

Agenda Item 9

17 November 2009

VALUE FOR MONEY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT

Trade Union Facility Time- Review of Arrangements.

WARD/S

ALL

CONTRIBUTORS

Finance and Corporate Services

SYNOPSIS

The report sets out the current position in respect of facility time for trade union officials who had formal time off to perform their role. As a result of the review the council decided to reduce provision of all three unions- Unison: GMB and Unite.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee is asked to consider this report and make recommendations.

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Report on trade union facility time- review of arrangements.

1 Introduction.

- 1.1 In the winter of 2007 this council undertook a review of facility time for trade union officials who had formal time off to perform their role. As a result of the review the council decided to reduce provision of all three unions- Unison: GMB and Unite. The reduction in facility time became effective in the early part of 2008 - different dates for the different unions.
- 1.2 The position is now summarised as follows;

<u>Trade Union</u>	<u>Reps as of October 2007</u>	<u>Reps as of October 2009</u>
Unison	8.1 posts *	4.5 posts *
GMB	3.2 posts	2.0 posts
Unite	1.4 posts	1.0 post
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Total	12.7 posts	7.5 posts

(*includes a 0.5 post solely agreed for Health and Safety at Work purposes).

- 1.3 There were two principle reasons behind the changes. Firstly, there has been a reduction in the numbers of staff employed by the council, and therefore a reduction in trade union membership, due to changes in the structure of the council and as a result of the market testing programme. Secondly, benchmarking against other London boroughs identified that this council had very generous levels of facility time and we wished to bring this borough in line with other London councils.

2 Changes in union membership levels.

- 2.1 Comparison of July 2007 to the current day is as follows;

<u>Trade Union</u>	<u>July 2007 Membership</u>	<u>Sept 2009 Membership</u>
Unison	1,678	1,318
GMB	629	415
Unite	407	103
<u>Total</u>	<u>2,714</u>	<u>1,856</u>

(Membership numbers ascertained from “check off”- union membership subscriptions deducted at source from pay by Payroll Team).

3. Comparison with other London boroughs

- 3.1 London Councils recently conducted a survey of 31 London boroughs – results have now been circulated. The two tables below identify the five councils with the highest and lowest levels of facility time. You will note that the results have been anonymised for the councils’ confidentiality purposes.

<u>Top 5 councils</u>	<u>Number of T/U Representatives</u>	<u>T/U membership</u>
Council 1	9.5	5,788
Council 2	8.6	3,120
Council 3	7.8	1,782
Council 4 (LBH&F)	7.5	1,896
Council 5	7.5	2,031

<u>Bottom 5 councils</u>	<u>Number of T/U Representatives</u>	<u>T/U membership</u>
Council 31	1.0	1508
Council 30	1.5	3626
Council 29	1.6	1124
Council 28	1.6	732
Council 27	2.0	1,430

3.2 The average number of representatives for the whole of London per council is approximately 4.3. The average number of trade union members per council is 2,262 approximately. Although these figures are very approximate, it can be easily seen that LBH&F remains above the average in terms of formal facility time when compared to the rest of London.

4 Salary costs

4.1 The total salary costs for the facility time can be listed below as follows - including on-costs.

<u>Trade Union</u>	<u>No. of reps</u>	<u>Total salary cost</u>	<u>Additional Costs (I.T.)</u>
Unison	4.5	£197,673	£22,250
GMB	2.0	£101,030	£10,000
Unite	1.0	£34,689	£5,000
<u>Totals</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>£333,392</u>	<u>£37,250</u>

4.2 The trade union representatives with paid time off are paid a salary relative to their substantive posts in the Council.

5 Accommodation Costs

5.1 The accommodation costs are listed below for the trades unions who currently occupy two premises – Unison are now located in the Old Registry Office and the GMB/ Unite occupy 34 Fulham Palace Road. The estimated costs of the premises are as follows;

<u>Union/Premises</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Unison – Registry	£15,140
GMB/Unite – 34 Fulham Palace Road	£15,600
<u>Total</u>	<u>£30,740</u>

6. Monitoring Arrangements

- 6.1 Historically trade union officials with formal time off have never had effective monitoring of their time and activities. In September 2009 management established formal monitoring arrangements for each of the three unions which would require them to:
- i) Submit sickness absence returns.
 - ii) Submit corporate weekly monitoring forms for all “corporate” officials.
 - iii) Maintenance of diaries of all trade union activity for shop stewards at their local workplace.
- 6.2 It is hoped that these arrangements will meet any audit requirements in terms of the trade unions and management accounting for time off. Secondly, it is envisaged that the monitoring will inform both sides of the level of time off and trade union activity and inform any ongoing review of trade union facilities.
- 6.3 To date however, the trade unions have not adhered to the management request, despite the fact that consultation took place on the subject in the summer of this year (2009).

7 Trade union “check off”/ subscription/administration costs.

- 7.1 At present Payroll Team provide an administration function for the collection of trade union subscriptions on a monthly basis. The approximate amount of subscriptions collected per month for the main trade unions are as follows:

<u>Trade Union</u>	<u>Total subscriptions collected (£)</u>
Unison	20,198
GMB	4,142
Unite	1,009

- 7.2 Some other London boroughs charge for this service and it is usually charged at 2.5% of amount (approx. £700 per month if LBH & F charged).

8. Formal Review

- 8.1 Management have indicated to the trade unions that a further review of facility time is now needed. Indeed, Unison have been making strong

representation that management should increase their level as the local branch cannot cope, although management do not support this view.

8.2 The names of the current representatives with formal time off in each of the unions are as follows;

<u>Unison</u>	Noreen Morris	1.0 post.
	Paul Widdrington	1.0 post
	Margaret Greer	0.5 post
	Bruce McKay	0.5 post
	Krissy O'Hagan	0.5 post
	Terry Schiff	0.5 post

(Unison not permitted to fill vacant 0.5 post until review completed)

<u>GMB</u>	Graham Lamb	1.0 post
	Bob Watkins	1.0 post

<u>Unite</u>	Ian Burgess	1.0 post
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8.3 Discussions are currently underway with the unions on the issue of facility time and a report setting out management's eventual recommendations will be brought to Cabinet before the end of the financial year.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 –
BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No.	Brief Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext. of holder of file/copy	Department/Location
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