

Hacked Off!

The Voice of Hackney Workers

NEWS EXTRA
March 2010

Are You Worth It?

The worst cuts in the history of local government are on their way and as we scabble around for £40-60 million which must be found this year, members must be aware that this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The programme of cuts has already started and there isn't a department in the Council that isn't 'under review'

One big, cross cutting review, aimed at making 'savings' of 25% is happening in Policy and Performance and is affecting a massive 347 staff.

Meanwhile the Council continues to hemorrhage money on Consultancy fees and top heavy management structures whilst members on the front line worry about whether they will have a job next year.

Let's put this in perspective, when the next government gets in, whoever they are, we can expect to be hit with a 25% reduction in funding. In staff terms that equates to over 750 jobs!

So what can the Council do?

Of course we could always lose agency staff who currently fill around 30% of all posts.

This is always a contentious issue and can be misleading as in

reality most temps are filling posts which are part of established structures and as such carrying out work which is critical in ensuring that the Council continues to improve.

Thus cutting these posts outright would serve to greatly reduce the capacity of the authority to provide basic services whilst at the same hugely increasing the stress of the permanent workforce who would have to pick up all the work.

So perhaps this is not such a good option.

LBH could then identify ways of saving money through bulk ordering or better procurement. This should be happening already but even if we are really successful in saving big bucks we are not going to be able to find 25% through better procurement alone.

Then there's the buildings owned by the borough, about 500 of them. Office blocks, shop units, halls and land and all in trendy Hackney where property is at a premium anyway (as anyone not earning £50K a year will already know).

Selling off large parts of the Council's estate could realise big bucks and help stave off the worst effects of this greed driven recession.

The Council could also reduce the number of Assistant Directors. Currently the Borough employs a total of 34 ADs all on about 95 grand a year.

Cutting ten AD posts could save the Council close to a million and in these times of trouble we all have to make sacrifices right?!?

Alternatively perhaps senior management would like to volunteer for a pay freeze this year and based on the expected 1% pay rise this alone would save a cool £45K.

Or of course we could get rid of the propaganda rag, HI magazine which no one reads and serves as nothing more than to boost the borough's paper recycling targets!

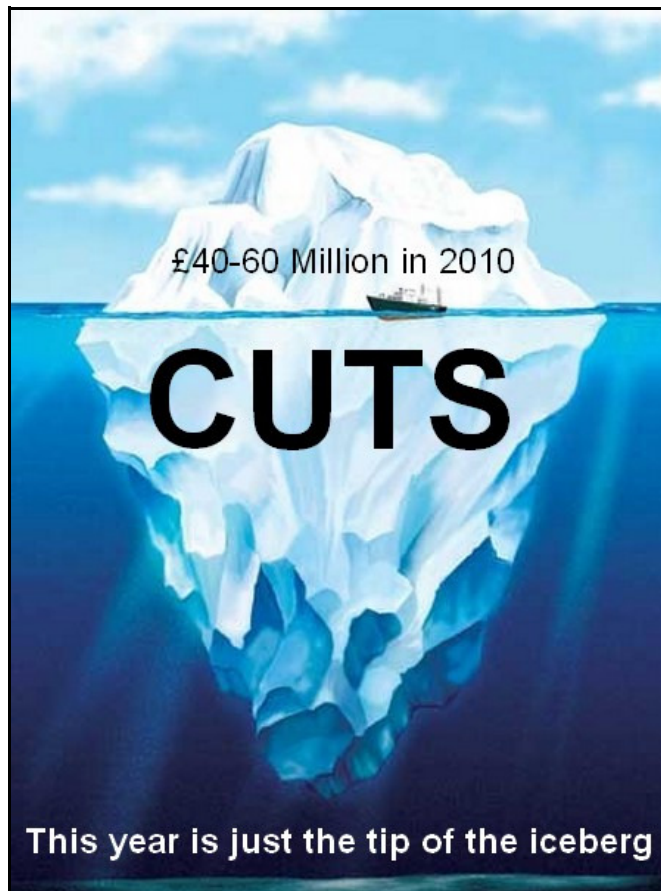
There are plenty of ways of saving money but what we cannot do is tacitly accept that some of us will lose our jobs because of the outrageous risks taken by mercenary bankers in the city.

It is also wrong to perpetuate

the myth that we can maintain front line services by cutting back office staff. Unison members are all on the front line and it although it might sound good to have a customer services officer meeting and greeting every visitor to the new HSC if there's no one left in the back offices to process what the customer needs then what's the point?

The services we all provide are crucial in ensuring a good quality of life for everyone in Hackney, cutting them now will only unravel all the sterling work members have strived to achieve over the past few years.

No one is safe and no department is untouchable the only way that we can stop the most damaging effects of the bankers crisis is to fight for every job in every service area. That doesn't mean stopping the Council from making further efficiency savings, we all want to be more efficient but when efficiencies become cuts we must all stand up to the attacks. This is not our crisis and we will not pay with our jobs.



All Quiet on the Eastern Front

The New Hackney Service Centre was opened officially on 1st February but as staff move in those not stationed in the building are banned from entering!

Hacked Off can reveal that security concerns at the building mean that anyone not actually working in the HSC is barred from walking freely around the new centre of power in Hackney!

The shocking revelation came to light after a union official went to the building to talk to members.

He was met at the door by building management who explained that he would have to be escorted to the department he was visiting to ensure he wasn't 'tailgated' by 'people who shouldn't be here'

Meanwhile members have been bowled over by the lack

of publicity about the new Town Hall and are wondering why the Council is not championing its brave new single front office approach.

Some think this could be due to the fact that the country is wrapped in the worst recession since the great depression and that the unveiling of a new £54 million mega building may not sit so well with local rate payers who are currently feeling the pinch.

This could be one reason why no pictures of the service centre are available on the net.

To try and give members who may not have seen the behemoth in Hillman Street an idea of the HSC and without the benefit of an official photo we have tried to recreate its majesty below.



Get the impression

The real Hackney Service Centre under the arches off the Narrow Way and ASDA in Edinburgh. Try to imagine somewhere in between and you have the new HSC

Unison Members Pack Out the Chambers for AGM

This years AGM went with a bang with the Council Chambers and public gallery full to the brim with members.



The meeting warmly received three speakers from Movement for Justice, Youth Fight for Jobs and Thompsons Solicitors.

Attendees also pledged £400 towards the relief effort in Haiti and agreed to affiliate to the Local Trades Council and Youth Fight for Jobs.

The meeting elected delegates to the national and local government conferences as well as delegations to all the regional and national committees.

There were lively debates about Best Use of Resources, the way the branch is organised and democracy in the union. The meeting was quorate which means that all the business dealt with was ratified.

There are still seats available on the Trades Council, Regional Council and Local Govt. Committee, anyone wishing to be nominated for a place should contact the branch office.

We are also seeking a delegate for the National and Local Govt. Conference in June which is being held in Bournemouth. The branch will cover all the costs of accommodation, travel and expenses for delegates

Motions, delegations, finances and minutes available on request from the branch office.

GENERAL MEETING

1 - 3 pm Wednesday 17th March 2010

Council Chambers

Come and discuss how we can combat the attacks on our jobs, pay and conditions