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## **UNISON Comments on Proposed Disestablishment of Neighbourhood Management**

### **General Observations**

Haringey's Neighbourhood Management Service was created in 2000, initially to run the Area Assemblies and to improve community engagement in the borough's deprived areas.

Over the years Neighbourhood Management has been expanded to cover the whole borough, reflecting the Council's desire for greater interaction with residents and to enable and empower more "bottom up" communication, ideas and initiatives from local people.

The Service has won many awards and plaudits since its inception and was at the forefront of the Council's successful submission for Beacon Council status in the Getting Closer To Communities category in 2005. Neighbourhood Management in Haringey has been at the cutting edge of community development in London and the UK and has initiated many innovative programmes and events, including:

- Access To Services events, targeting specific communities on how they can access Council and other local services (e.g. Polish Community, Greek Elders, homeless people)
- The first-ever Green Lanes Food Festival, attended by over 10,000 people
- A Community Leadership Programme for local residents, run in partnership with the University of Westminster
- An award-winning community allotment and well-being project, Living Under One Sun, benefiting residents from deprived areas who have many difficulties, including mental health issues
- Training young people across Haringey as Young Advisors, acting as positive role models for their peers and gaining paid work as "youth experts"
- Monthly Area-Based Working meetings in all seven neighbourhoods, bringing together different agencies (such as the Police, Housing Associations, Network Rail and various Council services) to examine and resolve difficult community safety, environmental and other local issues
- Delivering an annual programme of projects suggested by community groups and residents' associations to improve their neighbourhoods (Making The Difference), since 2005

Neighbourhood Management has supported, encouraged and nurtured many community groups, residents' associations and Neighbourhood Watches to become more involved in campaigning for positive change in their areas. Particularly in the east of the borough, there has been a lot of intensive work with the so-called "hard to reach" communities, many of whom have participated in initiatives such as the Access to Services events, Living Under One Sun, Police Ward Panels, programmes such as Spurs' "Goals for Girls" and the Community Leadership Programme. The Service works closely with Elected Members to support them in their community roles, particularly at Area Assemblies, on Making The Difference projects and in keeping them up to date with residents' issues in their wards. Neighbourhood Management has also pioneered partnership working in Haringey, resulting in many different agencies coming together to work on projects, using problem-solving techniques to get positive results.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

As Neighbourhood Management has engaged and worked with many different communities in the borough, we feel that an Equalities Impact Assessment of how local communities will be affected by its closure needs to be carried out as a matter of urgency. We are aware that an EIA is being considered in terms of the staff of the Service, but think that it is equally important that this is done for local communities as they will undoubtedly be adversely affected by the loss of this important Service.

It is therefore a great pity that the Council has decided to wind up the Neighbourhood Management Service after just over ten years of existence. Neighbourhood Management has been, for many residents, the friendly face of the Council, and several teams have also been based in the geographical areas they serve.

We would argue that, for all the reasons set out above, the Council has decided to get rid of a key front-line Service.

### **Transitional Arrangements**

We are concerned as to how effectively planning has been done to ensure that residents and other departments are aware of the proposal. Specifically it is proposed that numbers of functions to a lesser or greater extent transfer elsewhere in the Council, clearly this raises issues with regard to consultation with effected staff.

Separately as front-line service staffs comes into regular contact with both the public, community leaders and Councillors, it is unfair for staff to be expected to explain and rationalise why they will no longer be available to assist. There needs to be a clear communications strategy to ensure staff are not blamed when they are advised partners they are no longer able to complete intended projects etc.

As there has been a complete disestablishment a number of staff have opted to avail themselves of the Voluntary Redundancy option, this means that aside from the above the department will see a significant downturn in capacity and Senior management will need to be supportive and understanding of staff at this time. As Staff are now under threat of Compulsory Redundancy we are seeking assurances that staff rights to time off to seek alternative work will be managed sympathetically and that they will not be made to feel bad for exercising these legal rights.

### **Support Function Reviews**

The timing of the disestablishment has left staff at a disadvantage in this respect; no staff were included or considered under Performance & Policy, none have been included in either the Procurement or Finance Management SFR's. Additionally as the Admin & Business Support ones have been placed on short term hold staff may have left before they can be considered in respect of these processes as well.

This concern is particularly pertinent in respect of the Admin/Finance Officers, as the possibilities for redeployment will be particularly adversely affected, as managers will not be recruiting for these types of posts pending deliberations on SFR processes. Staff have indicated they feel they should be considered under the Finance Support Functions Review as they both perform functions fitting into it's definition currently and have the requisite skills to continue to do so in the new Finance Service Offer. We therefore request they are reconsidered for inclusion at appropriate grades in that process.

Separately we would also ask that in the event of there being a Business Support Functions review within the new Place directorate that they be included in ring-fences there as their colleagues from other parts moving into the Single frontline model will be.

### **Redundancies**

The Trade Unions wish to restate their complete opposition to compulsory redundancies occurring. Clearing part of the avoidance process may involve redeployment but we would also seek consideration for an element of bumping elsewhere in the Council in orders to free up potential opportunities. Such bumping is lawful so long as it is with consent rather than imposed, we have raised this principle generally with the Council in terms of mitigating the need for compulsory redundancy.

#### Single Frontline

In respect of the above comment it is clear that although the distinct unit is being disestablished that posts and functions are to be recreated in a largely similar way under the neighbourhoods part of the Single Frontline service. The below are extracts from the report which was scheduled to go to Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011

*"2.5 The current Neighborhood Management Service has been included as part of this Review and the Single Frontline will encapsulate and build on its ideals to deliver an Area based approach to resolve local issues. This will include a new Engagement And Enablement team whose role will be to work with the local community to identify The priorities and needs of residents and traders from each Area Assembly. The issues identified will form part of an Area Action Plan, which will be consulted on through an Area Assembly and agreed by the Area Committee. It will then be Passed over and presented to the new Neighborhood Service to address and resolve. The Area Assemblies and Area Committees will then be able to hold the service to account by monitoring how much progress has been made in delivering the actions as set out in the plan."*

*"7.1 To empower, facilitate and work with residents and businesses to identify local priorities to tackle environmental problems together, encouraging*

*resident involvement in delivery of services and co-production of outcomes.*

- o To work more effectively with partners, i.e. Safer Neighbourhood Teams, contractors and voluntary sector to commission services that will deliver local outcomes and priorities.*
- o To integrate the customer interface, invest in the use of appropriate IT solutions to engender a single working platform across the frontline.*

*Community Engagement & Enablement – A team to support all elements of the Single Frontline whose functions will include:*

- o To engage with residents effectively to understand the needs and priorities of the Area Assemblies/Committees.*
- o To support and monitor the delivery of local action plans.*
- o To develop and enhance relationships with local community groups to act as an enabler/facilitator providing a 'neighbourhood problem solver' function and interface.*
- o To provide an ongoing consultation service dealing with potential transport/parking schemes.*
- o To promote, facilitate and monitor environmental behavioral change by working closely with contractors, community groups and resident associations.*
- o To work with partners and the community to identify local crime and antisocial behaviour.*
- o To identify and monitor key Local Performance Indicators to measure success or otherwise, being transparent and thus being accountable to local communities.*
- o To consider and develop more joined up ways of working across the Council to ensure existing routes of community engagement are best Utilized and new opportunities for engagement are maximized.*

From the Report on the Disestablishment of NMS

Elements of the service, which are properly part of the apparatus for local Democracy, to be more appropriately placed within Democratic Services, Including Area Assemblies and Area Committees. The Governance Review will Determine appropriate terms of reference for these bodies.

- Area based working can continue through mainstream delivery, with added Strength through the new Single Frontline Service, aiming at speedy resolutions Through joined-up and partnership working.
- Making The Difference will be advertised to bona-fide residents' groups/forums Prior to the start of the financial year through an annual bidding process against Commissioning intentions agreed by Cabinet and linked to achieving Council Priorities. Projects would be delivered on a 'by you, for you' basis whereby Community/voluntary groups would need to demonstrate the capacity to deliver And manage both project and the funds.
- The Single Frontline Service will need a small number of community engagements Officers (3 – 4) to ensure this element of local engagement is fully covered in the New service.

It is therefore clear to UNISON that although the existing Service is disbanding there is a clear plan and strategy for elements of the service to transfer to elsewhere within the Council. As such we do not agree that all staff in NMS are redundant as the duties they are carrying out are simply transferring elsewhere. This principle is clearly no different to any other type of re-organization or restructuring, it is in fact rather akin to a Support Functions Review of customer contact.

We are therefore requesting that all Staff who are likely to be within a grade band one either side of the posts of "Community Engagement Officers" are not issued with notice until such time as the establishment of this service has taken place. Once this occurs they should be ring-fenced for the new posts. We believe this covers anyone currently in the PO1-P03 grade in Project Officer type roles. We accept that those who have taken the Voluntary redundancy offer would not be included in this deferred notice.

We would place the Council on notice that in the event staff are dismissed and similar posts are created it is our belief that Staff will have an opportunity to challenge this in a legal setting. Aside from this possibility as an employer Harlingen has duties and responsibilities to seek alternative employment for staff. It also has a clear fiduciary duty to spend appropriately; this should not include making redundancy payments when potential alternatives exist. This aside from the moral and social imperatives to minimize the effects of these CondDem cuts on staff

On a supplementary point there is a clear intent to transfer area assemblies (rebranded as Area Committees) to Democratic Services. This raises issues as to whether there is any potential to include staff in ring-fences in that service. Having just completed Employeeside comments on that Services proposals it was noticeable there was no specific mention of this new additional piece of work in the Service Officer.

**Implementation**

The timetable in the report indicates that the final decision on these proposals will be referred back to General Purposes Committee, having checked the Council calendar the next such meeting is on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011. In view of this we would suggest an attempt to issue notices on the 11<sup>th</sup> is rushed. When the Council revised it's redeployment procedure (against Employee side advice and lobbying) to run concurrently with the notice period it was agreed that no such notices would be issued in advance of initial referral and assessment by the deployment team. As such it is our view that no such notice should be issued on the 11<sup>th</sup> but only after this process has taken place.

In view of the importance of the issues we raise in terms of preservation of employment we are asking that our comments be appended in full to the GP report. Further in the absence of a satisfactory resolution to the issues we raise that we may enforce our right to a deputation on this report.

Yours sincerely

**Seán Fox**  
**Branch Secretary**      **25<sup>TH</sup> February 2011**

**c.c.**  
**UNISON Members in NMS**