

Question from Unison West Suffolk Branch with regard to the Anglia Revenues Partnership Employment Model and Response from the Head of HR, Legal & Democratic Services



Question:

The West Suffolk Branch would like to raise the awareness of the Members of the West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel of the employment model at the Anglia Revenues Partnership. Approximately four years ago before the Shared Services programme was undertaken, sections of staff that worked in the Revenues, Benefits and Fraud teams, based at Bury St Edmunds moved to Thetford to work in partnership with along with three other Local Authorities under the umbrella of Anglia Revenues Partnership known as ARP.

ARP now delivers the services of delivery of benefits and collection of revenues for the four different Authorities of Breckland, Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and East Cambridgeshire. Staff now sit at desks alongside their colleagues at Breckland House in Thetford carrying out the same function, sometimes across other Authorities under the umbrella of ARP.

The anomaly that we would like to raise with you is that whilst St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath staff are now on the same Terms and Conditions, the other Breckland group of employees are on different T&Cs. An example of this is that one employee may be paid at one level, sitting alongside another, doing the same job who is employed by Breckland being paid at a different level. Another example is that one employee may have 20 days leave a year, and another 22 days. These are not exact examples, however hopefully you can see how there are differences between employees carrying out the same job sitting next to each other.

The West Suffolk Branch would ask that this situation is resolved as soon as possible so that all staff are treated equally for the tasks they undertake.

Mark Johnson
Secretary
West Suffolk Branch, Unison

Employer Response:

The ARP partnership is a grouping of councils who have come together under a Joint Committee whereby the employees share the work involved in delivering Revenues and Benefits for those Councils. The staff have remained employees of the Council for whom they work, and they receive the pay and reward package that they are entitled to under their Contract of Employment with the Council for whom they work.

So, if a member of staff is employed by Forest Heath or St Edmundsbury, they receive the same pay and rewards as all their colleagues at FHDC and at SEBC (who have the same 'West Suffolk' remuneration package).

In practical terms this means that some staff work for a West Suffolk Council and enjoy the pay and reward that they have under their Contract of Employment with the council, but they may be sitting alongside a Breckland employee who has different terms and conditions, particularly as Breckland are not part of National Joint Council pay bargaining arrangements.

The ARP HR Group has carried out some work to remove differences where it has been possible to do so – for example Breckland staff now have Flexible Working and Performance Reviews based on the West Suffolk Scheme. Pay however is a far more complex issue – there is not a clear route through either reducing or increasing the pay of those staff that happen to work at ARP, as they receive parity and equal pay based on comparison with the other employees of the Council for whom they work as required by equal pay legislation.

The ARP Joint Committee are working also on agreeing a single HR provider which would mean that a piece of work could be undertaken identifying the differences and consulting with Unison on what aspects could be harmonised without producing an inequality with their home employer.

Karen Points
Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services
West Suffolk Councils