

MORAY UNISON

HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER BULLETIN - OCTOBER 2001

The Moray Council will be deciding on the future of Council Housing based on the findings of a consultants report which should be available by mid November 2001. This bulletin is to provide information to members on the issues involved, the process that the Council will follow, the timescale involved and what you as affected members can do in partnership within the branch.

WHAT IS STOCK TRANSFER ?

- ◆ The Council are to consider the potential for transferring the Council's housing stock to a Housing Association or a private housing company.
- ◆ What Happens ? Simply put, a stock condition survey is carried out by the Council and the costs of repairing and maintaining the homes over the next 30 years is calculated. This is compared with the income that can be generated from the rents. The difference is the price that is paid to the Council
- ◆ Tenants are provided with a detailed proposal document that sets out the differences for them as tenants, what the new landlord is saying about rent levels, and what repairs will be done.
- ◆ Any transfer cannot take place unless the tenants say YES.
- ◆ Usually in a transfer, the Council's housing staff would move to the new organisation but building workers and support staff may face redundancy. Depending on how much the Council would receive from the sale of the stock, there could be the potential for redundancies elsewhere in the Council too.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT ?

- ◆ The Council have appointed consultants, Ernst & Young to carry out a feasibility study.
- ◆ They will make recommendations to the Council on the future of the Council's Housing Service
- ◆ If the Council decides to transfer the housing stock, Tenants will be consulted on the proposals and given the right to vote either for or against the transfer.
- ◆ If tenants vote YES, the stock will transfer to a new provider. Staff transfers will then be considered as well as any implications for redundancies should this be the case.

UNISON's POSITION

UNISON believes that stock transfers are not in the interest of council tenants, new tenants, the workforce or taxpayers. Why? Because the investment made by the new housing association or private company has to be paid for. This is likely to mean higher rents and housing benefit bills for all and it is clear that public investment would be cheaper and more efficient.

Because of this, UNISON firmly believes that stock transfer produces significant additional public expenditure costs, increases social exclusion, can destabilise communities and reduce democratic accountability.

MORAY UNISON's POSITION

Following the national position, Moray UNISON will be campaigning against the transfer or sale of council homes.

In response to many discussions with members, we have launched a campaign to prevent the council from actually voting to transfer the stock in the first place. Our strategy is to:-

- ♦ Place our members at the heart of the campaign
- ♦ Appoint lead activists representative of the members
- ♦ Lobby on members' issues
- ♦ Seek support from Councillors, other trade unions and public
- ♦ Publicity and campaigning activities

MORAY UNISON LEAD ACTIVISTS

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
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TIME TABLE

- ♦ **The consultant's report will be presented to the council on 7th November 2001**
- ♦ **There will be special meetings of the Community Services and Policy & Resources Committees on 14th November 2001**
- ♦ **A decision is expected to be announced after the Committee's decision**
- ♦ **Branch Meeting scheduled for 14th November 2001.**
- ♦ **Further action as appropriate**

If you have read the newsletter and are not a member but would like to join please call the recruitment hotline on 0800 70 70 77 or if you have access to the internet go to :- <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/join.html>

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Job Evaluation has been the main focus of the Single Status agreement to date. However, job evaluation forms only part of the agreement. Discussions on the other terms and conditions will be taking place soon and the Council has produced a discussion paper to set out their position for negotiation. We therefore highlight below the main areas for discussion.

The Single Status Agreement brings about a **Reduced Working Week** to 37 hours. Within the Single Status document, it talks about a 'standard' working week of 37 hours which the Council interprets as the working week for all staff, including those currently working 36 ¼. (APT&C staff) Thus, by implication, those currently working less than 37 will work an additional ¾ hour extra per week. **This is not a view which is shared by Moray UNISON.** However, there may be options which will have to be explored if all staff have to work the same number of hours per week. Is the 37 hour week implemented along with additional pay for the additional hours? Will everyone come down to 36 ¼ hours instead of 37?

We have identified some options which may be thrown up by the negotiations assuming everyone must work 37 hours. **We would therefore like to have your thoughts on these options (especially from APT&C members)**

- Everyone moves to 37 hours with no change in salary
- Everyone moves to 37 hours with appropriate increase in salary
- Everyone moves to 37 hours with no change in salary, but with negotiated additional annual leave
- Everyone moves to 36 ¼ hours

Proposals have been put forward by the Council regarding **Flexible Working** patterns. It is proposed that all services and work areas within services are identified where overtime, allowances or enhancements equivalent to 10% of the wage bill are paid. Managers in these work areas must carry out a review of their working practices to identify where more flexible working could be introduced to reduce the need to work overtime, or times which attract enhancement. An example might be core hours with additional hours being banked and worked at peak times. Detailed arrangements would reflect particular circumstances and where changes would n't help to manage the situation, the reasons would have to be made clear. It is suggested by the Council that this proposal would improve flexibility and offer a wider range of working patterns, possibly helping staff to balance home and work commitments and assist the Council with being an equal opportunities employer.

Where overtime is to exist, including contractual overtime, the Council wants to consider the actual rates and calculations for such payments. Where enhancements are to exist, the Council would also wish to review the rates and calculations.

Details of your working pattern, and contractual or other overtime, enhancements or allowances along with your views on any changes to these arrangements would be welcomed.

In relation to **Bonus payments**, the Council considers that the existing arrangements leave them open to equal pay challenges and would wish to include these in the rate for the job. Moray UNISON would support the

view that members are entitled to be paid a fair rate for the job and in recognising members views expressed to date, would consider negotiating on this basis. The Council would wish to consider, where appropriate, performance measures at a later date.

Members who currently receive bonus payments, and performance payments are asked to record their views as appropriate.

The Council also wish to reduce the number of payments made to employees in lieu of annual leave. This would ensure that staff are actually taking their entitlements to time off work. Moray UNISON would wish to get more information on these proposals to allow for more meaningful consultation with members.

Discussions concerning **Car Allowances** are currently taking place at national level as they form part of the national agreement. As details become available on the union's position on the proposals, these will be shared with members. The employers, through COSLA, are currently proposing the scheme devised by the Inland Revenue, where by there is no lump sum, but an 'appropriate' rate per mile. It is currently difficult to do a comparison between the existing and proposed schemes due to the calculations for tax and national insurance. Moray UNISON has asked the union at national level to carry out this task to allow for members to compare the schemes accurately.

The Council has also considered two further areas for negotiation concerning **Leave arrangements** and **Pay-in lieu of holidays**. Whilst there has been little information given to the branch on this subject, the Council would like to consider arrangements for, in particular, special leave.

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At the next Trade Union / Officer meeting on the 21st August it is possible the negotiating process may start. The Unison single status working group will meet the day before (20th August) to agree the negotiating position. To enable the working group time to analyse all feedback can the response sheets be sent back to the branch office by the 17th August if possible.