

## EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE FORUM: 29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2017

### HARROW UNISON LG BRANCH REPORT ON UNILATERAL CHANGES TO ROLE PROFILES AND THE UNDERMINING OF THE RECOGNITION AGREEMENT

#### SUMMARY AND DECISION REQUESTED

In July 2017 Harrow UNISON LG Branch were engaged in what was believed to be meaningful consultation and negotiation regarding proposed format and content changes to the role profile template. However, following a CJC meeting and a special meeting to discuss the changes, HR admitted both verbally and in writing that, regardless of our consultation, negotiation and involvement in this matter, and notwithstanding our legitimate concerns and comments, a decision had already been made by other Council forums (CLG and CSB) agreeing the changed format. Not only do these actions represent unilateral changes to our members' contractual terms and conditions but they signify the undermining of this union's Recognition Agreement with the Council and yet a further failure by HR (operated by Bucks CC) to engage with UNISON meaningfully. Harrow UNISON LG Branch are requesting the direct intervention of ECF to return this issue to the negotiating table reversing the decision to enact the changes, a formal apology from HR and a written commitment from Harrow Council that it will honour and abide by all terms within UNISON's Recognition and Procedural Agreement before ACAS intervention is once again sought by this union.

#### CHRONOLOGY

DATE	ACTION	OUTCOME
18/07/2017	UNISON attended CJC meeting and discussed changes to the Recruitment System and role profile template.	UNISON requested a demonstration of the changes, more information and more detail on the proposals. HR agreed to schedule a meeting.
26/09/2017	Meeting attended by HR and UNISON representatives to discuss Recruitment System changes and role profiles.	UNISON committed to formally responding to the proposals in respect of the role profile changes following Branch Executive Committee discussion. However, UNISON were verbally informed that changes will be enacted regardless of our input and involvement (latterly reaffirmed in writing by HR in the email of the 29/09/2017 (Appendix 1)).
29/09/2017	Email received from the HR Organisational Development Business Partner (Appendix 1).	As above, UNISON were informed <i>'that we will continue with our plans to implement the revised recruitment changes based on CLG/CSB decision'</i> .



20/10/2017	UNISON sent correspondence to HR Organisational Development Business Partner (Appendix 2).	UNISON expressed its formal rejection of the changes and its disappointment to be informed, prior to our decision, that the recruitment (role profile changes) had already been agreed.
31/10/2017	Submitted formal ECF report.	Seeking resolution as outlined in 'Summary and Decision required' box.

## REPORT

The subject of this report involves two issues. The first issue relates to the lack of a genuine and justifiable reason behind the proposal by HR to remove and 'streamline' the existing role profile template. The second issue relates to the unilateral decision to implement the change without any meaningful engagement or prior agreement from UNISON thereby compromising the Recognition and Procedural Agreement the Council has with UNISON and straining industrial relations even further.

Firstly, in relation to the role profile issue; in July 2017 UNISON attended a CJC meeting to discuss wider Recruitment Process changes involving IT and proposals to amend the existing role profile template. UNISON representatives requested a demonstration of the Recruitment Process changes, more information and further justification regarding the role profile template changes proposed.

A meeting was duly convened on the 26<sup>th</sup> September whereby members of HR (Bucks CC) and the recruitment supplier Pertemps attended to explain and clarify the proposals in more detail.

In requesting the motive and reasoning behind this proposal, HR representatives explained that role profiles contain many generic statements that unnecessarily add weight to existing job descriptions. In further justifying the proposal, HR representatives added that role profiles need to be reduced because many 'are 12 pages in length'.

UNISON representatives challenged these assumptions and conveyed a rather different reality given that many job descriptions submitted to UNISON for evaluation are normally no more than 3-4 pages in length and are certainly not 12 pages long as quoted by HR. Furthermore, and as is outlined in our letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> October (Appendix 2), UNISON representatives found the streamlining justification presented by HR to be contradictory given that, rather than reduce job description documentation, the proposal will actually increase the total number of role profile documents from one to three (NB- the additional two documents mentioned had not been disclosed to UNISON so we are unable to comment as to the content of these documents).

Not at all convinced by the flimsy justification, UNISON representatives questioned the motive behind the change and further questioned the impact this would have on the GLPC (Greater London Provincial Council) Job Evaluation Scheme in light of HR's recent manipulation and movement away from the application of its due process in Harrow recently (for example see point 3 within Appendix 2). As stated in



our letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> October and in summary, the Branch Executive Committee rejected the change as unnecessary, unjustified and took umbrage with the way in which this matter had been presented to Harrow UNISON LG Branch by HR as fait accompli given that it had already been agreed by other Council forums without our inclusion or involvement.

This leads to the second issue of the report for ECF decision and it relates to the unilateral decision to implement the change without any meaningful engagement or prior agreement from UNISON. As members of ECF will be fully aware, Harrow Council must respect and honour this union's Recognition and Procedural Agreement. This Agreement covers collective bargaining arrangements and states that information for consultation purposes should be supplied and meaningful consultation with trade unions will take place before decisions are taken (see Section 15 of the Agreement).

Harrow UNISON LG Branch is extremely concerned by the order in which this matter has been progressed. It is quite clear from HR's email of the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (Appendix 1) that HR had already sought a decision before consultation and negotiation had taken place with UNISON on this matter, thus undermining and compromising the Recognition and Procedural Agreement the Council has with UNISON and rendering this negotiation process meaningless. As stated in Appendix 2, such breaches and apparent cavalier attitudes to industrial relations will not be tolerated and ECF involvement is required to resolve the matter before ACAS assistance is once again sought.

## **CONCLUSION & DECISION REQUIRED**

In July 2017 Harrow UNISON LG Branch were engaged in what was believed to be meaningful consultation and negotiation regarding proposed format and content changes to the role profile template. However, following a CJC meeting and a special meeting to discuss the changes, HR admitted both verbally and in writing that, regardless of our consultation, negotiation and involvement in this matter, and notwithstanding our legitimate concerns and comments, a decision had already been made by other Council forums (CLG and CSB) agreeing the changed format. Not only do these actions represent unilateral changes to our members' contractual terms and conditions but they signify the undermining of this union's Recognition Agreement with the Council and yet a further failure by HR (operated by Bucks CC) to engage with UNISON meaningfully. Harrow UNISON LG Branch are requesting the direct intervention of ECF to return this issue to the negotiating table reversing the decision to enact the changes, a formal apology from HR and a written commitment from Harrow Council that it will honour and abide by all terms within UNISON's Recognition and Procedural Agreement before ACAS intervention is once again sought by this union.

**AUTHOR: HARROW UNISON LG BRANCH**

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**From:** Welsh, Vincent <vwelsh@buckscc.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 September 2017 15:28  
**To:** Darren Butterfield  
**Cc:** Kitching, John; Reilly, Samantha; tom.whiting@harrow.gov.uk; Guest, Tom  
**Subject:** Harrow Recruitment Project  
**Attachments:** Role Profile Template Final (Aug 17).docx

Dear Darren,

After the CJC meeting in August, Unison colleagues requested a follow up meeting where they could see a demonstration of the Pertemps Recruitment System. The purpose of the demo was to reassure colleagues that the system has the ability to allow applicants for roles at Harrow to upload their CV's and then the system automatically lifts the information out of the CV and drops the information into the relevant fields in the current Harrow application form template. This approach maintains the existing organisational desire for 'blind' recruitment at the shortlisting stage. Whilst allowing greater flexibility to applicants in how they apply for roles and potentially attracting new candidates who have an expectation of using a CV to apply for roles. The only other change to the application process is the decision to move away from specific questions to a personal statement which allows candidates to demonstrate their skills and experience in relation to the essential criteria. During the meeting we were able to successfully demo the system and answer any related questions raised.

The second part of meeting was used to share the CSB and CLG approved changes to the role profile template which supports the move to personal statements and use of Essential and Desirable criteria.

During these discussions Unison colleagues raised the following/points and concerns:

- **Concerns that the revised role profile template would lead to role expectations being missed-** it was explained that information relating specifically to a role is not being removed, rather it will be captured/transferred to the new available sections/headers on the form
- **The removal of generic duties-** although Generic duties have been removed from the template, they will still be available on both the intranet and internet for managers and candidates to see and familiarise themselves with when applying for a role. The rationale for their removal is that these Generic duties are expectations of all employees of Harrow Council regardless of role. The revised role profile focuses on the duties that are specifically required to fulfil the role and the supporting knowledge, skills and experience required. We believe this approach gives candidates a clearer steer of what is essential/desirable criteria for the role which in turn helps them to shape their personal statement appropriately
- **Concerns that change to the template could affect the Job Evaluation process** - The JE process will not be affected by the change as all the role specific information from the previous template will be available on the new template. In addition Employee Relations colleagues who carry out the initial evaluation have questionnaires to support both GLPC and HAY evaluations and liaise directly with the recruiting manager if they have not provided sufficient information to complete an evaluation.

As requested please find attached a copy of the new Role Profile Template for information and sharing with your regional TU representative. **Please note** that we will continue with our plans to

implement the revised recruitment changes based on CLG/CSB decision. We will of course be open to consider any suggestions/feedback that share based on your discussion with your regional representative.

Kind Regards

Vincent Welsh  
Organisational Development Business Partner  
Mobile 07811110744



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*Harrow L.G.  
Branch*

Appendix 2

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*Branch Secretary: Gary Martin*

Vincent Welsh  
Organisational Development Business Partner  
Human Resources  
Civic Centre  
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Harrow  
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Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017

### **Unilateral changes to role profiles**

Dear Vincent

In our meeting of the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017 we discussed changes you were presenting to the role profile template and you were seeking a decision from this union as to our acceptance and agreement of them. Please accept our apology in communicating this to you but as you are fully aware trade union facility time is severely limited, restricting the ability of union representatives to engage with the employer on such important matters. Nevertheless on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017 the Branch Executive Committee met and discussed the issue but rejected the changes for the following reasons listed in no particular order of importance for your immediate attention below;

1. As was conveyed to you in the meeting, there have been several examples by Human Resources over the last 12 months that have witnessed actions and attempts to undermine, manipulate and erode the current GLPC job evaluation process and the application of this in Harrow. UNISON believe the reduction of the role profile template and stripping its content down to a mere page is yet a further attempt to move in a direction away from the fair and transparent use and application of the GLPC scheme, a nationally agreed scheme that is well established in Harrow, historically endorsed and applied by both recognised trade unions and the employer.
2. In the meeting HR presented little justification for change and the only explanation Branch representatives could discern rested on your goal to streamline and reduce role profiles because they are '12 pages in length'. As Branch representatives conveyed, the reality of the situation is substantially different to the flimsy justification offered in the meeting by you given that most role profiles submitted by HR for union evaluation are no more than 3-4 pages, this was a fact demonstrated to you in our meeting. Furthermore, the streamlining justification presented is contradictory and flawed because, rather than reduce job description documentation, it was clearly outlined that this change will actually increase role profile documentation from one document to three. We therefore once again pose




the question, how is this streamlining when only one documents exists now? what value does this change deliver and what is the overall benefit to the employer?

3. As stated in point 1, recently HR have openly endorsed and approved of the manipulation of the GLPC scheme and process. For example, one HR officer in a Peoples Directorate Joint Committee was quoted as saying "*it is correct and appropriate that the employer can choose not to follow processes that conflict with business needs*" in justification of a decision not to abide by an agreed job evaluation grade. We again therefore question the motive in progressing this unnecessary and unjustified change as we see little benefit in removing several generic duties from the existing format unless there is an ulterior motive that has not been disclosed to us.
  
4. In discussing the format change, the Branch Executive Committee wanted to convey serious concern with the contempt displayed in your email of the 29<sup>th</sup> September which shamelessly breaches the Recognition Agreement this union has with Harrow Council informing this union that a decision has already been made regardless of our input and involvement. We refer you to the final paragraph of your email which states '*Please note that we will continue with our plans to implement the revised changes based on CLG/CSB decision*'. Your actions here have not only strained industrial relations with the Council but completely undermined our consultation and collective bargaining rights compromising the collective right of association our members are assured of which, as you will be fully aware, is an enshrined fundamental human right. We are completely astounded but not at all surprised with this cavalier modus-operandi which will not and cannot be tolerated any further.

In summary we reject the changes as unnecessary, unjustified and flawed for the reasons listed within this correspondence. Given the clear breach of our recognition agreement and the contempt shown towards this union as outlined in point 4, we have no choice but to escalate this matter directly to the employer to be discussed at the Employees Consultative Forum in November.

Yours sincerely



Darren Butterfield  
Assistant Branch Secretary  
(on behalf of the Branch Executive Committee)

CC. Branch Executive Committee  
J. Noblemunn, Regional Organiser, Greater London UNISON  
Tom Whiting, Corporate Director  
John Kitching, HR  
Samantha Reilly, HR