

Appendix B

Our Ref: CF

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T18 Staff Consultation and Senior Management Structure Staff Consultation

West Devon Branch has sought the views of its membership regarding the consultations and as a result has the following comments to make:

Senior Management Structure

All comments relating to the SMT proposals have been passed to the Council Leader for consideration

UNISON is unable to agree to this being open to external candidates from the start. This seems to conflict with the Council's Managing Organisational Change Policy

Should external people be appointed who will they work for? Is there a policy or some structural diagram to show what posts sit with which council?

The document makes no reference to redundancy issues (unlike the T18 Staff Consultation).

There is no mention of staff that did not get a post being able to apply for other posts within the wider T18 structure. Any salary assessment will need to be subject to and Equality Impact Assessment. How will Members (Councillors) be trained to make any assessments? There seems to be no published scheme for determining the salaries.

T18 Staff Consultation

The report sent to Councillors last year indicated that there would be a Head Count reduction of 24-25% at West Devon. Is this still the case or is it envisaged that the number of people directly employed by West Devon could be a lot less? If so, has this been communicated formally to Councillors?

There are no proposed changes to the anticipated redundancy levels at each Council

Staff in Phase 1a are telling us that they are becoming anxious and rather stressed. Is there easily accessible support available to them and will facility time be provided to access this support? Will this then be available to the

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rest of the staff?

Support will be given to help people applying for posts in Phase 1a in June. It will be available to other people in the lead up to the other selection processes at the later phases. Time off to attend these sessions will be given and staff encouraged to attend

A staff profile obtained by both UNISON Branches roughly 12 months ago showed that approximately 2/3 of people employed at West Devon are female and at South Hams this is nearer 1/3. Has this been taken into account within Equality Impact Assessments?

The workforce profiles of both Councils have been taken into account when considering the equality impact assessments. It is also worth noting that approximately 150 predominantly male employees at South Hams from Environment Services are out of scope of the T18 programme, significantly altering the gender profile of the in-scope employees at South Hams

Members have raised concerns with regard to the Strategy and Commissioning Group. What is it? What is its remit? When will information be published on this?

Once the SMT structure has been agreed we can carry out the detailed design work that will provide further information on staffing requirements and the activities that will be carried out in the Strategy and Commissioning team.

UNISON Members felt very strongly that slotting in of some people could occur. We feel that the Council should undertake a risk analysis on this as soon as possible. It has been drawn to our attention that the Mobile Locality Officer role has been further detailed for Parking and seems to be identical to that of our current Parking Officer post.

We have noted the risk identified, but comment that as a result of the new way of working, roles will be different in the new operating model.

Blue Printing – lots of our members had little or no involvement in this at all. This has raised concerns that any modelling has been done based on the South Hams DC ways of working and not that at West Devon. How was it decided who was to do this blue printing and should it have been fully integrated across both councils?

Employees at both councils have been involved in the Blue Printing and will be involved in the detailed design work. There has been no bias towards either council and care was taken to take into account incidences where there is a difference in the current ways of working

Members are concerned about how functions (some of which are statutory) currently delivered by staff who specialise in the various work areas will continue to be provided to the same high standard. This needs to be

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explained in detail because the generic job descriptions do not provide the answers.

We intend to create Community of Practice Purpose, Responsibilities, Skills and Qualifications (PRSQ) document for each Community of Practice

This document will include a section on the skills, experience and qualifications etc that will be required to work within the Community of Practice

We intend to produce these documents for Phase 1a before end of June and to complete work on the remaining Communities of Practice as the detailed design work for phase 1b and 2 is completed

Redundancy issues are a major concern. If staff are unsuccessful in obtaining a post or wish to take redundancy, they will be given an Effective Date of Termination (EDT). Should some of these staff be asked to stay on for longer to aid the transition or for other reasons, is there to be a policy to cover this so that everyone is clear on the consequences of accepting changes to their EDTs?

In certain circumstances we may mutually agree to extend the effective date of termination originally set out in a redundancy notice. Where this occurs we will ensure there is no loss of any entitlement to a redundancy payment

What is the timescale for decisions regarding Voluntary Redundancy Applications?

SMT will consider VR requests during May and June and we will enter into discussions with affected staff to try and agree a mutually convenient termination date where the request is granted

Will staff retained passed their original EDT receive leave, accrued pension and should an employment anniversary be reached, will this be honoured?

Yes.

How will the current Redundancy and Redeployment Policy be used?

We have placed all staff within scope of the Programme at risk of redundancy and, in effect, will be offering redeployment into roles in the new model as an alternative to redundancy

We are proposing to draw a ring fence around all the roles in the new model for all employees within scope of the programme. Employees will be able to express an interest in any role, subject to meeting the minimum requirements of the job

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How quickly will those staff requesting flexible retirement receive a decision?

SMT will consider Flexible retirement requests during May and June. People retain the right to request flexible retirement at any time in accordance with current policy

Our members have raised concerns regarding agile working. Will the Okehampton Customers Services Centre be retained?

Yes

No mention of it is made in the document. If so, could there be more touch-down facilities provided? If not how will residents in the north of the Borough have face-to-face contact with the council?

More touch down facilities may be available. The site will be retained to enable residents in the north of the Borough to have face-to face contact with the Council

Many current staff are unable to work from home due to lack of space

There are no assumed numbers for home working and we acknowledge that for some people, home working might not be an option. Alternative places of work may be found or employees may choose to apply for roles that are permanently based in an office location

Very poor broadband speeds and a lack of mobile signal is also a major issue for our members.

How will IT support be provided for staff working from home or other possible office space? If there is a major problem there is not necessarily going to be an alternative pc, laptop, tablet to use.

The revised home working policy will include details of the bandwidth requirements to enable home working

The issue of broadband and mobile coverage around the districts is one that is driving the touchdown approach, where staff will be able to go to set locations and log on using secure Wi-Fi

The Allowance of £18 is thought to be very low especially where staff currently have a very basic level of broadband and heating costs are potentially high. Is the Council willing to consider paying more should the costs be higher to the member of staff? HMRC states that this can be done.

We have revisited this proposal but feel it is an appropriate level of compensation for staff that are designated as home workers. We will manage any exceptional circumstances as and when they arise

How will Health and Safety checks be carried out on people's homes?

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In accordance with a revised home worker policy that will take into account appropriate advice and guidance

Many staff either cannot drive or have no access to a vehicle because of cost or may be in a one car household and they walk to the office, get a lift or use Public Transport.

For people in this situation, home working or flexible working should be an advantage. If someone accepts a role that is based at another fixed location, e.g. Follaton House in Totnes, we are proposing a disturbance allowance to help with the cost of additional travel. We may agree to pay the allowance in a lump sum if this helps a person purchase a car or public transport season ticket

Some staff currently have roles where they are provided with vehicles. Will this continue or would those people be required to obtain a vehicle should they wish to apply for a “similar” post in the new structure?

We anticipate that council vehicles will be provided for some people where it is operationally required

Will Shift Allowances, Standby Allowances etc be paid for those roles that will be affected? There is no information on this within the document.

We will propose a new policy on premium payments for negotiation

Many members here have carer responsibilities and potentially travelling 74 miles a day which takes about two hours is going to make those carer duties very difficult to do? Has this been taken into account in an Equality Impact Assessment and if so, with what outcome?

We understand that some people have carer responsibilities and that travelling to Totnes every day would be difficult. However, for the majority of roles, people will be able to work flexibly and will not be required to travel long distances every day. For the purposes of the Equality Impact Assessment we acknowledge that there is the opportunity for people to avoid the necessity to travel long distances by working flexibly or by seeking appointment to a role that is fixed in a particular location

Our members have concerns regarding the Designated Administrative Centre referred to in the document as being Follaton. If this is the case West Devon staff will not be able to claim any mileage and could be financially disadvantaged.

This was an unintended consequence and for the purposes of the travel policy we will set the administrative centre as being the closest of Kilworthy or Follaton to the employee’s home address. This will mean that people based nearer to Tavistock will not have to deduct the normal mileage from home to Totnes whenever they visit an external site

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Is Kilworthy to be designated as an Administrative Centre for mileage purposes?

Yes. Please see above

UNISON maintains the position that the proposed travel policy is a contractual matter and requires a 90 day consultation.

Noted. We will amend the travel policy with the proposed changes and open negotiations with the unions

The Proposed 40% Disturbance Allowance has been queried by our members who might have to work from Follaton. It is felt that it will not come anywhere near the amount needed to cover the additional costs of travelling which for some staff will be nearly 100 miles a day. What about the additional travel time that these people will have to undertake? Is this to be taken into account? When staff were required to transfer from Okehampton to Tavistock, there was a time allowance given as well, negotiated under Appendix E.

We have revisited this and are prepared to increase the payment to 100%

If somebody would prefer to take the allowance as a one-off lump sum to help purchase a vehicle or pay for a public transport season ticket we are prepared to reach an agreement on the appropriate level of allowance paid

We do not propose to allow any time for travel

Is there an Equality Impact Assessment relating to the assessment centre process and also the job levels and salary ranges? Please can this be published?

We will publish EIA on proposed changes to the Travel and Subsistence Policy, the proposed approach to Selection, the Job Level Assessment and resulting pay and grading structure

What provision is there for taking on new staff in what could be thought of a specialism with a view to training them and career progression? Examples would be Trainee Planners, ICT, and Environmental Health Officers.

We propose a further level of Specialist at Level 6 that will be appropriate for people entering a profession. We will be looking at succession planning and talent management as part of Workforce Planning for the new host organisation

UNISON will not be able to agree to any pay and grading scheme that does not meet the requirements of our Head Office Legal Team with regard to Equality.

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Noted and understood. We have carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on the Job Level Assessment and have not identified any areas for concern. We will also carry out an assessment once people are appointed to the new model to make sure there is no unforeseen indirect discrimination

Members feel the Assessment Process idea is very light on information bearing in mind that some staff are due to go through this process in the very near future.

Noted. We will shortly be in a position to discuss the selection proposals further

Please confirm UNISON will be fully consulted on proposals for the assessment process.

Yes, we will discuss our proposed approach to selection with UNISON

It is not clear how specialists would be catered for in the Assessment Process. How would they be selected? What are the criteria? When will this be published?

Will the assessment process be the same for all posts/roles? If not how can scores be carried forward by staff unsuccessful in 1a or 1b?

Please see above. We will discuss our proposals with UNISON shortly

Certain Council roles require specialist training and qualifications in order that the function can be carried out correctly and legally. These are not necessarily Specialists as shown in the Job Descriptions provided. How will this be accommodated?

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How will any Assessment Process clearly take into account past performance? Appraisals were felt by members to be far from a reliable source of such information.

Would staff obtaining the highest scores in an Assessment Process be automatically offered the posts in preference to those deemed to have "passed" but with a lower score?

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How will the pass score be determined/calculated? Will it be the same for all posts?

Can staff apply for any role they consider suitable or is there any sort of restriction?

Please see above. We will discuss our proposals with UNISON shortly

Members are worried that posts could be made part-time to save money. Please confirm that posts will be full-time unless staff request part-time working or Job Share.

There is no intention to make roles part-time to save money. However there may be part-time roles available

Could staff who were unsuccessful in getting a post for whatever reason apply for any posts advertised externally (if suitable)? If so would any reference to their previous assessment process score be made or would they be treated like any other external candidate?

It would be open for people who have left the Council's employment to apply for any externally advertised posts. In that event, they would be considered an external candidate and any score from an internal assessment process would not be taken into account

Would external applicants to any post be put through the same assessment centre as existing staff?

We have not yet decided how we would recruit externally to any vacant posts but we would be very likely to design a process that tested the same behaviours

Many Job Descriptions appear to be almost identical yet appear to be different scales. How will these actually be differentiated?

The job descriptions draw a distinction between different salary levels by identifying the appropriate knowledge and skills required and other factors

How will staff on maternity/ paternity/adoption leave or wishing to change their hours due to carer responsibilities be accommodated?

Everyone will be asked to state their preferred working hours and we will try to facilitate this wherever possible. We will also take into account a statutory request for flexible working

The Branch looks forward to receiving your written responses to the points raised.

Yours faithfully

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Claire Fryer
Branch Secretary