

## AGENDA ITEM NO: 5

### To : Members of the Human Resources Committee

Councillors : Steve Comer, John Bees, Richard Eddy, Popham,  
Negus (subs:Wright, Havvock)

Copy to : Robert Britton, Head of Human Resources  
Minute Book,  
Pauline Draisey, DSO  
Evelyn Pearce, for web  
Graham Clarkson/Linda Fiitton  
Relevant report authors.  
Spares x 15

### HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2009

### PUBLIC FORUM STATEMENTS

AGENDA ITEM	AUTHOR OF STATEMENT	SUBJECT(S) OF STATEMENT	No.
6	Martin Jones - UNISON	Revisions to the Existing Flexitime Scheme	1
7		School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)	
8		School Caretakers, Tied Accommodation	
6	Jeff Jones/Liz Bebbington - GMB	Revisions to the Existing Flexitime Scheme.	2
6	Steve Paines - UNITE	Revisions to the existing Corporate Flexitime Scheme	3
7		School Support Staff Negotiating Body	

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE****THURSDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009****COMMENTS OF UNISON****Agenda Item 6, "Revisions to the Existing Flexitime Scheme".**

When the proposals were tabled by Employee Relations at the TU Officer meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2009, such was the opposition endorsed by the joint TU Side, that UNISON along with its sister trade unions had understood from the City Council Officers that the proposals would be withdrawn. At no time was it indicated that revised proposals would be submitted to the HR Committee, and therefore UNISON is surprised to see the report being presented at HR Committee.

The report of the Service Director (Strategic HR and Workforce) under a Appendix "A", shows in depth the current responses from departments whereby flexitime is in operation. UNISON recognises that for Service Need requirements, many sections do not operate a flexi time scheme. Others as per the appendix, operate a flexible hours system. UNISON however, would draw members attention to the paragraph on the appendix, which highlights the maximum number of days to be taken in a month within those sections who operate the scheme. This paragraph clearly shows that out of the 23 sections who do operate the scheme, only 4 of them allow only 1 day per month to be taken.

If as the report implies, the revision is to harmonise the scheme, then surely common sense should imply and that those 4 sections should be brought in line with the other 19. To only allow 1 day in every 4 week period is clearly detrimental to the workforce. Any employee at present requesting the two days flexi leave, has to put their request to their manager within a reasonable period in order to allow service standards/ needs to be maintained, as they would for lieu or normal annual leave. A manager can legitimately refuse the request if there were major concerns etc. If the employee is not satisfied with the response of the manager, they are at liberty to formally appeal as per section 8 of the current policy.

UNISON believes the report to be misleading under paragraph under paragraph 3.2 of the report. Prior to LGR in 1996, there had been harmonisation of both the former Avon CC personnel policies and Bristol City Council personnel policies, by means of using the best of each other authorities policies. Since then, there have been two further revisions to the scheme. The scheme however, has been a model template for departments to use with the proviso to amend. UNISON believes therefore, that the real purpose behind the report, is for equal pay purposes.

Paragraph 5 (Other Options Considered), the author of the report does not indicate their rationale for rejecting the 3 alternative options. UNISON would support the option under 5.1 of the report, as the one part of the report which UNISON would agree as correct is Paragraph 7 (Financial), because there are no financial implications arising.

Put simply, it is a managers responsibility for ensuring service needs are met when implementing the current flexitime agreement, and managers must refuse any flexi leave requests if they are unable to sustain the level of service caused by the employees leave of absence. That is how it must work, and how it should have worked. UNISON therefore, will support harmonisation of the policy, but only to ensure that 2 days leave per month can be taken by employees.

### **Agenda Item 7, School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)**

UNISON notes the report of the Service Director (Strategic HR and Workforce Strategy), and is assured that all trade unions will be fully consulted over the SSSNB once Royal Assent has been given.

UNISON will however flag up one issue which needs to be closely monitored once the conditions of service for all staff covered by the SSSNB is operational, and that surrounds equal pay related issues. There will be a number of existing postholders within CYPS who will in future be assessed by the SSSNB. Many of these postholders have had there gradings assessed and evaluated based on templates across the authority. UNISON therefore is naturally concerned that the posts could have differing terms and conditions to similar graded posts within the authority once the SSSNB become operational, creating a potential equal pay issue.

UNISON seeks assurances that the City Council will ensure that all equal pay issues will be covered in the “handover period” to the SSSNB on the affected posts.

### **Agenda Item 8, School Caretakers, Tied Accomodation**

UNISON welcomes the report of the Service Director (Strategic HR and Workforce Strategy), which it believes to be long overdue.

UNISON was a member of the TU Side to the former “Employees Joint Consultative Committee” (EJCC), had can vividly recall that the Employees Side Report to the EJCC in January 2008 clearly highlighting that some VA Schools who employed residential staff, had not implemented the revised accommodation policy, and questioned as to why they hade not. Paragraph 3.2 of the report sets out in full the reasons why the School Governing Bodies are not at liberty to endorse the City Council Policies.

UNISON is pleased that two VA Schools have since adopted the accommodation policy and would like to know which Schools to date have not.

**UNISON Bristol Branch**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Floor**  
**Tower House**  
**Fairfax Street**  
**Bristol BS1 3BN**

**Tel. 0117 9405002**

## GMB statement to HR Committee of 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009

The Gmb would like to make the following submission to the HR committee :

### Item 6. REVISIONS TO THE EXISTING CORPORATE FLEXTIME SCHEME

The GMB welcomes the changes that have been made in response to our concerns regarding the alterations proposed to the Flexi scheme and Bob Brittons agreement to defer the change of harmonising downwards to one day the flexi leave per accounting period.

The GMB will take an active part in any working party set up to debate 1 day/ 2days flexi leave issue.

However the GMB feels that to divorce the issue of 1 day/ 2days flexi leave from the other changes is illogical and so feels that the report as a whole needs to be deferred and debated by this working party. It is possible that other issues may arise that may need to be taken into consideration.

Considering the document as a whole, the GMB is concerned at the lack of consultation that has been undertaken. The GMB is also concerned that the feelings of the SOGs, the only members of staff who were consulted, was completely disregarded.

However, we are told the management consultation was carried out through the Strategic HR Group (comprised of a 2nd or 3rd tier Director/Manager from each directorate). The SHRG were very firmly behind harmonisation at 1 day's flexi.

The GMB is not at all surprised that it was the Managements consultation and not the staff consultation that was acted upon.

The GMB would like you to note that it was only after the report went to the TU Officers meeting that any changes were made, obviously the depth of feeling amongst the staff had not been calculated correctly.

On calculation, the GMB is surprised to read that the following have been carried out, Risk Assessments, Equality Impact Assessment and Financial impact.

You may wonder why the GMB is surprised.

The GMB is surprised because we have been told that, there are no means of recording employees who utilise flexi time.

If that is the case how have any impact assessments been carried out correctly if no one knows who uses the Flexi time scheme?

How many people have Carer commitments, married women with child care issues, are single parents, are disabled, have travel problems? How will this affect people moving to Somerfield, as 'Flexibility' has been mooted as a cornerstone of a successful move.

The GMB would also like to suggest some possible financial implications - not all users of flexi time do so because of personal needs.

There is no consideration of any possible overtime or of any new staff that may have to be employed due to the harmonisation down of Flexi days.

Given that the Council needs to save £30m over the next 3 years the GMB feels that there will be a need for greater flexibility rather than less. Just consider this if 20 people are losing a day a month this could equate to employing 1 extra member of staff, 200 equals 10 and 2000 equals 200.

Roughly 200 extra staff at a cost to the council of £25000 a year each would cost an additional £5 million a year!, Even an extra 10 could cost an additional £250000.

The GMB would ask you to note that, If we can't calculate the number of people who work flexi time then we can't calculate the financial loss/cost to the Council.

The GMB would also remind you that the management consultation was carried out through the Strategic HR Group (comprised of a 2nd or 3rd tier Director/Manager from each directorate). How close to the ground are these Directors/Managers if they apparently don't know how many of their staff work flexitime!!

The GMB would like to remind the HR Committee that this policy change is to the Flexi Time policy, which is about Flexible working and being allowed to take 'Flexi days' i.e. As and when you need to with regard to the needs of the business.

To suggest that a sensible alternative is to request to Work Life Balance is naïve. A WLB would set out the hours to be worked and the days off to be taken, there is no real flexibility within this scheme. The GMB would ask you to note that the majority of requests to go onto this scheme are rejected

The GMB wonders if there is an ulterior motive behind this policy change. Is the Council trying to do a 'Bob Ayling' (Chairman of British Airways) and get staff to work a day a month for nothing? The GMB trusts that this is not the case.

The success or failure of a department/section to run a scheme lies with the managers of that department/section. If managers can't manage then the GMB would have ask why they are in that job.

It is irrational to harmonise the Flexi scheme down because a handful of departments can't manage it. If Flexi time is 'managed' correctly it works well and brings benefits to the Council and to staff. If it doesn't work well don't penalise the staff, train the managers to manage.

As stated previously in this document the GMB feels that to divorce the issue of 1 day/ 2days flexi leave from the other changes is illogical and so feels that the report as a whole needs to be deferred until September to allow for meaningful debate by the working party.

Finally the GMB urges you NOT to underestimate or ignore the feelings amongst the staff over the 1 day/ 2days flexi leave issue.

Council staff already feel threatened by possible job losses to make up the expected Budget shortfall, the majority of staff are in or have just come out of a review, and now you propose to go tinkering with the hours they work.

Please remember that the support of some of these people will be needed to ensure a smooth transfer to Somerfield and to help you 'deal with your budget pressures'.

Liz Bebbington  
Branch Sec GMB

Jeff Sutton  
GMB



Trade Union response for Human Resources Committee 9 July 2009

Agenda item 6 Revisions to the existing Corporate Flexitime Scheme

The background to this item is that Contract Services was recently dissolved and staff transferred into Departments principally Neighbourhoods. However, these transferred staff can only take 1 flexi day per month compared to two in Neighbourhoods which produced an anomaly.

This Committee through a number of meetings has harmonised Terms and Conditions for Single Status. So the variations in Flexitime entitlements are not satisfactory and needs addressing. There is significant dissatisfaction from our membership at the proposal in paragraph 3.5 iii to harmonise downwards the number of flexi days that can be taken per month from 2 to 1.

This proposal also reverses some of the pioneering Work Life Balance work that Elected Members on this Committee supported. Increasing the number of flexi days to two is regarded as an alternative to the nine day fortnight.

During consultation it was suggested a short life working party be created to determine how proposals to reduce the number of flexi days will impact on individuals and departments who will be losing flexibility to deal with peaks and troughs in their workloads. Therefore, I ask HR Committee to delay making a decision on the flexi days issue until a later date when the results of the working party are available.

Agenda item 7 School Support Staff Negotiating Body

I understand the first meeting of the new negotiating body took place on Tuesday of this week.

Unite the Union supports the creation of the School Support staff national negotiating body due to the benefits that will be created. This includes additional funding at a local level for facility time for trade unions in England.

The new national job evaluation scheme mentioned in paragraph 3.2 will bring consistency across the country in determining the size of Support Staff jobs and setting a competitive rate of pay. Unite are pleased to see this report and await further information once statutory approval has been given.

Steve Paines

Convenor