

## **Council Budget Update Report to Salford City UNISON Branch Committee. January 2011**

The first detailed report was given to the Joint Trade Unions on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Attached is part of the report by the City Treasurer, John Spink, at 9am, which is the tracker that shows the cuts identified and put to the trade unions as proposals. The trade unions met again with the Council again at 2pm after we had drawn up additional questions based on from my e-mail (attached) to Debbie Brown.

They responded the e-mail and some additional questions at the 2pm session (attached) and again on the afternoon of 21<sup>st</sup> December, where additional information was supplied (attached)

It was agreed that due the constant evolving nature the Budget situation that we would meet with the employers every Friday between 10am and 11.30am and a pre-meeting of the joint unions who attend these meetings at 9am same day.

Whilst we have had answers to most if not all of the questions we have put, there has been a sharing of information with us that has shaped our further queries and comments. The Joint Unions have not agreed to any proposals but have sought to make the employer think seriously about the impact the erosion of terms and conditions would have on staff morale and the economic impact on council workers who have been hit by pay freezes, rising prices, inflation and increases in VAT and fuel costs to name but a few.

We are informed that there is now an "ask Barbara" Intranet Q&A site and that HR have set up a Creating Capacity Team of 3 HR officers to oversee, VER and VS requests and no doubt the impact on any job losses that may occur in respect of redeployments. The council are still "committed" to avoid compulsory redundancies and we are yet to be given a copy of the Section 188, intent to make redundancies, which will kick start the 90 days notice, so it is looking likely that many of the proposed job losses may fall out of the 2010-11 year into the 2011-12 year financially.

Part of the difficulty of preparing a response to the employers proposals is the ever shifting nature of this. When we met on the 15<sup>th</sup> December the figure of £47 Million budget cuts (difference between what the Government expects the Council's Spending Power to be and what the Council believes it needs to spend. At that meeting we were presented with £19 Million of identified cuts. On the 21<sup>st</sup> December we were presented with a report that said had identified a further £4 (now £7Million) Added together this still leave under half of the cuts yet to be identified.

And here lies the problem. Part of their cuts proposals include the widely reported plans to cut the Essential Car User allowance, Compensation Scheme, introduce Car Parking charges and remove travel allowances for displaced staff. When we have asked for examples of how the T&C cuts would enable a reduction in job losses, we have yet to see any figures and it is probably because they have yet to identify the full figure which has now gone up to over £49 Million.

This makes a joint trade union response extremely difficult to give, because quite simply we do not yet have the full picture. The Council insist that they are going to have set the budget by mid

February but I suspect that may shift if they have not found the full figure by then and a Full Council, sometime in March, my attempt to approve their Budget for 2011-12.

So where does that leave us. I have drafted a motion which I urge you to support. Whatever Industrial action our members may be asked to vote for and support if agreed, will be dependent on abiding by the best practice and procedures that govern a ballot for action, whether that be action short of strike action or strike action itself. Whether it will be the whole of the membership in opposition to the Cuts or selective action against cuts around particular Term & Conditions. Before we can do that we have to have a consultative ballot and the Region will not consider our request until we have done so.

The key discussion we need to be having now is preparation for the Consultative Ballot and ensuring that this report is as widely circulated to our members as possible so that they have all the facts and figures to hand to enable them to respond properly.

Some of our members want to fight the attack on our Terms & Conditions some members seem to think an across the board pay reduction would enable us to save jobs. We do not all share the same approach and that is also why a consultative ballot helps gauge a better picture in what areas our members would be willing to, if called upon, take industrial action of some kind.

A failure to agree has not yet been reached but may not be far off. We will not be led by the Council's timetable or be railroaded into knee-jerk responses that are ill-thought out. I urge you listen to the Regional Officers guidance in these matters as we will only succeed in any defence of our members if we remain united on our approach and one that cannot be challenged legally either by the employer or a dissatisfied member/s.

Ray Walker

Branch Secretary

18<sup>th</sup> January 2011.