

Aberdeenshire UNISON
Response to Consultation on Terms and Conditions Consultations
November 2013

Ballot Results
For 73.3%
Against 26.6
Spoiled 0.1 %

Therefore the majority of respondents to the Consultation accept the proposals.

This being said a significant number of comments were received, a brief summary follows:-

Terms and Conditions

The majority of comments relate to the reduction in unsocial hours and weekend working rates.

Those that responded, remark that even with the pay rise those in receipt of these payments face to lose between £200 and £3000 per year as a result of the cuts to these allowances. Many of these work in 24/7 365 services, predominantly care and are predominantly female workers.

The loss of shift allowance is causing concern for some as again they will lose significant income and will have to do the same job for less, although conversely some are pleased that shift allowance is being removed as at present not all receive it in the same workplace and working alongside colleagues on different rates of pay causes tension.

The buyout of this allowance is again a cause of tension as those that receive it believe the buyout is not enough and those that will not receive it believe those that have been in receipt of shift allowance get paid twice, leaving them losing out twice.

Comments have been made that all the reductions/cuts to premium payments should be brought out; all staff should receive a lump sum based on 18 months of what they will be losing.

The loss of the mileage lump sum again is not popular; respondents would like to see this phased out gradually or bought out on the same principles as shift allowance.

The increase to 45p for mileage is welcomed but respondents would like it backdated to the date of the Inland Revenue increase.

Again welcomed on one hand and criticised as too little too late with increasing motoring costs.

The loss of the last working day of the year as a public holiday was seen as a step too far for many and believe this should remain, with other local authorities planning closure between Christmas and New Year many are asking why remove this?

Respondents working 24/7, 365 days per year feel that this is a further cut for them and just too much.

Comments were made, why were additional annual leave days on top not given to compensate.

Changes to standby/callout predominantly for Social Workers, seemed to have caused a great deal of confusion with many commenting that it was unfair for them in all services.

Those that identified as Social Work indicated that it would be very difficult to cover out of hours as a result of the cuts to their service leaving vulnerabilities for people and the Council.

The reduction in premium payment for public holidays was seen as an insult to many that work 24/7 365 days per year, they again feel targeted by these proposals.

There were no comments received about overtime rates or excess mileage.

The changes to terms and conditions have aroused tensions with many that work an atypical week being very critical of those they perceive to work 9-5 in an office environment.

There is a belief that all that work 9-5 are well paid and are not losing out because of these proposals.

Benefits Package

The introduction of the car lease scheme is reasonably well received with little negative comment but some feel that they will be excluded due to not having the finances.

The provision of Council vehicles is very popular but many believe it is impossible for all employees that need a car to do their job to actually get a council vehicle and if this was so, many mentioned the vast car parks and fleet of vehicles that will be needed.

Pool vehicles are not seen as a reasonable option for those that transport clients or travel most of the day.

No comments were received about Childcare Vouchers or Cycle to Work.

Cynical comments were received about the retail voucher schemes, many believing it would only benefit those that had money to spend or who lived or could travel to Aberdeen.

Requests were made for healthcare and dental schemes to be introduced.

Pay Proposals

This is a controversial aspect of the proposals.

The introduction of an intermediate grade has been misunderstood by some believing that their pay will either be cut to the intermediate grade or that they will take longer to get to the top grade.

The proposal to pay £750 to the grades G and below has been welcomed by some but those that work 24/7; 365 days feel it is very little compensation for the loss of earnings.

Acrimony was displayed in the comments against those perceived to be working 9-5 and only gaining from this proposal.

Many feel it is too little too late after a pay freeze for the last 3 years and will go no way to help with rising costs.

Some are expecting a lump sum of £750 to be paid in their April 2014 Salary.

Those at Grade H and above feel that they are losing out, feeling that the better paid are being ignored by the Council, leaving them to become worse off in the greater scheme of things.

Many feel they are being penalised for working hard and progressing the career ladder or gaining qualifications.

Those just above the break point in H and I feel the difference between themselves and the people they supervise have been eroded.

A sense of acrimony between those receiving £250 and those receiving £750 is very evident in the responses and is a cause for concern.

General

Many comments are about not introducing the pay increase and keeping the Terms and Conditions as they are. The losses some are describing are too much for some to accept.

Many comments suggested creating different Terms and Conditions for different groups of workers especially front line care.

Conclusion

The majority of votes received are to accept the revised Terms and Conditions proposals. Therefore UNISON members in Aberdeenshire have accepted these proposals.

This being said there remain significant concerns for those working 24/7, 365 and the amount of income they stand to lose, particularly in one of the most expensive parts of Britain to live.

The ability to attract and recruit good quality staff may be challenged by these proposals.

A significant issue for UNISON is that staff are being critical and adversarial towards each other on either higher or lower grades or against those that are perceived to work 9-5.

Many issues have been raised within this response and UNISON requests that those issues are considered and addressed by Aberdeenshire Council.

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