

Decision Maker: Council

Date: 25th June 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: Petitions

Contact Officer: Graham Walton, Democratic Services Manager
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Chief Officer: Mark Bowen, Director of Resources

Ward: N/A

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 Under the Council's Petition Scheme, if petitioners are dissatisfied with the Council's response to a petition they can request that the issue be brought before a meeting of the full Council for consideration, provided that the number of verified signatures exceeds the threshold required. The lead petitioner or their nominee can address the council for up to five minutes.
- 1.2 Two petitions have been received objecting to (i) the Council's proposals to introduce localised pay and conditions of service for staff and (ii) the removal of Scope's textile clothing banks from Council sites.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Council is requested to consider the cases made by the petitioners.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy: Petitions are dealt with according to the Council's agreed Petition Scheme.
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council:
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: N/A
 4. Total current budget for this head: £N/A
 5. Source of funding: N/A
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: This report does not involve an executive decision.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): N/A
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 The Council's Petition Scheme allows for petitioners to present their case to full Council if they are dissatisfied with the Council's response to a petition, provided that the number of verified signatures exceeds the threshold required of 500. The lead petitioner or their nominee can address the council for up to five minutes. Once Council has considered the matter, it can choose whether or not to make recommendations for action. If there are any recommendations for action by councillors or officers then a report back to the next scheduled full Council meeting is required, setting out the action that has been taken.

3.2 Two qualifying petitions have been received as follows -

Localised Pay and Conditions of Service

3.3 On 24th April 2012 a petition was submitted on behalf of Council staff calling on the Council to "drop their plans to remove all council staff from the national terms and conditions for local government workers." In line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Graham Arthur, responded to the petition in the following terms –

"I write with reference to the petition that you submitted to the London Borough of Bromley on 24 April 2012. The petition calls on the Council to "drop their plans to remove all council staff from the national terms and conditions for local government workers."

As Executive Member for the Executive and Resources Portfolio the matter has been referred to me for a formal response.

The current position is that subject to consultation and further discussions with Trade Unions, Departmental Representatives and staff the Council is considering localising the terms and conditions for its entire workforce, except teachers.

The key drivers behind the proposal include:

- gaining control over the annual pay review process and timetable at a time of significant financial challenge for the Council in order to achieve better alignment with budget setting processes
- the need for the Council to exercise local control in order to give greater emphasis to local circumstances, and improve the Council's ability to innovate and flex in ways that the current nationally agreed terms have often not encouraged;
- improving the Council's ability to align reward with staff performance
- achieving efficiencies through the harmonisation of the management grade and Bromley staff pay review arrangements

The proposals also reflect the provisions in the Localism Act particularly as regards improving democratic accountability and transparency in senior staff pay.

In summary, the proposals are to introduce:

- a single local annual pay review mechanism to replace the separate arrangements that currently exist for the various groups of staff;
- a scheme of discretionary non-consolidated rewards for exceptional performance; and
- a professional/technical grade equivalent to Management grade 6 for highly specialised/technical posts which do not carry any significant management responsibilities

The details of the new local framework based on the above proposals are currently being developed, and will be the subject of consultation and discussion locally with staff and their representatives. Thereafter the outcome of these discussions and any subsequent changes to the current terms and conditions of staff will be reported to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, the Executive and to Full Council for consideration and approval.

In my view this petition is premature given the proposed staff and trade union consultation. I very much hope you and your colleagues will therefore take the opportunity to engage in meaningful consultation as key stakeholders in the future arrangements, and that this response will re-assure you of the Council's intention to take the views of staff and their representatives into account throughout this process.

In light of the above I trust you will reconsider your position and not proceed with the petition or refer it to Full Council."

- 3.4** Councillors will be aware that the General Purposes and Licensing Committee at its meeting on 29th May 2012 authorised the Assistant Chief Executive (HR) to progress formal consultation with trade union and departmental representatives and staff on proposals to introduce localised pay and conditions for staff.

Scope Clothing Banks

- 3.5** In May 2012 the Council received a petition from Scope objecting to the removal of its clothing banks from Council owned land. In line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the Environment Portfolio Holder responded to the petition in the following terms –

"Thank you for taking the time to present your petition. The Council decided to introduce new textile recycling banks across the borough after careful consideration. The reality of the Council's budgetary situation is that many hard and difficult decisions have been taken and decisions cannot be reversed without further impact on already stretched frontline services that serve all residents, including the most vulnerable.

The Council has never sought to infer that charitable giving is anything other than something to be encouraged. The Council is supportive of the good work that Scope undertakes and remains happy to encourage residents to give unwanted clothing items directly to a charity shop at the choice of the individual.

The Council will be introducing a door to door collection service for clothing as part of usual recycling services and the new textile banks are part of these arrangements.

These changes will generate savings for the Council as more recycling takes place. The sub contractor appointed to process the clothing supports a wide range of charities. Scope was informed of the Council's intentions and did not offer any alternative arrangements. The Council subsequently agreed the arrangements that have been publicised.

I will be writing to you shortly to specifically address the issues raised in our discussion but after looking carefully at this issue again in light of the petition, the decision will not be reversed."

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy/Financial/Legal/Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Report to General Purposes and Licensing Committee (29/5/12): Localised Pay and Conditions of Service