

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 MONDAY 12 OCTOBER 2009

EAST MIDLANDS COUNCIL SPENDING ON AGENCY STAFF AND CONSULTANTS “NOTHING SHORT OF A SCANDAL” SAYS UNISON

Figures published today (Monday 12 October) by UNISON, the UK’s largest local government trade union, reveal that councils in the East Midlands spent a massive £151 million on agency staff and external consultants in the last financial year ending March 2009. This is an increase of £18 million from two years ago.

The union believes the total spend will be much higher, as two large councils refused to respond to Freedom of Information requests by UNISON. Derby City Council said that they have no means of monitoring expenditure in these areas. Northamptonshire County Council said a newly installed computer system could no longer report these costs.

Ravi Subramanian, UNISON Regional Head of Local Government criticised this expenditure at a time when council staff are facing job cuts and pay restraint:

“These sums are huge and councils must reign in costs. Vital services are being cut by councils across the East Midlands, yet millions continue to be spent on expensive, private consultants. This is nothing short of a scandal. UNISON demands a cut to this level of financial waste so that essential public services are protected.”

The union has launched a ‘Save jobs and services’ campaign and plans to issue more information collected from Freedom of Information Act Requests over the coming months.

Mr Subramanian said at the launch of the union campaign last week:

“We know that councils can reduce costs on agency staff and consultants. Corby Borough Council has managed to cut these costs by 50% over three years through effective financial control. If they can do it, other councils can.”

ENDS.

Contacts

Ravi Subramanian, UNISON Regional Head of Local Government
0115 847 5482 (work) or 07904 343342 (Mobile)

Notes for editors

UNISON represents 1.37 million public sector workers (with over 100,000 members in the East Midlands). Our members work for the NHS, local councils and schools, care homes, contracted-out public services, in further and higher education institutions, for gas water and electricity utilities, public transport companies, police support staff, and a host of voluntary and charitable groups.