

**SPECIAL BRANCH COMMITTEE**  
**19 JANUARY 2011**

**Present:** J Bird, N Ramanandi, C Hodgson, B Gates, A Gilks, S Rounthwaite, B Mokhtare, J Liepins-Hall, C Mullinder, R Fenton, E Whitby, S Mulligan, P Quinn, M Harrison, N Proudlock, S Herron, A Smith, R Watson, P Henderson, J Cobb, G Haggerston, B Oliver, R Nelson, K Bensley, A Lamb, M Henderson, M Henderson, V Suddes, D Tree, J Horne, R Vasey, M Oliver, A Ashbridge, L Ashbridge, J Carden, L McGurk, A Green, F Mendelson, K Khan, m Haddon, J Imhoof, C Pegg, S Cargill, R Kain, C Armstrong, J Young, L Hardie, J Nicholson, R Sheikh, W Aitman, J Yugire, K Ameli, L Mcdonagh, H Ottie, A Ibbetson, T Connell, N Bone, N Nicholson. **In Attendance:** Karen Loughlin

**Apologies:** A Hall, M Brown, G Burin, S Hicks, H Rocke, A Foster, B Taylor, L Grainger

JB opened the meeting by explaining that UNISON have been given a draft document from the Council which represents their final position in terms of how they intend to deal with Workplace Reorganisation. The Council has also given a verbal indication of the Severance Scheme they intend to implement.

JB – Background to current situation, three main areas:

- In late December UNISON were informed of the Council's intention to revise the current Severance Scheme, this included proposals to reduce the existing package from twice statutory redundancy (known as the x2 scheme) to 1.5 times statutory redundancy.
- Another major issue was that the council wanted to make taking voluntary redundancy conditional on agreeing to waive your statutory notice period from 12 weeks to 4 weeks, thus forfeiting 8 weeks salary.
- UNISON wanted an extension to the current redeployment period from 3 months to 6 months.

NR – the other issues that were raised with us via previous Special Branch Committee on January were:

- Voluntary severance trawls needed to be undertaken prior to the appointment process – the council's original intention was to interview first which we thought would lead to a compulsory severance situation.
- Staff could not be forced to waive notice periods.
- Salary protection needed to be for a minimum of 3 years.
- Where staff are interested flexible working practices should be used to make savings and reduce the potential of a compulsory redundancy.
- No compulsory redundancies this year.

NR – The lobby that we held last time was a brilliant success and showed the strength of feeling from members and forced the council to reconsider their original position which they had been adamant was the only affordable option.

The council are now proposing that:

- Severance trawls will be undertaken prior to the appointment process.
- It will not be conditional for staff to waive their notice period in order to take voluntary severance.
- The severance package will be based on 1.75 times statutory redundancy pay – not the x2 we wanted to maintain but an improvement on the previous 1.5 the council were set upon.

JB – Where the council is considering whether or not to terminate redeployment and therefore employment, UNISON has asked that they can be involved in this process, so that where we are representing members we can ensure that all issues have been taken into account. HR have confirmed that we will be involved in this process.

NR – Protection will be 3 years (with pay award in year 1) plus 50% protection in year 4 – the same as the current protection offered. Fixed term staff will be included in any ring fencing proposals.

SM – UNISON need to have access to all Service Impact Assessments and Equality Impact Assessments. We need to fight for everyone's job and every member. Feel quite cynical that management have provided written details of the severance package yet. We need to maximise training and redeployment periods.

LMc – There is no mention of 'bump' redundancies.

EW – Waiving the notice period is unacceptable – glad this is no longer proposed, but the new severance scheme will not attract volunteers, therefore the council is forcing compulsory redundancies.

SB – This process has already been used in the Control Room.

NB – Due to state pension age changing from 60 to 65 for women, the redundancy package is even less attractive as you will not have your state pension to top up your income.

MD – The rally was to oppose compulsory redundancies, but the wording 'where appropriate' to carry out a voluntary severance trawl is worrying and may lead to managers making arbitrary decisions.

FM – It should be a principle to allow voluntary severance via a targeted redundancy trawl, which will be linked to a wider trawl if needed.

JB – Suggest that we raise with HR that the wording is more explicit to reflect our position that a voluntary severance trawl needs to be carried out where there are more people than posts. We need to protect the most vulnerable people – those who cannot afford to lose their jobs under any circumstances. Therefore UNISON would advocate that we advise the council that we are noting the new severance package but that we don't think it will deliver the numbers of volunteers needed and it will lead to compulsory redundancies. And, if we were faced with a compulsory redundancy we would ballot for action in the affected areas. We can deliver on that and support our members, but members don't currently have the appetite for all out action on this issue alone.

NR – Using bump redundancies is mentioned in the supporting paperwork which we did not circulate as it is quite lengthy. The job design period is quite short but so is the period for cuts, these are achievable timescales as long as the council invests the necessary resources. The process followed in the control room is the standard procedure which is very similar to this, as that review is not linked to STEP.

EW – I agree that we need to win if we ballot, but selective action isolates worker groups. Also the lead in period for a strike is 3 months – this is too long. We should seek permission for a strike now.

Also don't accept that redeployment should be extended on a case by case basis – it should be a collective policy, all members deserve the extended redeployment.

MO – There is no reference to having an independent person on the interview panel.

AA – Also concerned about wording 'where appropriate' for carrying out voluntary severance trawls. In Revs & Bens we have 10 posts to go.

JH – Reducing the severance scheme to 1.75 – has this been agreed by Constitutional Committee?

NE – Do HR have the capacity to deal with this?

KL – Re. timescales for strike – you have to register your intention but you also need to have a valid dispute. Can't just say that we think there will be a compulsory redundancy.

EW – We have a valid basis for a dispute, as we do not agree to compulsory redundancies.

JB – We would also only want to ballot if we were confident that we would win the ballot – it has to be a show of strength, not weakness.

RN – If you volunteer, there is no guarantee that you will be allowed to go. Will this be based on costs and can the council select someone who is not a volunteer if they are cheaper.

JB – We would be absolutely opposed to the council opting for a compulsory redundancy over a volunteer on the basis of cost. However you are right, there is no guarantee all volunteers will be allowed to leave, especially if there are more volunteers that needed in a worker group.

NB – What is the GMB's position?

JB – They have indicated that they will take the same position as UNISON, and are not advocating action to their members.

BM – Given the lack of a pay increase and the rate of inflation, all of our members are currently taking a pay cut. There is discontent and as a whole union we need to take a stand and say 'enough is enough'.

JB – Can we agree to note rather than agree with the proposals, and if we are faced with compulsory redundancies we would take action? **AGREED**