



Barnet trade union strategy

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European Services Strategy Unit

(Continuing the work of the Centre for Public Services)

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The **European Services Strategy Unit** is committed to social justice, through the provision of good quality public services by democratically accountable public bodies, implementing best practice management, employment, equal opportunity and sustainable development policies. The Unit continues the work of the Centre for Public Services, which began in 1973.

Barnet Trade Union Strategy

Objectives

Five main objectives:

- To ensure that services are fully reviewed with in-house options included in all options appraisals and in-house bids where procurement follows.
- To campaign to get TUPE Plus or secondment adopted in order to help protect staff terms and conditions and their pensions.
- To continue to promote best practice transformation and draw on the experience of other branches and local authorities.
- To critically assess all reviews, options appraisals, business cases and Invitation to Tender/Negotiate/Competitive Dialogue documents if procurement process is commenced.
- To adopt a proactive position rather than simply defence responses to management proposals.
- To be in a position to launch an effective challenge/campaign if/when outsourcing/privatisation is proposed.

Strategy

Critically assess options appraisals, business cases and procurement proposals

The trade union response to the original Crematoria and Cemeteries options appraisal proved what can be achieved when this was stopped at Cabinet in early 2009, with submission of a trade union/ESSU report. The new options appraisal was required to have an in-house option and is the only project in which the trade unions are on the project team with information shared with the trade unions. The circumstances will, however, be different in other services. The trade unions cannot rely on repeating that success because senior management/Cabinet are pressing ahead ignoring requests for staff and trade union involvement and not responding to trade union submissions.

The trade union strategy must be to get engagement and access to proposals at the earliest possible stage. ESSU is available to analyse and prepare critical responses to options appraisals, business cases and reports to One Barnet Board/Future Shape Overview & Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet.

Alternative policies and best practice

Firstly, the material on public sector principles, corporate procurement, TUPE Plus, employment charter, private sector track record in Barnet, staff/community participation and the Barnet economy should be drawn together. There is an urgent need to challenge/expose the easyCouncil model – work on this is beginning. The trade unions need an alternative plan/blueprint and this is needed more than ever. This would bring together a critique of the Council's overall approach with the various proposals already made by the Branch in the transformation toolkit and other documents. It would demonstrate that the trade unions have an overall plan based on

best practice and would have an important role in building support in the community. It would be proactive and illustrate why a different approach is needed for both services and jobs. The Council is still resisting the trade union's request to examine the Newcastle model of engagement around in-house bids. Mass meetings with staff show eagerness for in-house bids to be drawn up and this support should be drawn upon to press the case for the Council to change its policy.

Clarity about in-house options and bids is essential. An in-house option is a proposal drawn up by management and staff to deliver a service, taking account of future needs, innovation and improvements, corporate policies and resources. It is not a 'status quo' or 'do nothing' option. An in-house bid is a fully developed, resourced and costed plan for service delivery submitted by the Council's management (with staff participation) in response to an Invitation to Tender, Negotiate or Competitive Dialogue.

Secondly, a summary should be prepared to promote the plan/blueprint document and used as an organising tool, for example, getting community organisations to sign up to it.

Thirdly, promote the plan/blueprint with other trade unions and community/civil society organisations and campaigns in Barnet - Barnet Trades Council has key role in this and community meeting(s) could link up academy and other Coalition policy changes e.g. 23 September Barnet Alliance 4 Public Services campaign meeting.

Build internal pressure on the Council

The series of Questions submitted in the options appraisals should be used to challenge, seek information/responses and create an audit trail in each service. But there are potential limits if management decide to be selective in their responses or ignore key questions, yet publicly claim they have addressed the questions. It provides an audit trail but this is dependent on them responding. If they don't, the trade unions must ensure that the questions are well publicised internally, and where appropriate, externally. It is important all councillors are kept informed of questions and responses.

Lists of questions should be emailed to all members in each service and also summary hard copies produced for distribution in the Forum and other places/events around council buildings. Each service has got to see that what is happening to them is a council wide matter that the questions are valid and equally applicable to all, and it is entirely reasonable to expect answers.

Build external pressure on the Council

Draw up dossier of bad practice – service reviews, options appraisals, business cases, procurement, contract management, lack of participation/consultation with staff and trade unions.

Consider how to use this *internally* (to elected members, managers and staff) by exposing the fact that there is a lack of coherent corporate implementation (either by design or default). Also consider possible use *externally* by releasing it to media, district auditor, Audit Commission, LGA etc. It is in corporate/service management interests to keep the Barnet process internal and private. They have been keen to

promote the easyCouncil model but not the process. The flaws in the Future Shape programme should be publicly exposed.

The 'fairness, flexibility and responsibility' banner can be used to demonstrate that there is no approval for a mass privatisation agenda based on a political dogma 'public sector bad, private sector good!.

Extend the branch communications strategy

A lot of work is already done on branch communications and this should continue to ensure that:

- Members are regularly kept up to date with developments in their service and workplace e.g. e NEWS, hard copy newsletters/flyers, web site updated, Face book and Twitter
- Members are informed of management's responses or lack of response to the lists of questions
- It is linked into organising and recruitment in targeted services.

Experience has shown the most successful campaigns against marketisation and privatisation are those that follow a strategy that *combines* the following tactics:

1. Critically assesses the direct and indirect impacts (economic, social, equity, employment, environment and ecological), costs and benefits of policies and projects and expose the underlying values, assumptions and vested interests.
2. Develop a trade union alternative plan, promoting progressive change in public sector provision and management and make the case for public investment.
3. Organise and mobilise in the workplace, community and civil society to build strong, effective and independent organisations e.g. Barnet Community Campaign (BCC)
4. Forge local, regional, national and international alliances and coalitions to organise support.
5. Intervene in the planning, public sector reform, service review, options appraisal and procurement processes.
6. Build political support through research, education and communications strategies including evidence of PPP and privatisation impacts and failures.
7. Adopt action strategies that include selective joint civil and industrial action.