



Date: 14 January 2009

Committee: General Functions

Subject: Budget Proposals

1. Welfare Rights Unit

Please find attached a detailed report of the work of the Unit which was circulated to the Cabinet Committee and which will also be submitted to General Functions Committee.

The Employees Side feel that it is essential that Councillors sitting on the JNCC and all other committees which will be considering the budget have a detailed understanding of the work of the Welfare Rights Unit to enable them to make an informed decision about its future.

The work of the Unit goes far beyond just completing benefit applications. The support that the Unit offers to both adult and children's services is reflected in the unprecedented messages of support from frontline staff. The Employees Side feel it is essential that consultation process addresses the concerns set out in this report before any decisions are made.

- How will the existing work of the Unit be covered if the unit is closed?
- What approaches have been made (or are going to be made) to the third sector to cover the work of the Unit?
- Has a disability impact assessment been carried out to determine affect of closing the Unit?

Consultation with service users

Has any consultation with service users been undertaken?

If so, when did it take place and how will the views expressed be incorporated into the budget consultation process

2. Sheltered Housing

We note that this saving is based upon reconfiguring the service for Barnet residents. In reaching a decision on savings in this area it is important to have detailed information on the current level of support the service is providing. The saving proposed in this area has a direct impact on a service capacity vehicle i.e. Barnet Homes.

We have a number of questions

- How many Barnet residents will it affected by the proposed savings?
- How quickly will residents be consulted?
- How will the views of the residents contribute to the budget consultation process?
- How many Barnet Homes staff will be at risk of redundancy?

General point:

Staff working for this service delivery vehicle were TUPE'D across from Barnet Council. However, Barnet Homes, despite requests from the Trade Unions, chose **not to** adopt the council's new severance scheme which was implemented after the changes to the Pension Scheme. If the Council had implemented 'TUPE- plus' those staff now facing redundancy would have the same entitlements as council staff also facing redundancy.

3. Agency figures

We have currently 402 Agency staff working for the Council. Over proceeding years the TUs have continued to request agency staff details. The TUs wish to acknowledge that there has been a significant improvement in data provided. However, Agency spend is a budgetary factor that any organisation of this size needs to have under robust and strict control.

Resolution

The Employees Side seek agreement from this committee that such good practice will be an integral part of the industrial relations processes within the remit of the JNCCs.

4. Consultancy spend

The Trades Unions are still waiting for details of the consultancy spend. We made a similar request for this information at the Budget CJNCC in 2008 and the figures were provided.

In light of the continuing under funding of local government it is imperative that controls over consultancy spend are in place.

The TUs are requesting the following information from each Head of Service:

- details of the business case for the employment of the consultant(s);
- when the work being undertaken is due to be completed;
- how the quality of the work is to be evaluated;
- reasons where consultants are working beyond the agreed timescale for completion of the work.

Resolution

That Consultancy spend figures across service areas are provided to the TUs as a matter of urgency and details reported back to the next CJNCC.