

# Hacked Off!

**The Voice of Hackney Workers**

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November 2009

## Best Value Consultants

So the Council is asking us to 'spend it like it's ours' in an attempt to make staff think about how we can save millions over the next couple of years to avoid the worst effects of the cuts which are on their way. This is not an unreasonable request and indeed engenders the spirit of consultation amongst staff which is very welcome.

However as we all put our heads together to try and collectively counter the worst excesses of the bankers in the City, Unison is concerned at the Council's continuing reliance on consultants some of whom earn wages more akin to those of City bankers than the average Council worker.

Regular readers of Hacked Off will know that Unison has been complaining about how much the Council spends on consultants for years. Back in 2005 Hackney spent a cool £45 million on the services of temps and consultants and by 2008 this had risen to £48 million.

To give credit where it's due Councilors have recognised the problem and have told directors to set up 'challenge panels' which review the appointment of temps and consultants regularly, their brief is to reduce the Council's reliance on them.

This is a very positive move, however in some directorates and departments there are so many consultants that the Council simply can't get rid of them because there would be no one left to actually run the section!

Unison understands that the Council will from time to time need to hire the services of experts in a particular field to ensure that one off projects are completed on budget and on time but the Borough should not be hiring consultants to carry out the work of managers.

In many sections across the Council head of service posts are being filled by consultants who get paid, in some cases, more than double the going rate to do nothing more than manage a department.

Other managers and service heads bring in consultants to carry out restructure reports and service reviews.

This is the work of a head of service, it is what they are paid to do!

Why are these managers allowed to use taxpayers' money to employ people on exorbitant wages to do their jobs for them.

Better yet there are also examples of consultants being brought in to identify efficiency savings!

We are at a loss to understand how anyone, no matter how deluded, could honestly believe that you can save money by employing expensive consultants. And why are managers not identifying these savings themselves, why is the

Council paying out twice?

In some ways it's ironic that as Gordon Brown and David Cameron argue about how much to cut there are a significant number of consultants working in the Council earning more than the Prime Minister

Of course there is little point in complaining about something that has already happened as we can do very little about it, the damage has already been done and the money already spent.

What we can do as members is what our employer is asking us to do, make those money-saving suggestions.

If you have a consultant doing a manager's job in your department why not suggest that the Council employ a full time permanent member of staff instead, perhaps the authority could even offer the job internally and give some of us the opportunity to develop ourselves!



**A pile of wasted cash**



**A very fat cat**

**HACKNEY**



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

## Annual General Meeting

12:00 pm—2:00 pm

Wednesday

3rd February 2010

Town Hall Chambers

Come along and have  
your say

Time off for council and  
ALMO members

## EMERGENCY

Criminal Law Advice  
and Representation

Unison operates a 24  
hour helpline on 0800  
587 7530 for urgent  
cases. Just call and  
you'll be referred to one  
of Thompson's criminal  
lawyers

# Childminders Join the Union

Hackney Unison has started representing Hackney Childminders who approached the branch a few months back with some concerns they had about the services they receive from the Learning Trust.

As childminders are self employed we have not represented them before as they do not have the same employment rights as workers, however they are regulated in the same way as other childcare providers such as schools and nurseries and so we have agreed to bargain for them collectively with the Learning Trust on matters which affect them.

The take up has been very positive and with over 200 childminders in Hackney we are confident that the Branch can develop a strong self organised group capable of challenging the problems they face in their work.

So far we have elected a committee of eight childminders, two from each of the four childminding networks operated by the Learning Trust.

One main concern for our newest members relates to the fees they earn from parents with children aged three who

receive 15 hours of free childcare per week from the state. Currently the Learning Trust only pays childminders £3.03 per hour per child for their care and naturally this makes it difficult for childminders to make a decent living.

On top of the low pay childminders are required by law to provide the same curriculum (the Early Years Foundation) as any other childcare provider catering for children of the same age but are expected to pay for all the resources associated with the curriculum out of their own pockets.

This makes it very difficult for them to compete for childcare places with other providers who have much better access to government provided resources.

They believe that the recent changes in childcare brought in a year or two ago by the Government fundamentally undermine their position and also the Government's commitment to provide parents with choice about the childcare they use.

The Branch has now arranged to meet with the Trust early in the new year to thrash out some of these issues and get a better deal for our members.

## Trade Unions Want a Better Deal for Families

Following many months of lobbying by Unison the Council agreed during the summer to review family leave policies. This includes maternity, adoption and paternity leave.

The consultation has been ongoing now for some time and we are confident that we will be able to achieve significant gains for all staff as a result.

Among the proposals from the union side were improved paternity pay from six to ten days at full pay, improved maternity pay for women from 90% for six weeks to full pay for those six weeks, the removal of qualifying periods for new staff, paid time off to attend classes and appointments such as antenatal meetings.

The consultation is now coming to a close with the TU side waiting to hear back from management on what will and will not go into the new policies.

If members wish to get involved in policy review please contact the branch.

Members wishing to view the comments and proposals submitted by the TU side so far can do so by visiting the branch office in the Town Hall

## Single Status Update

Single Status negotiations are rumbling on with unions meeting Trust management last week to discuss the progress being made.

Unison, GMB and UNITE are all working together to secure the best deal we can for our members.

Work has already begun on jointly evaluating the job descriptions of every post in schools in Hackney which with so many jobs is a significant task in itself.

Negotiations have so far been positive although these are early days and there will undoubtedly be areas of disagreement ahead.

Unison has however been alerted by some members in some schools to the unfortunate approach being taken by certain heads.

It has been alleged that some head teachers are telling members of staff that they will have to sign a new contract and agree new job descriptions now.

This is not right and all members who are approached by their heads and asked to sign contracts before negotiations have been completed should refuse to sign and contact the branch immediately so we can report the incidents as they arise to the Learning Trust.

## Branch Chair Ban Latest

The Three Wise Monkeys case continues to rumble on with Hackney Chair Brian Debus due to appeal the decision to ban him from office in January 2010.

Meanwhile the four banned officers are still pursuing a case of discrimination against Unison (on the grounds of their philosophical beliefs) at tribunal in December.

Their case seems to have gained momentum following the ruling last month in the Employment Appeals Tribunal which found that an executive working for a large property company had been discriminated against for the beliefs he held relating to environmentalism.

His employer, Grainger PLC claimed that as Mr Nicholson's views were essentially political he was not protected under discrimination laws.

Mr Justice Burton rejected that view stating that a political belief could also be a philosophical belief. He suggested that "*belief in the political philosophies of Socialism, Marxism, Communism or free-market Capitalism might qualify [for protection]*". In his judgment "*if a person can establish that he holds a philosophical belief which is based on science...then there is no reason to disqualify it from protection by the Regulations.*"

The Unison case resumes in December.

# IMPORTANT NOTICE

The deadline for submission of nominations for the forthcoming branch officer elections has been extended to the **18th December**. The deadline has been extended due to problems with the distribution of the previous edition of Hacked Off in October.

## Timetable of Election 2009/10

Open Nominations:	Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009
Close Nominations:	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
Deadline for Submission of Motions to the AGM:	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
Deadline for Submission of Election Statements:	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
Ballot Opens:	Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
Deadline for Amendments To Motions:	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
Ballot Closes:	Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
Annual General Meeting:	Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2010

## Don't forget to Nominate

The annual branch elections are the cornerstone of democracy in the branch and allow any member from any section to be nominated for a position in the branch from Secretary to Treasurer, Chair to Equalities Officer, all posts are up for election. Trade Union work is extremely rewarding and gives members the opportunity to gain skills in advocacy, bargaining, policy review as well as helping your colleagues in their time of need. Any member interested in standing for a position can do so by completing the form below. If you want to find out more about standing for election, what it entails and what we can do to help you please contact the Branch Secretary on 0208 356 4062



Hackney Local Government Branch

## Nominations for Branch Officers

Hackney Unison Branch invite nominations for the following Branch Officers posts:

**Secretary, Chair, Treasurer, Health and Safety Officer, Publicity Officer, Welfare Officer, Equalities Officer, Education Officer, International Officer and Membership Officer**

If you wish to nominate or second a Unison branch member for any or all of these posts you need to complete the form below.

Only fully paid up members of Unison can stand, nominate or second a candidate. All positions can be held by job sharers.

**Officers Position you wish to nominate to**  
(Please print clearly)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Proposed Candidate**

\_\_\_\_\_

Candidates Unison Membership Number

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Person Proposing**

\_\_\_\_\_

Proposer's Unison Membership Number

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Person Seconding**

\_\_\_\_\_

Seconders Unison Membership Number

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Candidate**

\_\_\_\_\_

**NB:** please print all names clearly using block capitals. If any of the information requested above is not provided or is unclear, the nomination will not be accepted.

Please return completed forms to Hackney Unison, Room 40, Town Hall, Mare Street, E8 1EA.

## 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

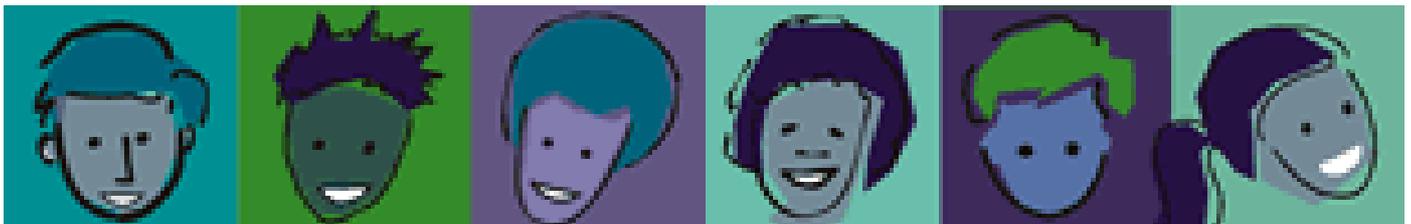
We are always looking for members to take on the role of steward in their workplace. A local steward is the best way to ensure that your managers are meeting their obligations to staff. The role of shop steward is extremely rewarding and allows members to develop skills in advocacy, policy, legislation 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**

**Not a member?**

**Then join the Council's biggest trade union today.**

**You're better off in Unison**