

DEPUTATION THREE – UNISON LEEDS COMMUNITY HEALTH

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR D SYMS: Lord Mayor, Council Members. To my right I have Brian Wheeler, Unison Regional Officer; to my left I have Anne Szczepanska, Unison Health Safety and Welfare Officer; next to Anne is Paul Bullivant, Health and Safety Representative. My name is David Syms, I am the Branch Secretary for Unison Leeds Community Health Branch.

We are here today to speak to you about NHS Leeds proposal, to transfer Leeds Community Health Services into a Social Enterprise, which is a business run for profit but instead of a portion of the profits being spent on shareholder dividends they should be spent the "social causes or objectives". We have a number of significant concerns which we believe you will share and we ask you to refer to the Council's Scrutiny Committee and proposed changes to the provision of NHS services for the population of Leeds. UNISON considers that there has been a lack of meaningful consultation with the trade unions, staff and the people of Leeds in relation to the rush to become a Social Enterprise.

The Government requirement in regard to the setting up of a Social Enterprise is that the staff, in this case of NHS Leeds have the 'right to request' the formation of a Social Enterprise. NHS Leeds decided, with our support, to consult staff over whether or not they want to become an Social Enterprise and held a ballot in August of 2009 for staff to have a chance to have their voice as to whether to become a Community Foundation Trust or a Social Enterprise. A total of 1373 staff voted with 1335 in favour of a Community Foundation Trust - that represents 97% of the vote; 3% or 38 people voted for Social Enterprise. Our view, supported by this evidence, is that staff do not want to work in a Social Enterprise; they want to work in the NHS.

In December 2009 the Department of Health announced that they were not going to create any new Community Foundation Trusts. However that position has changed and new NHS Community Foundation Trusts are being agreed.

In the interim, NHS Leeds began to pursue the option of becoming a Social Enterprise. It is our view that NHS Leeds has not given proper consideration to the other NHS options that were/are open to them.

It is our view that while the NHS Leeds has held what it calls consultation meetings across the city, these meetings do not constitute meaningful consultation with staff. As the meetings were designed to promote the advantages, as seen by NHS Leeds, of social enterprise, in our view it would appear that they have not seriously pursued other NHS options which would keep Leeds Community Health Services within the NHS, subject to rigorous governance arrangements and under public control.

If the move to a Social Enterprise happens it is the start of the break up and privatisation of the whole NHS. If the decision to become a Social Enterprise goes ahead, then it is the beginning of the end for the NHS not only in Leeds but the whole county.

I have worked in the NHS for many years and as a member of staff, a union activist and a resident of Leeds I do not want my NHS services to be privatised.

On the 6th September 2010, at a meeting of the Transforming Community Services Advisory Board, it was announced that Leeds had been provisionally approved in the second wave of Community Foundation Trusts. We are waiting for the Department of Health to confirm this.

On the 9th September 2010 NHS Leeds sent out the following in an e-mail to all staff.

“As you are aware we are pursuing all avenues to become a stand-alone community based organisation. We continue to work on our ‘Right to Request’ social enterprise application but have also been waiting to hear if it was possible to reconsider the Community Foundation Trust option”.

Our concern is that while NHS Leeds continues to pursue a Social Enterprise, they may well miss the opportunity to become a Community Foundation Trust, given the now tight time scales.

Is this what residents of Leeds want for their families and friends? I respectfully submit that it is not. What the people of Leeds want is high quality, efficient and effective local NHS Community Health Services to tend to their Community Health needs, not a private business run for profit, albeit with a social conscience.

If the Social Enterprise bid continues and is successful, then no political party will in the future be in a position to undo or indeed influence in a significant way what is happening to our Community Health Care in Leeds, so we ask you again to refer NHS Leeds proposal to pursue the transfer of services to a Social Enterprise to the Council’s Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, David, for your speech to Council today. Can I now call on Councillor Gruen, please.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I have great pleasure in asking Council to refer this matter to the Executive Board for consideration, please.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED. Thank you for attending Council today and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon to you, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you. (*Applause*)