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Comments on Agenda Item 5

Although we have not asked for a deputation to the Corporate Committee we felt the need to bring to your attention some of our concerns with regard to this area of work.

We have now completed consultation on the first such proposal which is on the agenda at your committee tonight with regard to Economic Development. While this is a relatively small team and there is already an element of cross borough boundary working it highlighted potential tensions and problems which may arise.

Consultation

The current Council consultation framework for changes of structure is not fit for purpose in respect of shared services. It is designed to deal with reductions or re-organisations within a business unit primarily, its limitation for bigger projects have on occasion come to light around the recent support functions review.

We previously flagged with Officers the need to have a joint framework for consultation with crosses the boundary with Waltham Forest. Such a framework should be designed to cover both specific proposals and a more general overview of potential options, timelines etc. To give a specific example of the problems caused by the current deficient arrangements Waltham Forest on the Shared Economic Development Service consulted in one way and Haringey in another. Two separate responses were received and potentially contradictory HR policies were followed. On more recent proposals documents were made public in Waltham Forest before they were shared with Trade Unions in Haringey (re Legal, Comms, Organisational Change).

We therefore believe before these projects proceed officers should be instructed to engage on a joint basis with both Waltham Forest and Haringey Trade Unions to reach a consultation framework fit for purposes. We are aware our Waltham Forest colleagues has lodged a dispute with their employer on this very point.

Finally while we remain broadly neutral on shared services proposals we would wish to restate our complete opposition to them being used as a cover for privatisation, outsourcing, reductions to terms and conditions. For the avoidance of doubt privatisation means in all its forms whether there is a preference to call it partnership, strategic partnership, social enterprise, Local Area Trading company and the myriad of other terminology that may be used.

Yours sincerely

Seán Fox
Branch Secretary