

# INTERIM REPORT OF THE SINGLE STATUS SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

**Membership** : Councillors Cornwell (Chairman), Flemington, King, Mackenzie and M. Woodriff.

Supported by Frances Kavanagh – Principal Scrutiny Officer

Advisers: Ross Wood (Head of Corporate Personnel) and David Freeman (Principal Projects Officer – Corporate Personnel).

## **1. THE BRIEF**

**“To review the implementation of Single Status in the Borough and assess its likely impact on the organisation”**

2. 2.1 This Task Group was established by the Scrutiny Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2000.

2.2 For the first time in the Council’s scrutiny trialling, this Task Group has explored an issue which is being developed contemporaneously. For that reason, the Group is submitting its interim findings which should inform the ongoing decision making process.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

3.1 The Task Group met on a number of occasions and interviewed 9 witnesses:

Geoff Eford - Head of Services for Adults  
Doreen Field - Principal Manager – Domiciliary Care.  
David Streeter - Head of Environmental and Operational Services.  
Allan Bone - Support Services Manager, Environmental & Operational Services.  
Stuart Young – Greater London Employers Association.  
Cheryl Coppell – Chief Executive, Slough Borough Council.  
Steve Cowan – UNISON.  
Mick McKeever – UNISON.  
Ian McNichol – GMB.

3.2 Written evidence was also sought and received. The key documents included:

Greater London Provincial Council – The London Agreement  
Background reports submitted by Ross Wood  
Various articles from periodicals  
Reports provided by witnesses.

## **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 Single Status affects all employees covered by the former APT&C and Manual conditions of service. It came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1997. The London Agreement came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000. They harmonise some aspects of employment conditions, with others being changed from set dates in subsequent years. It is intended that there will be full harmonisation of employment terms and conditions from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 at the latest when the former manual employees reduce from 37 hour week to a 36 hour week.

Separate agreements are still in place for other staff, such as Teachers and Craft graded employees, however the current agreement for Craft graded employees focuses on the same principles as the Single Status Agreement.

- 4.2 The introduction of Single Status will afford the opportunity to ensure that all the employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner; this should lead to a more stable and contented workforce.
- 4.3 The principles of Single Status are equal opportunities in employment, which underpins service delivery and employment relations, the removal of all discrimination and the promotion of positive action.
- 4.4 Subject to the concurrence of the Resources Committee in April, the Council intends to adopt the Greater London Provincial Job Evaluation Scheme (as part of the London Agreement) and there will be a need to consult with the Trade Unions. A points grading relationship is recommended by the Greater London Employers Association (GLEA) based on anchor points. Each borough can set its own grading structure linked to those points. The grading structure will consider incremental progression from one spinal point to the next and whether grades should overlap.
- 4.5 It will be necessary to review all Job Descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect the needs of the service. It is likely that the grades of some of the former manual employees will increase. Some jobs, particularly those of middle administrative rank, may see a reduction in grade. It is anticipated that in these cases existing grade and pay levels will need to be protected or their job content reviewed.
- 4.6 The Single Status Agreement allows for flexible arrangements to be negotiated by individual boroughs on some issues: these include shift payments, rest day working arrangements, evening working and standby payments.
- 4.7 Currently some part time staff and temporary staff do not receive the correct pro rata entitlement to pay, annual leave and public holidays compared to full time employees. Under the Single Status agreement it will be necessary to address these issues and make the necessary increases as appropriate.
- 4.8 As part of the London Agreement, the London Weighting has been split. Employees on spinal column point (SCP) 10 or below receive £1869 per annum whilst employees on SCP11 or higher receive £1359 per annum. This results in a £510 increase for former officers below SCP11, bringing them in line with manual employees below SCP11. The greatest impact applies to non-teaching staff in schools, such as Classroom Assistants.

## **5. INTERIM FINDINGS**

- 5.1 The Task Group recognises that a key feature of the implementation of the agreement will revolve around a new grading structure and the new Job Evaluation scheme. Taking account of the resources available it is anticipated that the elapsed time necessary to undertake this work will be about two years. The Group would prefer the process to start as soon as possible in order to clarify the position relative to employees and their jobs even though the eventual implementation date will not be until, at the earliest,

when all the re-evaluations are complete and allowing for extensive consultations.

- 5.2 It is the view of the Task Group that the Council's current good joint consultation machinery should be built upon to create the necessary shared sense of ownership of the new scheme to the mutual benefit of both the Council and its employees.
  - 5.3 The Task Group is keen to stress the equal pay background to the Single Status agreement. They took the view that it would be helpful for the Council to have an agreed working protocol with the principal trade union(s) for the implementation of the Job Evaluation scheme in recognition of possible equal pay issues.
  - 5.4 The Task Group are concerned that management should be encouraged to give the necessary priority to the work involved in progressing the new job evaluations and suggest agreed progress on these should form part of an individual's performance targets.
  - 5.5 There would be considerable advantage in joint management and union training.
  - 5.6 It is anticipated that if the current numbers and distribution of the Council's directly employed workforce remain the same, the total cost to the Council of implementing the agreement will be in the order of £1.5 million per annum, the majority of which will be related to job evaluation with the remainder related to the harmonisation of the working week to 36 hours.
6. It would be sensible if the Members of this Task Group, or some of them, continued to form a reference group on the progress of Single Status implementation in the coming Municipal Year. It is suggested that this is picked up by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.