

## Appendix 6

### Response to Consultation Comments

The following are the key comments and responses received from Unison and/or staff members from Benefits, Local Taxation, (BLT) Customer Services (CS) and other stakeholders.

#### 1.0 General Comments

**Comment** - We are concerned that at a time of severe cuts across the Council there is a proposal to create four posts at PO8/SM1. This is in contrast to the current departmental headcounts of two posts at this level + one which has remained vacant for some significant period of time. We would suggest it should be possible to reduce this number thus freeing up increased resources for lower down the structure.

**Response** - Customer contact is a key priority for the council and the merging of Benefits, Local Taxation and Customer Services will provide a framework for ensuring that high volume customer enquiries are resolved at the first point of contact, thus increasing customer satisfaction and reducing unnecessary costs.

For this to succeed the right level of strategic management is required with the right balance across the functions of the service. The structure follows the approach stated in the Rethinking Haringey document of four layers. This is demonstrated in the structure with two layers of strategic management and two layers of operations. The strategic element consists of one Head of Service and four Assistant Heads. The Assistant Heads and therefore the key strategic decision making equates to 1.7% of the overall FTE count and 3% of the salary cost. This is not excessive considering the complexity of operations and the importance of customer contact.

**Comment** - As generic job descriptions across BLT & Customer Services exist to a greater degree than previously please clarify the position with reference to staff being required to move between the three component elements of the new service. Conversely what opportunities will there be for staff to request such a move where they may see it as a career opportunity?

Our expectation is that any moves would be with prior notice and consultation where they formed a permanent change of team or location. We do however recognise there may be a need for staff to be relocated within teams in each of the three services due to demand on resources.

**Response** - The generic job descriptions across BLT and CS reflect that 60% of current customer contacts are BLT related. The proposed structure identifies our future requirements as an integrated service and will encourage a joint front and back office approach to customer resolution and satisfaction. Our main aim will be to reduce hand-offs, waste and duplication of effort and eliminate the inevitable customer frustration that follows. The type of activity that an officer will be undertaking will be dictated by customer demand but consideration will be given to differing knowledge levels. Officers will only be expected to undertake duties where there has been a sufficient level of knowledge transfer.

Customer demand excepted, officers will be encouraged to extend knowledge to other functions within the service and this can certainly be used to enhance internal career opportunities.

**Comment** - What (if any) are the implications on home working for staff that currently have this in place post implementation? Will staff from BLT teams be expected to perform a customer service function as currently on a rota basis and how frequently?

**Response** – The proposed structure does not preclude the continuation of homeworking. Meeting customer requirements, including processing benefit claims etc., will be the key consideration and if this can be performed at home without an adverse effect on financial resources then this would be favourable.

**Comment** - Although we recognise the fundamental financial pressures on the Council we remain concerned that such a fundamental reduction in frontline officers will lead to a decline in service levels. We urge officers to make this point explicit to elected members, particularly with reference to increased waiting times at the two remaining Customer Service Centres. We wish to place this on record as we would not expect to see any reduction in performance targets being blamed on remaining staff or used as a cover for attempts to privatise the service or elements of it. Councillors must be clear that demands on BLT/Customer Services are increased and continuing to increase as a result of upturns in unemployment caused by the economic policies of the government. If we are to lose this number of posts then it must be recognised it may have a detrimental effect both on benefits and on collection/recovery rates for Council Tax and Business rate.

**Response** – Customer demand is being monitored closely to ensure that there is an understanding of the levels of resource required to provide an effective service. One of the main reasons for merging BLT and CS is to reduce hand-offs and eliminates unnecessary delays and processes. This improvement is expected to contribute significantly to the resource reduction across the service.

**Comment** - How will staff who currently work less than full time be treated when applying? Will they automatically be offered posts on hours equivalent to those they work currently or will there be opportunities for review of these hours where staff have a desire to do so?

**Response** – Established current part-time working will be recognised in the same way as now under the proposed structure. Opportunities for changing working hours will be considered on an individual basis.

**Comment – Single Status** - With the exception of CSOs and Telephonists none of the current posts have been subject to a job evaluation. We would therefore request clarity as to what steps management propose to deal with this situation. This is particularly relevant since the majority of posts are “new” and as such could not be used for backdating purposes. A number of posts in the historic BLT structure were identified as being in the appendix to the Single Status agreement and consideration needs to be given to having these evaluated.

A decision also needs to be taken in respect of posts that are largely unchanged as a result of the new structure as in such cases backdating should apply to the Single Status implementation date. From review of the posts we would say the Court Officer and Visiting Officer, the Submissions Officer roles fit into this category, as may the IT Officers although there may be others.

Finally there is the issue of job evaluation appeals under the Single Status agreement these should be made available to first time round GLPC evaluations OR where the grade goes down following a new evaluation. We would therefore contend only the two jobs who have had Single Status completed have exhausted this right.

**Response** – Single status evaluation for all posts that were deemed non-priority will be considered and a timetable provided.

## 2.0 Job Related Comments

**Comment - Service Manager** - There is a lack of clarity as to how many posts will be allowed at each level of the range grade and whether consistency will apply across the teams. For example meaning each team will contain a number of PO3s, a number of PO4s and a number of PO5s. We are concerned that the lack of a transparent explanation and a system for monitoring roles may lead to inconsistencies and/or unfairness in deciding the level of each post-holder. Additionally as the ring-fence contains staff at PO2 and PO4-PO5 please confirm that successful candidates will be appointed no lower than their existing grade.

How will it be decided whether a Service Manager post should be at the more senior or junior part of the grade? For example some managers have a larger number of staff to manage while others (in particular within the support structure) have a large number of PO graded staff within their remit.

**Response** – There will be consistency across the different teams to reflect the level of knowledge and skills required in each function. This equates to 3 x PO5, 9 x PO4 and 9 x PO3. Successful candidates will be appointed at the grade that matches the level of knowledge and skills required in the job description and candidate specification, ensuring a match against the three grading levels, limited to the overall numbers at each grade.

**Comment – Senior Practitioners** - We welcome the development of this role and in general feel it will provide a useful career path for staff. Our only query concerns how and where these roles will be deployed in the Customer Service setting. In particular whether it is intended that they be located in the Customer Service or Call Centre environment. Since in both cases work is led by customer demand consideration needs to be given to how work will be allocated to them and by whom. Equally how Service Officers can call upon their expertise in the Customer Service setting.

What is the rationale for their allocation as some teams have a Senior Practitioner while others do not: For example in the benefits structure two teams do not have a PO1. This is repeated in the revenues area.

**Response** – The Senior Practitioner role will be a new addition to the customer services function but will equally provide a level of higher technical knowledge, providing advice and support to other Officers. Availability of these staff will need to be considered during times of increased customer demand but it is proposed that these posts will sit in both the customer service centre and the call centre.

A key role of a Senior Practitioner is one of advice and support to staff and this will cover more than one team as a generic officer.

**Comment – Service Assistant** - As for the Senior Practitioners this role is a new one in a Customer Services setting and it needs to be more clearly defined what they will be doing. We raise this as it is less possible to differentiate via work allocation in a customer environment than in a BLT “back office” one. Essentially we would seek assurances that the work required would be sufficiently different to that done by the Service Officers.

Similarly to the situation with Senior Practitioner posts the teams have a varying number of Service Assistants and in some cases have none at all. What is the rationale behind this?

**Response** – There are six Assistant Officers in the proposed structure within the customer services function. The key role will be to act as receptionists at the two customer service centres. The Assistant Officers will handle the initial contact with the customer before any referrals to a Service Officer and it is expected that three will be in each service centre.

**Comment – Numbers of Posts in each team** - We are concerned that at a time of increased demand there are significant reductions in the number of “Service Officers” in Benefits. We note an increase in numbers within enforcement but would comment that this approach is likely to lead to increased backlogs in claims and consequent increased calls or visits to Customer Services. It will also lead to increased usage of Court procedures when the real problem is an inability to process Benefit claims in a timely fashion. Clearly as an area with high levels of unemployment and underemployment this is of concern as the results will be: Adverse publicity for Haringey Council and equally importantly to us increased abuse and aggression towards staff as well as inevitable high levels of stress. The latter was previously identified as being abnormally high in the Stress survey process last year.

**Response** - The number of posts in each team and function is based on the savings required and projected customer demand. The addition of a Workforce Demand Officer will enable us to analyse customer demand and identify the resource required to meet this demand. Should this fall short in some areas then we have the opportunity to use the generic officers across all teams to support this gap. There are a number of challenges ahead as we look to encourage customers to use more on-line facilities and we will be monitoring any changes in demand closely.

**Comment – Support Team** - We have some concerns about the construction of the support team and the level of management demand particularly upon the Control and compliance manager. The latter post is required to support a total of ten officers all of whom are PO1 or PO2. Although the over all number of posts managed is consistent we would expect that the demands upon this team would be considerably higher than other teams with a consequent need for management advice and guidance.

We would therefore suggest the Submissions Officers sit more sensibly on the Benefit Teams. This would leave a clear focus of support and development and subsidy protection within the remit of a slimmed down team.

There are two Service Managers identified within the Support area and we would ask for confirmation of where in the PO3-PO5 range these two posts will sit?

**Response** – The structure has been amended so that the Appeals and Submissions Officers report under the benefits function. Both Service Manager posts will be PO3. There will be one PO3 post managing the IT Officers and one PO4 post managing the control and compliance team.

**Comment – IT Officers** - We are aware that the current post-holders have concerns re the content of the job description and the grading the post attracted on evaluation. We are supportive of their concerns and would ask that both areas be reviewed. These posts are clearly key to the future delivery of our service and this should potentially be reflected in the grading.

**Response** – The concerns have been noted and the job description is being reviewed with the officers concerned.

**Comment – Subsidy Role** - We are concerned that once again it is proposed to delete the sole dedicated resource responsible for ensuring we maximise our subsidy. There appears to be a lack of recognition throughout the structure of the key importance of this area of work. This will become even more paramount with the Council facing continued financial pressure that would be significantly worsened in the event that we failed to retrieve all monies due.

The current postholder would appear to have unique insight into the work and in deleting the dedicated post there is a very real possibility that this knowledge base could be lost since the post-holder would either be required to take on another post or a manager's post thus diluting the amount of time available for this element of the work.

The unique duties undertaken are described as follows

Undertakes subsidy cell checking reveals subsidy loss in areas such as above caps, LA errors, No rent officer determinations, above rent awards etc. Additionally they analyse, identify and help to address subsidy loss problems. This is done, by dealing with subsidy from a Benefit practitioners view, not as an accountant.

As a Benefits practitioner these skills are used to deal with Auditors on a claim-by-claim basis. There are two accountants who negotiate the actual money, account, and subsidy claim return side. We are concerned that in the new structure subsidy work may be taken from a 'subsidy accounting' perspective rather than 'subsidy benefits'. There is a huge difference in responsibility (and knowledge) between the two.

From initial discussions we understand that it is felt this work would sit on the control team and be shared between the Senior Practitioners and support and development Officers. Our counter proposal would be that this work should be enhanced in Support and Development roles and that an additional post should be created at this level to lead on subsidy work.

Since we recognise the budget constraints we would propose this is funded in the main by reducing the Senior Practitioners on the team by 1FTE. We are proposing this option, as it would appear nobody would be adversely affected by this change. We have commented on the implications on this in the section on ring-fencing.

**Response** – Most of the generic job descriptions across the service include an element of subsidy awareness and minimising subsidy loss. This strengthens the importance of subsidy to all relevant officers, rather than leaving the responsibility within one post.

The control and compliance team of eight staff is a new addition to the structure and one that demonstrates the need to ensure controls are in place to protect subsidy and reduce losses. A further key responsibility of this team is to ensure that quality monitoring is used as a feedback tool to raise understanding of subsidy across relevant officers. The inclusion of a Service Manager covering control and compliance further supports the importance of minimising subsidy loss.

The subsidy claim is prepared and presented by Corporate Finance who play a significant role in supporting the audit process. The importance of subsidy control is further acknowledged by the recent introduction of internal audit carrying out a mid-year review of cases. Best practice dictates that key service subsidy knowledge should not sit with one person as this contributes to a risk as the focus is too narrow. The proposed structure reflects the need to widen this approach and knowledge and to continue with tight controls. Therefore, subsidy protection sits more comfortably with a control and compliance function with the support and development team contributing to subsidy training and awareness.

However, I note the comments in respect of ensuring that minimising subsidy loss is recognised more specifically in relevant job descriptions and this will be reviewed.

**Comment – Visiting Officer** - We are concerned at the proposal to further reduce the number of visiting officer posts. Currently there are three substantive postholders with an additional agency worker working on the Council Tax team. The new structure reduces this to three and removes the dedicated role within Benefits. We believe this represents a risk to effective work currently delivered by visiting officers in respect of bringing properties into the Council tax and NNDR lists, fraud reduction in benefits and verification of exemptions/residency checks. The reduction in officers will lead to longer delays in visits.

**Response** – The Visiting Officer post numbers are being reduced as stated. However, we expect to make the process of visiting more effective and efficient to accommodate this reduction.

**Comment – Recruitment and Selection** - We note the intent to use a combination of interview and test for some posts and would seek clarification on what combination will be applied in each instance. Any tests used should be relevant to the role required and staff should be given clear guidance of the type of test in advance of the process taking place. We would ask that examples be provided in advance to both staff and Trade Unions along with confirmation on the conditions under which the tests will be taken. There will need to be a confidential facility for staff to report any reasonable adjustments required in order to ensure equal access and outcome.

Many staff may not have been subjected to recruitment processes for some time and may therefore be in need of offers of support in terms of interviewing skills and potentially more general support where they are at risk of losing their jobs. We would therefore want any interview timetable to be reflective of the need for such support to be offered and there are internal courses offered in this area. It may be sensible to assess the demand for these in advance of referring the final proposal to Corporate Committee so as to maximise opportunities for staff to prepare themselves.

Who will be on interview panels for each post? Will attempts be made to ensure all panels have a gender and ethnicity balance?

What is the timeline for implementation of each level, is it assumed that the top tier will need to be in place before other recruitment processes can take place? We would be concerned this could lead to lengthy delays if it became necessary to interview external candidates for the PO8 posts.

**Response** – Staff will be informed of the type or requirement of any testing before the recruitment process begins. However, any testing will be relevant to the post requirements and can be agreed as appropriate in advance with Unison.

Staff have been informed, through team briefs and other communication tools of the offer of corporate support in advance of any restructure and recruitment process. I can confirm that some staff have taken up this offer. However, it is acknowledged that it may have been some time since staff have been interviewed and this will be considered during the decision process. I can confirm that the panel make-up will follow expected council guidelines to achieve the right balance.

The recruitment process will be initiated immediately following the decision at the Corporate Committee and the proposal is for a parallel approach of top down and bottom up recruitment.

**Comment - Voluntary redundancies/Avoidance of Compulsory Redundancies** - We recognise that the department has made strenuous attempts to avoid compulsory redundancies during this process. However it is our practice to re-emphasise our absolute opposition to compulsory redundancies when commenting on reductions. Aside from favourable consideration of requests for VR in areas of reduction we would emphasise the need to view favourably any proposals from staff to reduce hours or job share etc.

We would seek an assurance that all requests will be responded to in advance of any recruitment to stay processes being commenced and that where staff ask to leave early rather than serving notice this will be facilitated.

**Response** – Requests will be responded in advance of the recruitment and consideration of leaving dates will be on an individual basis.

**Comment – Ringfencing** - We would seek clarity on the number of post-holders in each ring-fence as this information is not included in the proposals, it would also be helpful to be clear where post-holders are in multiple ring-fences.

We are assuming that the intention will be so far as possible to minimise the number of interview/selection processes staff in multiple ring-fences will need to take part in? It would be helpful if this and the expression of interest processes could be explained to both UNISON and staff in advance of the process commencing.

We are unclear what the proposed order of ring-fencing is and whether recruitment to posts where there are no (or insufficient) candidates will fit into this process. We raise this as clearly success in such posts could reduce or eliminate the need for ring-fencing. The obvious posts that fall into this category are the Assistant Heads of Service (1 candidate for four posts) and the three IT Officer posts that do not have substantive post-holders.

Also we would request clarity on whether staff will be required to express an interest in all posts for which they are ring-fenced. If this were the case we have some concerns with regard to this approach since some posts are significantly different to those staff currently occupy.

**Response –** The numbers of postholders for each ringfencing is as follows:

<b>Ringfence Post</b>	<b>Number of Postholders</b>
Assistant Head of Service	1
Service Manager	32
Appeals and Submissions Officers	30
Workforce Demand Officer	41
Senior Practitioner	38
Service Assistants	58
Snr Administrative Officer	20

The following postholders will be in multiple ringfences:

- Benefits and Local Taxation Team Leader
- Subsidy Officer
- Customer Services Team Manager
- Appeals and Complaints Officer
- Stakeholder Liaison Officer
- BLT Officer (Senior)
- Visiting Officer (Senior)
- Admin officer

I can confirm that I wish to minimise the number of interviews for staff. Where this is appropriate one interview may cover more than one post. The expressions of interest will clearly set out where this is possible and communicated in advance of the recruitment process. The recruitment at each level will dictate whether any ringfencing on the other levels is necessary. This can reviewed on an ongoing basis with Unison as each level of recruitment is completed.

Where there is ringfencing and a recruitment process exists then staff who are successful will be offered a post that matches the skills and knowledge required. This should eliminate any concerns that staff will be offered posts that they were unable to fulfil.

### **Comment - Specific Ring Fence Comments**

#### **Assistant Heads of Service**

Please clarify the current grade of the 1 remaining post-holder in this ring-fence, as they are also included in the ring-fence below. Will an internal advert for the other posts be issued at

the same time? Will those applying be entitled to express a preference for one or other of the posts, although the job description is generic there are clearly lead areas in each case.

**Response** – The current grade is PO8 so only one ring-fence is applicable. There are four posts with one postholder in the ring-fence so an internal advert can be issued at the same time and those applying can state a preference of function.

### **Service Managers**

Although the role has been altered it is not fundamentally different from that fulfilled currently. Particularly since the post has a range grade reducing the need for current PO2 postholders to demonstrate that they could act at the higher level role. The key difference is an expectation of more generic functionality, the key knowledge base is largely unchanged and as such we believe a closed ring-fence would be appropriate as opposed to the current one. If voluntary redundancy requests result in there being a match between the numbers of posts the assimilation should be considered assuming staff do not have competing preferences for specific posts at this level. In the latter case we would suggest a closed ring-fence selection process could still be legitimately used to resolve who obtained which job within the ring-fence.

**Response** – The role of a manager or team leader has not changed in that the posts manage staff within functions. However, the key change is the generic working that will be required following the integration of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services. How we manage the customer demand will change as customer enquiry resolution will be addressed at the first point of contact. This is a fundamental change that requires a different approach to customers and should be reflected in the appointments through open ring-fencing.

### **Support & Development Officers**

We have no objection to the proposed assimilation of the postholders indicated. We would however propose an additional assimilation of the current Subsidy Officer into one of the remaining vacancies on the team. This request is based upon a comparison of the Subsidy posts job description and the new role. There is a large degree of overlap covering areas such as provision of training, management statistics, production of policy and procedure notes, financial and performance monitoring etc. We consider that based on a point to point comparison this would most closely resemble the role of the subsidy officer particularly since it also refers to subsidy work as well.

**Response** - The role of subsidy is being widened to reflect the importance of minimising subsidy loss and will predominantly reside in the control and compliance team. Therefore, any comparison should be with the Senior Practitioner post within the control and compliance team where assimilation would not be relevant due to the generic aspects of this post.

### **Appeals & Submissions Officers**

We received a number of conflicting views with regard to this proposed ring-fence: Some staff were in agreement with it while a number of post-holders felt the post was fundamentally that of the current submissions officers and that as such an assimilation should be offered to those staff currently fulfilling this role. This opinion was particularly based upon the fact that the representation of the Council at Hearings is now a clear part of the role whereas previously it was only required at the top end of the range grade. We would suggest further consideration is given to this ring-fence. In view of the close similarity between it and the posts undertaken in the complaints and appeals team we are concerned that an open ring-fence is not the appropriate method of recruitment since it is clearly fundamentally an unchanged job we would propose it be amended to a closed one. Please clarify the number of post-holders in the ring-fence.



**Response** - The current role is one of Appeals and Complaints Officers on a range grade. The grade dictates the type of work undertaken and therefore the skills and knowledge required. Although the submissions element remains most of the remaining duties have changed therefore open ringfencing would be appropriate. However, I note the comments and am willing to have a discussion in this respect.

### **Workforce Demand Officer**

As the post is completely different we have no objection to the use of an open ring-fence since there is no obvious current member of staff who is a match. We would suggest potentially this post is dealt with after the main ring-fences. If there is nobody who is displaced then the post could be released for an internal advert and/or referred to the deployment officer.

**Response** - Agreed

### **Senior Practitioner**

We would suggest this ring-fence be completed after those for Service manager, appeals and submissions officers, and support and development since for some staff involved it would represent a downgrading. Although the role has some variation we believe it could justifiably be drawn as a closed ring-fence rather than an open one. Will staff be able to express a preference between the teams? How will applicants be assessed as the roles cover three distinct disciplines?

**Response** - The sequencing of recruitment is recognised as important and will be considered to ensure there is limited disruption to staff going through the process. The ringfencing has been reviewed following consultation and agreed that a closed ringfence is more appropriate where staff can express a preference to work in a particular function. Staff will be offered posts that match the skills and knowledge required for each function.

### **IT Officer**

We have no objection to the proposed assimilation. With regard to the other vacant posts our view would be that once it has been established there is no fall out from existing candidates at SO1 and above that the post be released as an internal advert. This would facilitate applications from the candidates who have been acting into this post for a sustained period.

**Response** - Agreed

### **Service Officers**

We have no objection to the proposed assimilations please confirm how staff will be allocated to teams and whether they will be able to express a preference.

**Response** - Staff will be able to express a preference to work in a desired function and this will be considered when allocations are determined. Customer demand and knowledge matches will also contribute to the decision.

### **Visiting Officer**

We feel this ring-fence is incorrect. These posts are distinct within the structure and are largely unchanged from the current posts. As such we believe the three substantive postholders should be assimilated to the new posts. Additionally as the post involves significant outside work we do not feel it would be a suitable alternative employment opportunity for staff that are currently office based.

**Response** - Agreed - following consultation comments these posts can be assimilated.

### **Service Assistant**

We can see no justification for this ring-fence being treated as “open” if there is notionally an excess of staff then a closed ring-fence should be utilised, as there is no evidence that staff at this level would not be appointable. As with the Service Officer role the duties covered are largely unchanged. It would be our view that these posts should only be subjected to a ring-fence after all other vacancies have been completed as it is highly likely that sufficient candidates would be successful elsewhere (particularly at Service Officer and IT Officer level) to make the numbers of candidates and posts match. If this were the case then we would say assimilation would be appropriate. If selection is necessary then we would suggest it is limited to interview rather than a test.

**Response – Agreed.**

### **Senior Admin Officer**

We have not seen the job description for this role so cannot comment fully on the ring-fence proposal. However as we have commented with the visiting officer post we feel the ring-fence is incorrectly drawn, as we do not feel the visiting officers should be included. As with the service assistant we would expect this ring-fence to be one of the last in the sequence. By doing so the need to consider Complaints and Appeal and BLT Seniors may well have been removed. We assume the open nature of the ring-fence is based upon the fact that current Admin Staff (only in post in Customer Services) do not supervise? We would question whether offering the post to a specialist such as a complaints and appeals officer would be appropriate offer of alternative employment as it would be likely to involve a high level of “deskilling”

**Response -** The post of Senior Administration Officer has been added to the structure following feedback during consultation. The job description has been evaluated and is with you for comment. The post is subject to open ringfencing due to the supervisory role that is not within the current administrative posts. Agreed that the sequencing of recruitment is recognised as important and will be considered to ensure there is limited disruption to staff going through the process.

### **PA to head of service**

Could you confirm when the support function review on admin/PA support will be taking place? If it is imminent I would suggest there might be a case for allowing the postholder to be considered for the Admin Senior Posts?

**Response -** The support function review is being prepared and the PA role will be considered during this process. However, there is an expectation that a PA role for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services will still be required.

### **Internal Vacancies**

**Comment -** It is clear that after the process is completed there will be a number of vacant posts. These would either arise from a failure to fill posts or because even after doing so there are remaining vacancies.

Since it is clear there will be a deficit of post-holders at the Service Officer grade UNISON would propose an additional ring-fence be created allowing current BLT Assistants the opportunity to apply in the first instance along with any other post-holders within one grade. (This may well include any displaced post-holders at SO1 for example.)

Other than this we would be supportive of internal adverts for vacancies, a decision would have to be taken whether such internal adverts were limited to BLT/Customer Service staff or opened up more widely. In advance of such an advert occurring it would be necessary to ensure there are no current staff in the deployment pool that are within the one grade band of the relevant posts as they would have priority over internal candidates. I am also aware

for example that Strategic Housing has impending reductions and that there are post-holders there with Benefits or Customer Service experience.

**Response** - Following the recruitment exercise there are expected to be a number of vacancies across the service. The additional ringfence suggested can be accommodated and agreed that any remaining vacancies are advertised across Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services following consideration of the redeployment pool.

### **Visiting Officer post – additional comments**

**Comment** - We are concerned that uniquely among the scale graded posts there is no reflection or opportunity for range grade progression in the role. In any case we believe the role to be under-graded at Scale 5 and await a copy of the finalised job evaluation that has yet to be supplied. We note that many of the additional duties included at Scale 6 in the Service Officer role are incorporated into the Visiting Officer post.

**Response** - Predominantly the role of Visiting Officer is to either obtain information or to confirm that the information held is correct. Determinations regarding complex cases are handled by Officers following the return of information and are generally not made with the customer present. This is reflected in the grade, however, I am willing to consider the points made and review the job description.

### **Implementation timetable**

**Comment** - Assuming Corporate committee endorses the report on the 27<sup>th</sup> September could you confirm the process and likely timeline for implementing both the new jobs and new grades where appropriate? In particular the order for recruitment process and interviews.

We would be happy to meet and discuss the issues raised in more detail and to engage in an ongoing dialogue through the implementation period.

We would also ask that we meet urgently to review the situation with regard to potential voluntary redundancy applications.

**Response** - Following the Corporate Committee endorsement recruitment will commence immediately and expected to be finalised by mid November 2011. The sequence will be key to minimise a lengthy period of recruitment and disruption to the individual. I am encouraged by the opportunity to continue with the ongoing dialogue to resolve any outstanding issues.