

Hacked Off!

The Voice of Hackney Workers

Vol. 2. Issue 13.
January 2010

Be Prepared!

As we walk towards the light of a new decade 2010 promises to be a long and arduous year for members as the Council attempts to find 10% cuts across the Borough.

After the relative calm of 2009 which saw fewer restructures than in previous years the new year has started with a bang with restructures being announced in Parking and Markets and also Communications this week.

So why do we have to bear the brunt of the selfishness and greed of speculators in the City when all we are guilty of in Hackney is working extremely hard over the past nine

years to turn the borough around from a basket case it was at the turn of the century, incapable of running education or housing properly, into a beacon of excellence in the East End!

To compound matters further the Council has announced in true pre-election style that council tax will be frozen for another year which translates in real terms to a cut in revenue raised from the tax.

This means that on top of the 10% sacrifice being made in departments up and down the Council there will be less money to go around from income generation streams.

So what should members be doing to protect themselves against redundancy as the recession hits the public sector's poor relation?

Firstly members should ensure that they review their job description so that if and when a restructure is announced in your section you are prepared.

Jobs naturally evolve over time as processes and regulations change therefore it is important to ensure that the job descrip-

tion you have reflects accurately the role that you undertake.

Look at what could be done better in your section and tell your boss so that they can include your proposals in any business cases they make.

Speak to service users and find out what they like about the services your section offers.

We often forget when campaigning to keep



jobs the impact that losing staff will have on the Council's ability to meet the needs of service users. If we can show that by cutting services the public will suffer it will make it more diffi-

cult for the Council to argue against us. Speak out! If you don't think your manager is right then tell them, they have a duty to listen and act on your concerns.

Put your concerns in writing and don't get fobbed off with a lacklustre response.

Keep us informed, if you are hearing rumours about cuts in your area then tell us so we can be more prepared for any proposals if they come.

Ask your colleagues to join Unison and if you're not a member then join up today. The facts speak for themselves, staff in departments with a high level of membership experience less problems at work and are more likely to be able to resist job cuts. The Council has improved, no doubt about it and has done so because of your hard work. It would be great if management and councilors stood up to government and said it's your mess you sort it out but they're not going to so we have to rely on ourselves to resist unnecessary cuts if and when they come. So don't get caught out, make sure you are prepared for what promises to be a difficult year.

HACKNEY



**Room 40 Town Hall
Mare street E8 1EA
Tel: 020 8356 4062/71**

**DON'T
FORGET
THE
AGM**

12:00—2:00

Wednesday

3rd February 2010

Town Hall Chambers

**Refreshments
Provided**

**Time off has been
agreed for all Council,
Hackney Homes and
Trust members*.**

***members should inform their
manager that they wish to at-
tend so that cover can be ar-
ranged**

Election Results

Nominations have now been received for the following branch officer posts:

Secretary	Matthew Waterfall	Elected Unopposed
Chair	Brian Debus/Lee Ray (Job Share)	Elected Unopposed
Treasurer	Kathy Hamilton	Elected Unopposed
Health and Safety	Lee Ray	Elected Unopposed
Equalities	Stacy Shalo	Elected Unopposed
International	Valerie Easmon-George	Elected Unopposed



As none of the officer positions have been contested there is no need for a postal ballot. Vacant positions not filled through the nominations system can be contested at the AGM. Members attending the AGM will also be able to vote for the delegates they wish to send to this year's National Delegate and Local Government Conferences and other regional and local committees.

The posts not filled are:

Education Officer
Membership Officer
Publicity Officer
Welfare Officer

Single Status Contracts Latest

In our last issue we reported that in some schools members were being asked to sign new contracts ahead of a single status agreement being signed.

The problem with this is that many members still have old ILEA or Hackney Council contracts which afford staff different and often better terms and conditions than the new contracts being offered by heads in some schools.

As such those staff would, by signing a new contract, be agreeing to new terms and conditions which are actually inferior without consultation.

Since our last edition Unison has had discussions with the Trust on the issue and the Trust has agreed to ask heads not to issue new contracts to any staff before single status negotiations are completed.

In many cases staff do not have a written contract and naturally this is a major concern for the union, however the Trust has confirmed that they will be able to identify the terms and conditions of staff, whether on ILEA or old Hackney contracts, through the payroll system which contains details of any plus payments or allowances that staff currently receive.

This development will hopefully result in new contracts being offered to staff however if you are asked by your head teacher to sign a new contract please contact the Unison office immediately so that we can raise the matter with the Trust and definitely do not sign any contract without first consulting your union.

Pay Claim

The national union has put in a claim for the coming year's pay rise.

The claim for 2010/11 is for a £500 flat rate or 2.5% - whichever is greatest.

So the annual pay debacle begins again and we thought we would highlight a few facts in anticipation of the usual misinformation coming from central government!

1. Every year employers say they can't afford what is asked for and with the recession in full flow perhaps they're right?

What a load of rubbish the fact is that since 1997 Council's have had above inflation settlements from government and this year they are set to get an increase in funding of about 4%.

2. Our pay is already pretty good! Absolute nonsense, the National Joint Council estimates that Council workers earn only 89% of average public sector pay. Workers in equivalent jobs in the NHS, Police and Probation services are paid between £1000 and £2000 more than us!

So they can afford it and we deserve it. All we need to do now is actually do something about it. If you want to find out more about the pay claim or what you can do to campaign for a better deal for Council staff please contact the branch office or www.unison.org.uk

Stressed Out and Angry!



After years of campaigning the Council has agreed to work with unions in drafting up a policy on stress at work.

Stress continues to be the biggest single cause of sickness absence in Hackney, accounting for 25% of all referrals to the occupational health service.

This compares unfavourably with the national average statistics compiled annually by the Health and Safety Executive who confirmed that in 2009 16.7% of days lost to sickness in Britain were due to stress related illnesses.

So why is Hackney Council such a stressful place to work and why has it taken so long for the Council to deal with the matter?

One reason could be that the Council is reluctant to acknowledge that working practices in the Council are stressful because they do not want to admit liability for any personal injury cases brought against them by stressed out workers. Although this is understandable it does nothing to tackle the problem at its source.

Another reason could be that staff are constantly being restructured and so live in constant fear of losing their jobs.

Hopefully the stress policy when written, will go some way towards dealing with the problem however it's no good having a policy on how to deal with stress if the practices that cause the stress in the first place aren't dealt with properly in the first place

Motions

1.0 Organising and Communicating

This AGM is concerned that the level of organisation and communication within the Hackney Unison Branch is insufficient to provide a proper level of protection and service to fully protect the membership.

The Branch is therefore instructed to set up a working party to consider means to rectify this situation and report back to the members no later than the end of May 2010.

The remit of the working party is to look at all areas of organisation and communication within the branch including;

- All new starters to be contacted with recruitment literature within one month of their commencement of employment
- The creation of regular surgeries and/or meetings for all workplaces
- The creation of a complete email list of all members with a view to:
 1. Distribution departmental Unison minutes & information
 2. Distribution of Branch, Staff Side & national information
 3. Replacement (whenever possible) of newsletters etc, currently distributed by post.
- Ensuring that all work areas are covered by named representatives, with a responsibility of keeping in regular contact with the local membership.
- The setting up of a branch website, perhaps in conjunction with other local Unison Branches.
- Publicising the various ancillary benefits of Unison ie insurance etc.
- Considering the criteria of the acceptance of new members under the threat of disciplinary action.

PROPOSED Steve Suff – Youth Offending Team

SECONDED Steve O'Donoghue – Youth Offending Team

2.0 Election of Paid Officials

This NDC believes the Deputy General Secretary, National & Regional Secretaries and National and Regional Heads of Service should stand for election every 5 years.

We recognise that all existing Officers in these posts would not be affected and their current contracts of employment would be respected in full. This change would then only apply when the post became vacant.

To this end we call on the NEC to bring forward proposals and advice on any necessary rule changes to the 2011 Conference to facilitate this democratisation of the Union.

PROPOSED: Brian Debus

SECONDED: Matthew Waterfall

3.0 Industrial Action

This NDC views with concern the the long delays that often occur in members wanting to ballot for industrial action, when in dispute with their employer. On many occasions members have been frustrated and prevented from taking legitimate industrial action. As a result many members have suffered an adverse change to their working conditions.

This has even resulted, in the loss of members.

Advice and guidance from Regional Officers to ensure the correct process is followed is welcome. It still takes at least six weeks with the current employment legislation before official industrial action can take place.

We therefore call on the NEC to write up a guidance note in line with Rule 0 to be issued to all branches and Regional Officers to speed up the process to allow members to take action in good time to defend or advance their conditions of employment.

PROPOSED: Brian Debus

SECONDED: Matthew Waterfall

Amendments to Motions

Any member of the branch may submit an amendment to any of the motions set out in this pamphlet by simply completing the form below and returning it to the branch office no later than 5pm on Monday 25th January. All amendments received by this date shall be included in the AGM agenda. Amendments can also be e-mailed to matthew.waterfall@hackney.gov.uk

Name of Motion

Amendment

Name of Member

Hackney Unison Delegate Nomination Form

Please tick the box(es) of the committees/conferences to be nominated to and return to Hackney Unison, Room 40 Town Hall using the internal post.

Regional Council

The Regional Council meets four times a year, normally in Central London, to make decisions on Unison policy for the Greater London region. Hackney is entitled to send three (3) delegates to this body.

Regional Local Government Committee

This body meets three times a year to discuss and decide on Unison policy relating to local government matters for the Greater London region. Hackney Unison is entitled to send four (4) delegates to this body

Regional Health and Safety Committee

This body meets three times a year to discuss and decide on Unison H+S policy for the Greater London region.

Hackney Trades Council

The Trades Council is the local branch of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and is made up of delegates from all local trades unions. It meets monthly to discuss ongoing campaigns and local trade union matters. Hackney Unison is entitled to send five (5) delegates to this body.

Conferences

The National and Local Government conferences are held once a year and are attended by delegates from every branch in the country. They are the most important decision making bodies for the union and set Unison policy nationally for the coming year. Conference also decides on rule changes to the national rules of the union. The conference is in mid June and is being held this year in Bournemouth. All travel, accommodation and expenses are paid by the union and paid time off is given to delegates by the Council, Hackney Homes and Learning Trust.

National Delegate Conference

The National Delegate Conference decides on national Unison policy for the coming year.

National Local Government Conference

Local Govt Conference decides on national Unison policy relating to Local Government matters

Name and membership number of nominee

Nominated by

Membership no.

Signature

Seconded by

Membership no.

Signature

Contacts

Branch Officers

Welfare Services	Unison Direct	0845 355 0845
Health and Safety	Lee Ray & Tony Jones	020 8356 3445
Education and Training	Branch Office	020 8356 4071
Branch Secretary	Matthew Waterfall	020 8356 4062
Chair	Brian Debus	020 8356 4071
Treasurer	Kathy Hamilton	020 8356 4814

Lead Representatives

Customer and Corporate Services	Lee Ray	020 8356 3445
Private Sector	Peter Coleman	020 8356 4062
Community Services	Brian Debus	020 8356 4351
Children and Young People	Andrew Williamson	020 8356 4786
Neighbourhoods And Regen	Matthew Waterfall	020 8356 4062
Education	Karen Lynn	020 8356 4894
Hackney Homes	Helen Toner	020 8356 2394
Learning Trust	Branch Office	020 8356 4071

Vacancies

Stewards Needed

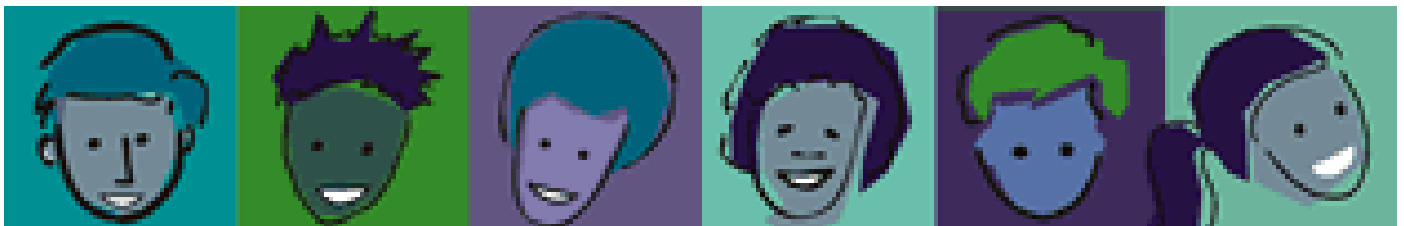
We are always looking for members to take on the role of steward in their workplace. A local steward is the best way to ensure that your managers are meeting their obligations to staff. The role of shop steward is extremely rewarding and allows members to develop skills in advocacy, policy, legislation and health and safety. Stewards get paid time off to carry out their duties and attend excellent TUC accredited training. If you are interested in becoming a steward and would like help from the branch to set up a workplace meeting please call 0208 356 4062

Hold The Front Page

With 3000 readers **Hacked Off!** is a great way to get your message across.

If you have a story we would like to hear from you. We would also like to hear about events or meetings which are happening in Hackney Council or the local area.

Please forward stories and notices to **Hacked Off!**



Need advice? Call Unison Direct on 0845 355 0845

Hackney Unison wishes all our members a very Happy New Year.