

userid	id	input_date	comments
INTERNAL\			The proposed scheme is appalling and represents a huge reduction in staff benefits and a major variation in the terms and conditions of employment of staff as compared with custom and practise over the last 14 years when this matter was last dealt with. To name the policy "Discretionary Compensation" is misleading to staff when in fact it is a rewriting of the existing "severance" scheme - a term widely understood by staff. To use the excuse of age discrimination legislation to substantially reduce benefits to older staff is a mockery of the intentions of the authors of the European Directive. To allow only 3 weeks consultation on such a major change in employees' conditions of employment is grossly inadequate given the need for staff to receive independent advice and information and discuss the proposals fully within the unions and staff/management structures.
	1	30/04/07	
INTERNAL\	2	30/04/07	The ready reckoner seems to take ten years off the continuous service figure. Is it working correctly?
INTERNAL\	3	30/04/07	How does this compare to the previous scheme?
INTERNAL\	4	30/04/07	Can I volunteer to be made redundant or leave for efficiency reasons?
INTERNAL\	5	30/04/07	I have recently resigned, waiving my rights to the extremely generous termination package that City Council Employees have previously enjoyed. It has in my view been verging on the immoral that there are many senior staff who have enjoyed generous publicly funded termination packages AND continue to receive another regular publicly funded wage as an employee (or consultant) to another Council. The new policy will reduce liability to the public purse whilst providing a reasonable and above statutory level of compensation. At a time when we are being told the Council wants a leaner but more motivated and better remunerated workforce, I find it hard to understand how one can justify (to quote)
INTERNAL\			"The level of compensation payable under the proposed policy will mean we are paying ..... slightly lower than the average across the whole of London. If the Council were to use its discretion (in exceptional cases) to award further compensation then this would place us at the median level for London authorities.
INTERNAL\	6	30/04/07	It should not be left to discretion to even meet the median. This is hardly likely to make good candidates jump at job opportunities here if they compare terms closely!
INTERNAL\	7	30/04/07	Why, if superannuation deductions are made from PRP (and in my case, sometime back, overtime) payments, do they not qualify for inclusion in the assessment of the compensation payment?
INTERNAL\	8	02/05/07	consultation re redundancy within my team there are a number of staff who wished to express concern; i am collating these issues as follows:  veracity of the consultation process - feeling among staff of an element of lip service not HR's direct responsibility but to what degree are the relevant unions involved? competition even re end processes; ref to objective of employer of choice within LA context particular concern re withdrawal of lump sum contribution to what degree optional additional payments likely
INTERNAL\	9	02/05/07	Seems as if this amendment will be prejudicial to staff. I am getting the impression that Westminster is no longer the best Council to work for. We will be on par with other councils. Very sad to see that government legislation is being used to manipulate a situation so that staff lose what was once a potentially good redundancy package. Hopefully I won't be made redundant!
INTERNAL\			One hopes that no member of staff will be made redundant, but one also hopes that one's employer will offer the best redundancy terms possible if those unfortunate circumstances do occur. Westminster is considered to be a flagship authority. As such it should be able to recruit the best staff and offer the best employment and benefits package for staff. It is a disappointment, therefore, that Westminster has chosen to reduce the compensation payable to such extent that it no longer offers the best compensation in London.
INTERNAL\	10	02/05/07	I note that the communication to staff states that the new scheme provides benefits that IMPROVE on the statutory minimum. I think that the word "improve" is misleading as the new scheme is considerably worse than the old scheme. The correct message is that the new scheme provides benefits that are much worse than the old scheme, though they are still better than the statutory minimum. It is a great shame that Westminster considers it appropriate to operate in this way.
INTERNAL\	11	03/05/07	The proposed scheme might very well be more favourable than the statutory scheme, but I understand that it is less favourable than Westminster's current scheme. If this is right, I am concerned by such a stance and I am also very concerned that the impression being given in the consultation process is misleading.
INTERNAL\	12	04/05/07	The changes made by the Council in relation to Costs Savings should be rolled out in conjunction with the Pay and Benefits and Reward scheme so that staff can see how the organisational changes they have to effect will feed into direct benefits for them in terms of recruitment and retention.
INTERNAL\	13	05/05/07	The Council is attempting to be a more lean and efficient organisation. By reducing the redundancy package one would think that Council costs would therefore be lowered - this is a very short-sighted view. With these changes staff are less likely to readily agree to redundancy in the future thus leading to unrest and consequently an unhappy workforce and all that goes with it. The act of reducing the package to below the London average seems confrontational and hiding it behind a change in government legislation a little cheap!
INTERNAL\	14	16/05/07	Whilst it is true that the proposed changes will benefit certain categories of staff. In general terms for the majority of existing staff the changes in my view constitute a significant reduction to (and worsening of) the former compensation arrangements which is very disappointing especially for long serving staff who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. This will only serve to further undermine staff morale in light of the Council's efforts to cut expenditure at the expense of its staff.
INTERNAL\	15	16/05/07	I vehemently oppose this detrimental proposed changes to the Council's Compensation Scheme. The proposals appear to be less than half as generous as the current scheme and are barely more than the statutory minimum standard. The allegation that the Council's current scheme is more generous than other Authorities is neither supported by evidence nor an argument to decrease the Council's compensation arrangements unless the underlying factor on which the proposals are based is in fact financial. The fact that these proposals are advanced in tandem with the Council's Worksmart proposals appears to be significant. Moreover, a three week consultation period is extremely short and, I would suggest, an inadequate period in which to undertake a genuine and proper consultation exercise.
INTERNAL\			I do not accept the proposed new Compensation scheme for the following reasons:  Although I understand the need to change the current scheme in order to comply with the Age Discrimination legislation, the proposed scheme means that, because of my age, I would receive a substantially lower level (over 50%) of compensation than I would have done under the current scheme. This runs totally counter to the Council's claim to value and invest in its staff (after all staff are continually applauded for being the key factor in repeatedly achieving Council of the Year and CPA Excellence - it feels like a "stab in the back" and will result in a significant reduction in morale, motivation, commitment and preparedness to "go the extra mile". I am sure this is not what the Council intends to achieve.  Furthermore, the proposed change does not reward staff who have been loyal to Westminster over the years (including the problematic early 1990's as well as the excellent recent years) ie someone who has worked elsewhere for 19 years and 1 year at Westminster would get the same level of compensation as someone who had worked for Westminster for 20 years. Again, this will result in a significant reduction in morale, motivation and commitment. I am sure this is not what the Council intends to achieve.  It also runs counter to the approach adopted by the Council in 1997 when changes of similar scale were made to the Compensation scheme. In 1997 however, the new scheme only applied to staff employed after a certain date, whilst the old scheme continued to apply to all existing staff. Why can the Council not adopt a similar approach on this occasion - if such an approach is specifically prohibited by the law, then why does the Council not structure its proposals in such a way as to provide a similar level of compensation to existing staff  I also believe the change proposed goes to the root of the contractual relationship between the Council and me in that it is a significant change to the terms and conditions upon which I was recruited and employed. The level of compensation proposed in lieu of that significant change is insufficient and, if implemented, would lead me to consider whether there were grounds for constructive dismissal.  Because the proposed scheme results in a higher degree of reduced compensation for older people (as opposed to the degree of change in reduced compensation for younger people) I believe that the process of implementation of the proposed scheme could itself be age discriminatory and could be subject to challenge.  Overall, this is an unfair, unjust and highly demotivational proposal. I would therefore urge the Council to reconsider accordingly.
	16	17/05/07	

		As an employee with many years service with Westminster Council, I would like to register my dismay at the proposed new compensation policy on a personal level. Although I have no intention of seeking to leave my employment before retirement age, given the scale of change that is the norm in Westminster and as we move towards even more transformation in the near future, it is very distressing to note that in the event that I was made redundant, the compensation that I would now be due would be very little more than the bare statutory minimum. I find this personally very demotivating and in complete contradiction to the message the Council is currently trying to convey with the Reward project, which is supposed to provide better and more attractive reward packages for staff.
	INTERNAL	I am also concerned that such a minimum package of compensation will make future organisational change much more difficult than it has been in the past, as there will be little prospect of any staff volunteering for redundancy under these arrangements, meaning that all future reductions in staff will have to be achieved through compulsory redundancies, with consequent employee relations problems and potential for Employment Tribunal cases, all of which will cost the Council dearly. A change to a minimum of two weeks pay per year would be at the very least a less punitive reduction in the benefits long-serving employees would have a right to expect.
17	INTERNAL	In the event that no changes are made to the policy proposed, I would ask that at the very least, the powers of discretion available under the new regulations will be exercised to ensure that any staff who may have already received estimates under the old scheme will not be disadvantaged. I would also urge that the discretion is applied so that the new policy is applied to new employees only, with additional discretionary payments payable to existing employees.
18	INTERNAL	The criteria for the application of discretionary powers needs to be clearly identified so that there is no scope for discrimination or inconsistency.
19	INTERNAL	This appears to be less favourable than the current scheme and I therefore object to the proposed change.
	INTERNAL	I intend to submit my comments next Monday morning, 21 May, once I have read and understood the proposed changes over the weekend. I trust that comments submitted then will be taken into account.
20	INTERNAL	I think that this change is very disappointing. It counters our attempts to promote Westminster as an employer of choice by signalling that staff are not valued. I have assisted many staff through the redundancy process over the years and what has helped maintain morale and retain their colleagues has been the sense that the severance package for staff no longer required by the organisation has been fair. Our services rely upon the goodwill and loyalty of staff who know that they can earn more elsewhere. I fear that this change in policy is a knee-jerk reaction that will be seen as penny-pinching and insulting to staff and will undermine our strategies to build a stable workforce. This submission follows the submission I made on 18 May, in which I said that I would make my detailed comments today having read the consultation papers over the weekend.
	INTERNAL	Although the introduction to the proposed new scheme does not say so, it is clear from reading the details in the briefing note, and in particular from the table of comparison on page 8, that the new scheme will be significantly worse for all employees regardless of age. A person will in future only get 1.5 weeks' pay for every year worked, instead of between 2 and 4.4 weeks' pay. Contrary to the misleading impression given in the introduction and in the summary in the briefing note, these changes are not required as a result of the Age Regulations. There is no reason, therefore, why Westminster should not keep that part of its more generous scheme which is not prohibited by the Age Regulations, even if that means that the Westminster scheme continues to be significantly more generous than that of other London boroughs.
	INTERNAL	I would urge that this be done. There is no need for Westminster to follow other boroughs' policies.
		The details of the proposed new scheme are set out on page 12 of the briefing note. Although the impression is given earlier in the note that the new payments will apply automatically, it is stated on page 12 under 'Business Criteria' that each payment will only be made by the Council 'at its discretion'. The words 'at its discretion' surely need to be removed.
21		This consultation gives the misleading impression that the proposed scheme is a generous one, when in fact it represents a significant worsening of the scheme currently in existence. Staff being made redundant or retiring early in the interests of the efficiency of the service deserve to be treated better.
	INTERNAL	The comms bulletin states that the new scheme improves upon the statutory minimum. What it doesn't say is that it is actually less than it was before April 1st
22		If we are an excellent council and want to attract the best staff we should have the best scheme. Current and perspective employees will consider the schemes operated by other local authorities more closely in future to see who provides the better option.
23		If my calculations are correct this seems like a very much less generous provision than was formally the case. If the authority wish to attract and retain good quality staff they should be actively looking at enhancing the pension arrangements across the board. I do not support these proposals as they currently stand.
24		I support the proposed changes
	INTERNAL	I am glad that you took my point that the consultation period was unreasonably short.
25		I wish to reiterate my view that the proposed revision of the Council's Compensation Policy represents an unreasonable detriment to my terms and conditions of employment, which I oppose in the strongest possible terms. I trust that you will take my representations into account when considering a decision in this matter.
	INTERNAL	The discretionary compensation policy may indeed improve the position of lower paid staff, which I welcome. However what is very worrying is that it penalises those employees who have been at Westminster for many years on middle income salaries who may be made redundant through no fault of their own. They would be in a far worse position under this Policy and it cannot be right that they are treated not only with such gross unfairness but frankly contempt.
26		It can only be of extreme concern that the existing compensation package was allowed to lapse at 31 March and that only the minimal statutory scheme is now in place and that the scheme that was previously one of the more generous ones in London is to be replaced by one that is freely admitted to be less favourable than others.
27		1. UNISON does not accept the proposed changes to the Redundancy and Severance scheme. 2. We understand the need to make the Scheme age discrimination proof but this should not be used to make a general cut on payments on the scheme. 3. UNISON is more than happy to negotiate with management to bring about a broadly comparable scheme to the present scheme, which would be age proof. We expect to start negotiation and consultations at point where we use the present scheme and see how it could be made age proofed. 4. Advice from central government is that changes to make schemes age discrimination proof should not be used to bring general cutbacks. 5. UNISON does not accept that the present scheme is generous or over generous compared to other authorities. The comparisons that have been provided by management does not take into account the specifics in each local authority. Local pay, reward, travel grants and incentive scheme has an impact on the overall package provided by these authorities. 6. WCC proposed scheme would take it to the bare bone, which will make it difficult to recruit and keep skilled staff, and from other authorities with long years of service. 7. The changes proposed will impact long standing staff who have given good service and brought around the reputation of this local authority. 8. The consultation period, even though it has been extended at the unions' request, is not adequate. Not all school-based staff have received the draft Compensation scheme paper for consultation. 9. WCC staff feel that management has bounced this new scheme in a period of six weeks even though one of the trade unions raised this with management way back in September 2006. WCC did not even respond to their I am concerned that there has not been a reasonable consultation period in relation to this issue, particularly as this was raised by the GMB back in September. This draft policy is changing our members terms and conditions and the GMB, and the other unions could not agree to any changes without a meaningful consultation period in this case. In your Q&A's you admit that in the Age regulations the government has exempted the calculation of the statutory redundancy payment from being discriminatory, and therefore until case law challenges that exemption it will be difficult for the unions to come to any agreement regarding changes. It is also understood that the DWP says it is now believed that enhanced redundancy provisions in pension schemes are exempt from age discrimination. This would include the 'added years' and early pension availability in the LGPS. I also understand that employers can still award up to 10 added years to qualifying LGPS members and a set of amendment regulations (SI 2007/1488) have been laid down in Parliament that enable the employer to grant (e.g. in redundancy/efficiency termination cases) added years up to 10 years. Therefore your response on the Q&A's in question 10 is incorrect. As stated above it is not possible to give a response at this stage and therefore agreement is unlikely to be reached, until we see the outcome of future case law
28	Unison	
29	GMB	
	NUT	This is the formal response to Westminster City Council's proposals to change the current compensation schemes for those employees who are made redundant or leave on the grounds of efficiency of the service. Not surprisingly, and as you note in your letter, these changes "will invoke a lot of discussion". The consultation period, even allowing for the 3-week extension, is too short – especially as employees only received their notification 4 days before the closing date for submission of comments. Your proposals acknowledge that the Government has exempted the calculation of the Statutory Redundancy payment from the legislation on age discrimination. The NUT believes the same exemption applies to discretionary payments relating to redundancy or premature retirement. Regulations made by the Dept of Work and Pensions for all occupational pension schemes, specifically exempt from the age discrimination legislation the minimum age for entitlement to benefit with enhancement on the grounds of redundancy. WCC's proposals anticipate a future court challenge to the current differential payments based upon whether employee is aged 41 or over, but this is a presumption rather than a fact and is not a sound basis for policy making. Regarding the discretion of the Council to by awarding "added years" to a pension fund for employees over 50 being made redundant or taking premature retirement, this power remains, and will not breach the Age Discrimination regulations provided it can be
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