

Chatham Staff Say "No" To Tonbridge

When Scottish Widows announced its decision to withdraw from Chatham and to move the closed the book operation to Tonbridge it was agreed that staff would have the opportunity to express an interest in either moving to Tonbridge, redeployment in some other part of the Lloyds TSB Group or leaving SW on the agreed severance terms. However, it was made clear that although the preference exercise would shape how staff would be treated by SW there were no guarantees that individual preferences would be met.

Preference Exercise

The preference forms have now been counted and analysed and, as we predicted, the overwhelming majority of staff have rejected the opportunity to move to Tonbridge and have opted instead for either redeployment or, in most cases, to go on the agreed voluntary severance terms. The results of the preference exercise are as follows:

Personal Preferences	No
Redeployment to Tonbridge	54
Redeployment opportunities in SW Edinburgh	6
Redeployment opportunities in Lloyds TSB	65
Considered for severance	268

Scottish Widows have said whilst insufficient staff have expressed a preference to go to Tonbridge at this stage, it is still committed to moving the closed book operation from Chatham by the second half of 2007. However, the fact is that Scottish Widows don't have enough staff with the right skills to cover the operational needs of the business and, in our view, if that remains the case then the closed book operation will not be moving to Tonbridge.

In order to understand individual preferences and the reasons which prevent staff from moving to Tonbridge, particularly those who fall within the mobility policy, SW have said that over the next two weeks they will be meeting with all staff to go through their preference forms.

Preparing For Your Interview

Whilst all staff will be interviewed the reality is that SW are really trying to find out why the majority of staff have said that they don't want to move to Tonbridge and whether there is any help or support they can offer to enable to staff to move. It is important that members prepare fully for their individual meetings. Before the meeting members should familiarise themselves with their original preference form and prepared to explain why they choose a particular preference. In advance of that meeting we would advise members to be clear about what they want to say and make notes if necessary to help them remember and structure the points they want to make. If you can't go to Tonbridge because of personal and domestic circumstances, for example looking after elderly relatives or dropping children off at school in the morning on the way to work, then make sure those points are made in the meetings. Equally, if public transport is an issue be prepared to share with your manager the travelling times for getting to and from work in Tonbridge. If they offer the possibility of different working hours or car sharing don't be afraid to say that you have considered but rejected those options. If there is no help or support SW could offer you to facilitate your move to Tonbridge then make that clear in the meeting.

Staff are not being asked to change their original preferences and we would strongly advise you not to commit to anything during the meeting. At the end of the meeting staff will be asked to sign an interview form confirming the key points discussed at the meeting. Make sure the form covers all the points discussed in the meeting and again don't be afraid to ask for things to be removed or added. If you are not happy with the contents of the completed form and your Senior Manager refuses to include your amendments then don't sign it and contact the Union's Bedford Office immediately.

LTU Advice & Support

It is important at a time like this that members can count on the highest standard of Union representation. If members would like to discuss how to approach their interview then they can contact the Union's 24 hour Advice Line which enables members to speak direct to an LTU Official at any time; whether during the day, night or weekend. Every one of these LTU Officials is specially trained and experienced at advising on, and tackling problems relating to, reorganisations and office closures in the Bank. You can contact the Advice Line on 01234 262868.

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