



## Consultation response to the proposed changes to the Corporate Direction Restructure

### BACKGROUND

The Council proposes to restructure in accordance with a proposal as laid before Council for approval. In essence, following the resignation of a Chief Officer, it is proposed to appoint internally, with reorganisation of responsibilities between two Chief Officer posts to save £50k to £60k pa by not recruiting externally. The reorganisation also creates some newly defined responsibilities. There are interim arrangements in place covering all the responsible areas of the departed Chief Officer.

It was agreed that Unison would conduct a consultation of all staff in the immediately affected areas (Finance and all services previously under the departed Chief Officer). Extensive responses have been received from both Unison members and non-members and these have been incorporated in the summary below under generic headings –information of a personal nature is excluded.

Comments/responses from Steve Atkinson are in blue against each question below.

### 1 THE NEED FOR REORGANISATION

It is widely understood by staff from previous discussions with senior management that a significant reorganisation is to be expected some time after May 2015 and in that context the responses are:

- Why reorganise now when there is to be a later reorganisation?
- Why reorganise now when the interim arrangements are working very well?

This can be summarised as questioning the need and urgency.

**Having reflected carefully and discussed the position at SLB, I have concluded that there is no pressing need for changes, other than those proposed, to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the vacancy. This does not preclude further changes at a later date, but these need not be immediately after May 2015. For this reason, the proposed changes should be implemented as soon as possible, subject to this consultation.**

### 2. THE PROPOSED STRUCTURE

There are numerous questions arising about individual responsibilities or Corporate responsibilities under the new structure for both Statutory or internally designated tasks but as these do not directly question the proposal they will be subject of a separate consultation report to the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Direction).

There are numerous comments about whether the proposed structure is appropriate and some in full agreement. Alternatives have been suggested.

- The key response is regarding the sense in putting the front line service of Customer Services under a Finance function. It is however agreed that the majority of customer enquiry with Customer Services relates to issues of Revenues and Benefits. In further discussion around this point it is now understood the logic is explained as achieving closeness to the Client function of Revenues and Benefits. It is also understood that the Universal Credit implementation will need close working between the two services.

**I welcome this understanding, which accords with the rationale of the proposal.**

- There is significant concern at the loss of Legal expertise (from the departed Chief Officer who was a qualified solicitor), which supported a number of functions, as neither Chief Officer is required to have such knowledge.

**That is the case. However, we do have a Legal Services Manager, who is qualified and provides excellent legal advice and who is supported by other qualified practitioners. This team, supported as necessary by other ad hoc appointments to meet specific requirements, will provide the required advice to senior managers.**

- There is concern that (like the London Borough of Barnet) the Council would be open to criticism by appointing a Monitoring officer with no legal qualification.

**There is no formal requirement for this role to be performed by a qualified legal officer. Indeed, I am aware of other District Councils which have Monitoring Officers, who have no legal qualifications, and which operate effectively in that basis. I think that Barnet is a specific case, which has a wider context.**

- Why is Procurement being separated from Finance?

**Procurement is still part of the remit of Corporate Services and has been separate from the main finance team for some time. This function was retained by Julie Kenny, when she was appointed as a Chief Officer**

- Why isn't Housing Repairs under Housing?

**As above, the Housing Repairs function has been separate from the Housing Management function for over four years. It enables a clear separation between the client and the contractor.**

- Why are Estates and I.T. not reporting to a Chief Officer?

**They have both reported to the Deputy Chief Executive (formerly Director of Finance and ICT) for some time. There is no need to change this arrangement; hence none is proposed.**

- Why isn't Customer Services with Housing repairs as there is considerable synergy because of customer requirements?

**The rationale for Customer Services being aligned managerially with Revenues and Benefits has been explained above.**

- One Chief Officer should cover Compliance, Legal Services and Information Governance.

**I would be interested in the rationale behind this suggestion, which could create a management imbalance – something I have always wished to avoid at this level..**

- There is no mention of the Corporate Support team but by subsequent enquiry it is understood this would move to the existing Chief Officer post.

**That was the substance of the proposal submitted for consultation, which I confirmed to you on 7 December. However, Sanjiv Kohli has met today with Lynn Fray and her colleagues and has agreed with their submission that the corporate support function should be aligned with the Customer Services team, within the remit of the vacant Chief Officer post. This variation to the structure, therefore, will be highlighted, when it is put to the Council on 16 December.**

- With the ongoing project for 'channel shift' it would make more sense for Customer Services to be with Transformation.

**This is another suggestion (the third) for a different location for Customer Services; highlighting the difficulty in securing the most appropriate arrangement. In the end, the proposed location, aligned to the Revenues and Benefits function, is considered to be the best fit, because of the increasingly close business relationship we have identified between the two functions over the last three years.**

### 3. THE PROPOSED NEW RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NEW CHIEF OFFICER POST

There is no direct feedback on the new proposal for a Chief Officer post to have specific responsibility for:

- Project Assurance or
- Client Role in Partnerships

It is understood there is an intention being drawn up to flesh out the Fraud element to potentially create a new service once the existing Fraud service within Revenues and Benefits has transferred (under Government direction) to the Single Fraud Investigation Service. There is no direct feedback on that proposal.

#### **Noted.**

In general, Unison supports these proposals to better manage the business of the Council.

In addition, a number of suggestions have been made that some former responsibilities of the departed Chief Officer would now fall on junior staff and so potentially jobs need to be re-evaluated and that might impact on savings.

**If that is the case, we will review in accordance with appropriate Job Evaluation process.**

### 4. THE NEED FOR A NEW CHIEF OFFICER POST

This covers two aspects:

#### A. DOES THE ORGANISATION NEED A REPLACEMENT CHIEF OFFICER

There is considerable feedback to question that the Council needs to retain the existing large structure at both Corporate and Strategic level and it is suggested the matter should be examined in the expected wider reorganisation.

Under this heading there is also reiteration that the interim arrangements are working well.

**I agree that these arrangements have worked very well, but we need to put arrangements on a sustainable, longer-term footing.**

#### B. IS THE PROPOSED NEW POST OF SUFFICIENT SUBSTANCE TO BE CHIEF OFFICER LEVEL

It is understood that the Job Evaluation for Chief Officers is conducted under the Hay methodology which amongst other things places some weight on responsibility for budgets and resources, including staff.

- Responses have questioned whether the new post manages sufficient staff as some of the functions in the new structure are reiteration of responsibilities in the job description but without staffing. It was questioned whether staffing from Revenues and Benefits was included but it is now understood that this is not the case.

**Noted - but, as you know, Hay covers much more than 'people' management.**

- The budget responsibilities of the various existing and new posts have been examined and the budget responsibility for the new post is set out at a suitably substantive level.

**Noted.**

5. RECRUITMENT TO THE NEW CHIEF OFFICER POST

- There is considerable feedback on the way the new post is defined in such a way that it possibly eliminates the majority of people who ordinarily might enter the selection process. The difficult point is the requirement for Accountancy qualifications and it is questioned why in particular that has to now move to Chief Officer level from the Head of Finance post when it could remain with the Head of Finance. If the Head of Finance is selected for the post then they take that responsibility with them as it is quite usual for Chief Officers to continue with former roles.
- Responses have pointed out that the last Chief Officer recruitment included two applicants having a 6m trial before final selection
- Unison requests that in line with Council policies and procedures that a new post is recruited using the usual open and transparent process.

**It will be recruited and selected in the most appropriate manner, in accordance with our established practices and procedures and with the current Constitution. I have no problem with there being a three month trial period, to enable the appointee and SLB to determine long-term suitability.**

Robert Vaughan  
Joint Branch Secretary  
Unison Hinckley and Bosworth Branch  
9<sup>th</sup> December 2014