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COMMUNITY HOUSING SERVICES RESTRUCTURE – UNISON DEPUTATION TO CORPORATE COMMITTEE 24/11/2011

We do not believe that it is necessary for management to make the cuts that are proposed in this restructure. We have alternative proposals that we believe could avoid at least some of the cuts having to be made, which would avoid compulsory redundancies and the costs associated with this. These proposals are as follows:

- 1) Management have proposed to cut the admin staff from 13 posts to 10. However, we understand that one of these employees has already found an alternative post, and three staff want to reduce their hours from 36 to 18 hours a week. This would leave 10.5 posts, only half a full time post over management's target. We believe that management should agree to this proposal, as it would;
 - Keep skilled and experienced staff within the service.
 - Avoid compulsory redundancies and the costs of this.
 - Avoid the stress of putting staff through a selection process.

We believe that there may be further scope for reducing the number of staff in this ringfence through alternative opportunities that have become available, but this is not yet certain. If this was the case, then the remaining staff in the team would actually be below management's target of 10 posts. However, if this did not happen, it would not be reasonable to have a selection process to reduce only half a post, particularly when we are proposing other ways that savings could be made, which are below.

- 2) A Service Operations Manager post (PO5) has been created in the restructure. Management should not be creating such a highly graded post when they are trying to make savings, and they should abandon the creation of this post.
- 3) There is a vacant Head of Housing Needs and Lettings post. This has been vacant for some time, so we would question whether it is actually needed. This post could be deleted.
- 4) Management are proposing to delete 4 PO1 posts (1 x Tenancy Support Officer, 1 x Income Recovery Officer, 1 x Lettings Officer and 1 x Visiting Officer – currently vacant). These will be replaced with 3 senior posts (Senior Tenancy Support Officer, Senior Income Recovery Officer and Senior Visiting and Lettings Officer) which will be graded at PO2. This will increase the amount of work that the remaining PO1 staff in each team have to do, at a time when they are already under huge pressure. There will also be the risk of compulsory redundancies, as the PO1 staff are in open ringfences for the senior posts. In addition, the posts will cost more as they are at a higher grade, and they take capacity away from the front line. We believe that the proposal to delete the PO1 posts and create senior posts should be dropped, in order to avoid compulsory redundancies, save money and keep staff at the front line where they are needed.

UNISON also has an issue with the fact that management seem to be proposing to use all available selection methods for each ringfence. We believe that this is excessive and will put staff under unnecessary stress. We have a particular issue with the use of testing for the Service Support Officer posts, which is the new name for Administrative Officers, although the duties have not changed. We object to testing for this post for the following reasons:

- 1) Testing should only be used where there are new jobs or existing jobs that are changing significantly, and the Reorganisation Policy backs this up. This is not the case here.
- 2) The level of skills required for the job do not justify testing.

- 3) It *could* be reasonable to test new staff on computer skills, literacy/numeracy, etc. in order to check that they have the required skills for the post. However, this is a closed ringfence, and the only reason for having a selection process is that there are more people than posts. Management have clearly stated that the tests will be based on the requirements of the person specification. In a closed ringfence, it should be assumed that all staff meet the requirements of the person specification. If they do not, then this should have been taken up before the restructure using the available procedures, including providing support and training. Therefore, we believe that testing of the type that management have proposed is unacceptable in a closed ringfence.
- 4) Admin posts were reduced in Adults earlier this year, and only interviews were used. Also, a staff member in Housing was appointed to a completely new post of Technical Support Officer in the last restructure and did not have to sit a test.
- 5) Interviews are a well-established selection method for situations such as this, and we believe that this should be the method that management use. In order to compromise with management, staff have also said that they would be willing to undergo a management assessment of factual information (supervision/appraisal records, etc.) as an additional selection method, even though it would be unusual to have both this and an interview.

Chris Taylor
UNISON
22/11/2011