

Pay alignment – Update

Firstly, I apologise that it has taken me longer than hoped to post this note.

Forgive me for repeating some of the sentiment of what I said yesterday which I shall put in bullet form for ease of reading:

- Trades unions were not consulted on the decision to make this change;
- Businesses have a right to take this approach;
- This has happened before on occasion including prior to the merger;
- Understanding the logic, whilst not agreeing with the change, BSU pointed out most, if not all, of the concerns expressed on this forum, and;
- The business listened which resulted in some changes to the support being made available but, due to the reasons explained by the business, still wished to go ahead with the same timeframe.

BSU was aware, and feedback both to us and on this forum since the announcement, has confirmed, that staff would fall into three broad categories: i) those who are fortunate enough to have a financial buffer to cope; ii) those to whom it would be inconvenient but would be able to cope by making some changes, and; iii) those whose finances had no leeway whatsoever to cope with the short-term shortfalls created by the timeframe.

Whilst we disagreed with the proposal, we have to accept that the business has a right to take decisions. Given this, our priority was to try to protect those most adversely affected, which is what we are continuing to do by holding further discussions with the company.

I deliberately did not refer to industrial action in my original forum note as I know, from experience, that there is not an appetite amongst our whole membership. Neither did I want to give people false hopes that the decision would be changed. For those wanting a tougher stance, we know that a good proportion of members are able to cope with the change. In addition to this, over 150 of our members are going through organisation designs at present and are worried about redundancy - feedback shows that many are not bothered about pay frequency, they just want a job.

As a senior official, I have to have a mind for the big picture - the results we got from STC, the decent pay settlement (compared to the marketplace), the results we get for individual cases, etc. Whilst there are some folk unhappy with pay and/or STC, these are definitely in the minority and I have to consider what is best for the majority – we will never keep everyone happy all of the time. This does not mean that we ignore those members, and I am aware of a number in Platform due to past reward structures, however in addition to the policies and conditions enjoyed, most of which we have previously negotiated, I am confident we will have the opportunity to further demonstrate our worth to those doubters going forward. We have to be responsible and save our energy for the occasions where we have a chance of attaining our objective.

Our belief is that striking or the taking of industrial action, which harms the employer,

leads to a set of losers which, history tells us, is the staff. I am confident that a degradation in relations with the business, which this action would inevitably lead to, would ultimately have an adverse effect on staff.

I appreciate that some members may disagree with our approach however our obligation is to the whole membership with the longer term view in our minds. Anyone is welcome to join our ranks as representatives, we have been recruiting for some time, to influence our policies. This includes being able to vote on issues such as whether or not I get elected to serve another term. I cannot think of many roles that have that level of direct accountability.

I must point out that we are all in favour of free speech and anyone who knows me and the other senior officers will also know that we do not shy away from responding to members. However I would add that members need to be careful of the way in which they post to this forum and any external websites, such as Facebook, as we would not wish to be representing anyone who ends up facing an allegation of bringing the company into disrepute.

By way of summary, we are genuinely grateful for the feedback and we fully understand members' concerns and shall be continuing to speak with the business regarding implementation. In the meantime, I hope members consider their overall reward packages, terms and conditions of employment, and policies on which BSU has had considerable impact over many years.

Adrian Northcott
BSU Chairman