

# UNISON *news*

## **BRANCH BRIEFING — SHARED SERVICES - CLACKMANNANSHIRE & STIRLING COUNCILS**

### **What is Shared Services?**

Members will be aware that in September 2014, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Council's Management were authorised to commission the production of a business case that would set out the reasons to move towards a full Lead Authority Service Delivery Model but also allow for a wholesale transfer of Social Care and Education staff between both Authorities.

This essentially means that Stirling Council Social Care employees could become employees of Clackmannanshire Council providing Social Care services on a commissioned basis for Stirling and that Clackmannanshire Education employees could be employed by Stirling Council providing services for Clackmannanshire.

Both Stirling UNISON and Clackmannanshire UNISON branches have consistently challenged and raised concerns regarding the Shared Services agenda from the start of the process. We have highlighted to management and our elected members the impact that this could and is already having on our members who provide services to some of the most vulnerable services users in Stirling and Clackmannanshire. UNISON has major concerns that any savings to be made through a Shared Service Lead Authority Service delivery model will be made through job losses due to duplication of posts across the services.

### **What are our concerns?**

In 2011, the Christie Commission recommended a bottom up approach to public sector reform. Instead, all that's on the table are the same tired old solutions: privatisation, shared services and increased centralisation of services. Public services are facing massive cuts and the focus is no longer on driving improvement but instead on where and what to cut. We believe that the route forward must be decided in communities through informed consultation with users and staff rather than driven by consultants selling off the shelf solutions. All public sector organisations should be aware of opportunities to work more efficiently and effectively. UNISON believes that improved cooperation between public service is essential, but this does not require setting up vast public service factories or bringing in the private sector. Sadly shared services are frequently pushed by private consultants as a way to improve services and save money. They are in fact extremely costly and have high upfront costs.

There is clear evidence that conventional shared services is a high risk strategy for local government in Scotland. Shared services won't deliver the savings needed to meet the budget cuts because of:



Valuing public services and the people who provide them

- High up-front costs
- Length of time to achieve savings if they materialise (approx 5 years)
- Technology fails to deliver what's promised
- Costs and work often pushed onto other departments
- Large numbers of mistakes
- Loss of control and operational accountability
- Reduction in democratic accountability

Even on the rare occasions where shared services have been successful the time scale required to rake back the up-front costs mean they could provide no quick fix. Much evidence, in fact shows, that in the majority of cases shared services projects don't achieve what they set out to do, they end up costing jobs, money and damaging services.

### **So what is happening now?**

Both UNISON Branches in Stirling and Clackmannanshire dispute the supposed benefits that this shared project are proposing will bring and believe that experience shows that in the majority of cases they don't achieve what they set out to do, and end up costing jobs, money and damaging services. Both UNISON branches question why the management of both Councils are pushing forward at such a rushed pace, when little has been achieved in four years of joint working, that could have been achieved by other less costly and disruptive means. UNISON can see no clear rationale or business case for both Councils doing what they are doing. UNISON is currently excluded from the various work stream meetings, because we have questioned and challenged proposals, which raises major concerns regarding the transparency of the whole process.

The large amount of evidence that highlights previous failures in shared services projects elsewhere, demonstrates to UNISON that they are on the whole about cost cutting through the loss of jobs and reducing services. UNISON has major concerns regarding the potential impact to our members, delivery of services and service users if there is a move to Lead Authority Service Delivery Model and full integration of staff in Social Care and Education across both Councils.

As it currently stands both UNISON branches believe that the councils case for proceeding with shared services is flawed and that the Councils are failing to fulfil their legal requirement to engage with UNISON and the process should now be forcefully challenged directly with officers and elected officials.

### **What can Members do:**

**- If members live in Clackmannanshire or Stirling Council areas - contact your local councillor about your concerns about the Shared Services proposals. You can get your councillors details from Council Websites.**

**- If you work in Social Services or Education consider becoming a UNISON rep or workplace contact.—speak to your UNISON Branch Officers about this.**

**- Encourage your colleagues who are not members to join UNISON —the more members we have the stronger we are to challenge management on these proposals.**

**- Support the Branch motions on Shared Services that will be debated at AGM meetings .**