 there is an express term that clearly states “current duties are detailed on attached job description”.

UNISON challenged this statement stating that the sentence that the job description does not form part of the post holders contract of employment is contrary to an express term within business support staff's current contract of employment and therefore UNISON would like it to be removed from all proposed job descriptions.

Discussion was held over where this statement originated from and Management agreed to discuss with their legal parties regarding removing this sentence and would feed back at the next meeting.

Management proposed that there was need for more staff flexibility and wanted to change the working hours clause to better reflect the actual operational needs of the College.

Current terms are “Your hours of duty are 36 per week for x weeks per annum. Your normal working week is 36 hours, exclusive of meal breaks and your hours of duty will be determined by the Principal. Any hours you make be asked to work in excess of 36 hours will be remunerated in accordance with the agreements referred to in paragraph 1.4”

The proposed amendments:

"Your hours of duty are 36 per week for x weeks per annum. Your normal working week is 36 hours, exclusive of meal breaks, and your hours of duty will be determined by your Line Manager. You can be asked to work evenings or weekends where operational needs require this. The College would provide appropriate notice. Any hours you may be asked to work in excess of 36 hours will be compensated by time off in lieu equivalent to the hours you have worked.

Unions stated that if terms are already summarised in the staff handbook and there is custom and practice across the College, then was any change required. UNISON stated that they wanted the wording to remain as it currently is as staff during peak periods have been flexible and there is no evidence to prove that this will not continue. UNISON also stated that staff were also given the option of overtime payment. UNISON stated that it would advise members to be as flexible as possible during peak periods so that terms will not be amended.

Management agreed to leave current statement however if this becomes an issue then further discussion will need to take place regarding formally amending terms and conditions.

9. Additional members queries and response from Management

Where staff are ring-fenced for more than 1 job:

- Will those conducting the interviews be aware of the applicants preferred job? Staff are concerned this knowledge will influence the interview process and the decision of those conducting the interviews. One possible scenario: the interviewer knows that this is the applicant's 3rd preference, and therefore the interview reflects that knowledge, is perhaps rushed, and as a result the applicant scores lower.

Managements Response: The information on preferences will be collated by HR – the Managers will not need to know the preferences prior to the interview, they will just be provided with a list of the staff to be interviewed. However, when we come to determine who goes into what post, all of the information from the selection processes will be collated and all managers have been asked to attend a meeting. At this stage, we will need to consider the preferences.

- Will staff have to be interviewed for each job? If an applicant is successful is there any way this can be communicated speedily, to remove the need for additional interviews? Staff are feeling stressed about having to be interviewed up to 3 times, and early notification would reduce both their stress and the workload of those conducting interviews.

Managements Response: We will be interviewing people for the choices they have put on their form – if they have three choices, we will arrange for them to be interviewed (if required) for all three posts. When we come to appointing people to posts, we will of course look at their first choice but if there are less posts than people who have applied for that post as a first choice, then we will need to consider the scorings to determine who is appointed to and then the other choices put forward.

Feedback from the S188 Consultation Meeting on 23 November 2012 Cont'd

Application form

- I have had a look at the drafted expression of interest and application form and I feel that the application form is too involving and some of the criteria's are repetitive, especially the curriculum administrator's person specification. We thought that we would only have to complete an expression of interest, which was one of the main concerns raised in the consultation meeting. We were told that this concern would be looked into. Is there anyway, section A and section C could be considered without section B. Those that are ring- fenced to more than one post, will find this extremely long winded and I do feel this is unfair considering we are still going to have to do a presentation for some post and in some cases complete more than one application form.

Managements Response: The scoring process being proposed will use information from the application form, interview and selection test to score the requirements and criteria detailed in the person specification. On the person specification issued with the final paper, it will include against each criteria whether we are scoring it against the information in the application, interview or selection test. The communication to staff will be that where a criteria on the person specification will be scored through the application form information submitted, staff will need to provide information in their application form for this criteria. To make this as clear as possible, the HR team are going to highlight the criteria on each person specification which needs to be incorporated in the application form for that post. This means that not all criteria will need to be covered in the application form, just those where there is a score to be determined from the information within the application.

- Will we all get first refusal from our first choice and then we will be told – OK you will have to go for your second choice now since you failed your first one, and subsequently third one if second fails too?

Managements Response: We will be interviewing people for the choices they have put on their form – if they have three choices, we will arrange for them to be interviewed (if required) for all three posts. When we come to appointing people to posts, we will of course look at their first choice but if there are less posts than people who have applied for that post as a first choice, then we will need to consider the scorings to determine who is appointed to and then the other choices put forward.

Feedback from the S188 Consultation Meeting on 23 November 2012 Cont'd

JRP

- I have been through the JRP and the refunds are staying with Data Quality, however since then I have heard that it is now going to front of house. Is this correct? Clarification was sought at the consultation meeting regarding refunds, it was proposed that the input be done by MIS and the refund element by front of house posts. I would like to know what elements are going to be done where and how. This was not answered in the response from ELG. My feeling is that this should be done by one area as student's personal details including bank account details will be floating between departments and this could raise a confidentiality risk.

Management Response: There are no proposed changes to the procedures for processing refunds. MIS will continue to test requests for refunds against College refunds Policy not least because this involves assessment of whether the terms of the refund meet data/funding regulation audit requirements (for example in the case of a transfer). Front of House, currently within Cashiers, will continue to process the refunding of actual moneys up to Finance.

- For the post of Curriculum Administrator it is essential to have a L2 Qualification in office skills/Administration or equivalent administration experience, if you already have this or have a level above this why is it necessary to then take an IT test?

Managements Response: The selection process is being designed to enable scoring of the criteria within the person specification. As such, there may be other criteria which relates to IT skills which needs to be tested and scored through the selection process. A L2 qualification in Office Skills/Administration doesn't necessarily demonstrate IT skills.

- If we are unsuccessful in our applications and then offered redeployment, but decide to refuse the redeployed position, will we be eligible for compulsory redundancy? Will the VR/VS be coming out again?

Management Response: If there is a post which is suitable alternative employment that is offered as redeployment and this is refused, this will not be a redundancy situation. In this scenario, the College would be identifying a post for the individual which would mitigate redundancy. If the individual refuses to be redeployed, then they are essentially resigning. We would only offer redeployment where the post was deemed a suitable alternative employment in accordance with the Organisational Development and Management of Change Policy.

VR/VS being considered in terms of whether there is a need to re-offer and this will only be in areas where a reduction in the no. of posts is still required.

Christalla Tsattala

Barnet & Southgate UNISON Senior Steward

