



## **SEFTON NEW DIRECTIONS PETITION**

The following is intended to be a helpful 'script' to accompany the Sefton New Directions Petition and outline the case to be made by UNISON at Full Council on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Background** – Sefton New Directions established in 2007 – *a wholly owned Council Service*. UNISON expressed grave concerns at the haste, the deliberate attempt to avoid Equal Pay costs, the false assurances given to staff about service security and future funding streams and the lack of independence from the Council. Staff placed between redundancy or transfer 'rock and a hard place'.

**Present** – July 2010 Fresh Care Consultants produce report that reaffirms UNISON concerns and is extremely critical of the entire setting up process and subsequent management of the company. Despite several requests, this report has never been shared with the staff or the unions. Findings of the report were accepted by the Board and consultants brought in to manage the Company.

- SND have blamed the Council for withdrawing £3m (25% of their entire budget).
- SND have blamed the unions for their legitimate Equal Pay claims.
- The Council have blamed the SND for not managing or marketing their business properly (although several requests for evidence of concerns being reported before December Cabinet have never been provided)

**Future** – 500 staff placed once again between a 'rock and a hard place', over 4,000 vulnerable service users now in a position of extreme uncertainty through no fault of their own. Fresh Care have produced savage proposals including pay cut for some staff of 25%, 52 redundancies and a wide range of other severe cuts to terms and conditions raising approx £2m of the £3m required by the Council. It is clear these proposals will be rejected and will provoke industrial action.

Fresh Care present some innovative and challenging ideas in relation to income generation and service reconfiguration and UNISON is more than happy to engage in this debate, but not with the threat, caused by the Council requiring £3m of such massive cuts to pay and terms and conditions. There are extremely complex legal issues relating to this matter also that will be robustly defended by the unions if this cannot be sensibly resolved.

**Request** – UNISON is asking that Elected Members give consideration to reduce and/or defer the amount required from the SND budget to allow further and proper meaningful discussions to take place around service provision and terms and conditions. There is a shared aim between Fresh Care and the Unions to resolve this without recourse to unrest, but the financial penalty posed by the Council and the extreme haste has extremely limited the manner in which negotiations can be carried out and any alternatives explored. Having been let down by the Council before, it should now be incumbent upon Councillors for this wholly owned Council company and its 500 staff to be treated fairly and be provided with the reprieve necessary.

**Glen Williams,**

**Branch Secretary,**

**Sefton UNISON**

**February 2011**