

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2011

Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement

Purpose of Report

1. To ask Staffing Policy Committee to review the current Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement.

Background

2. In July 2010 Staffing Policy Committee agreed a revised Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement on the proviso that this be reviewed in 12 months time. A copy of the agreement is attached as Appendix A.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. At its meeting on 28 July 2010 Staffing Policy Committee resolved:
“To request that a systematic recording of approved time off be continued and that a report on this be presented to the Committee in six months’ time”
4. A report was presented to Staffing Policy Committee on 9 March 2011, with the recommendation that the time recording system remain in place and be reviewed together with the revised Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement in July 2011.
5. Like most organisations, both within the public and private sector, Wiltshire Council has been, and will continue to go through a difficult employee relations period. This has included having had to reduce the number of staff employed, and make redundancies as part of the management review exercise, service reviews and 12% savings review. In addition the authority has to consider the option of changing and in some case reducing, some employee’s terms and conditions in order to achieve the savings that we are required to make.
6. In spite of this Wiltshire Council currently continues to enjoy a positive and constructive employee relations climate and this in part is down to the current Recognition and Facilities Agreement.
7. Just to remind Staffing Policy Committee a Recognition Agreement outlines the Trade Union(s) or Professional Associations(s) formally recognised by an employer for the purposes of collective bargaining and employee consultation. The facilities element of such an agreement defines the facilities such as accommodation, equipment etc that will be made available as well as any time off arrangements.

8. Wiltshire UNISON, in discussion with HR, wish to propose two amendments to the Recognition and Facilities Agreement, these are:

Currently there is the facility for up to 80 days off per month for UNISON branch officer roles which are individually specified in section 10.2. It is proposed that the total number of days per month remains unchanged but that the allocation to the branch officer roles is jointly agreed with the Director of HR & OD and Wiltshire Secretary, and reported to this committee, each March and implemented from 1 April annually.

10.4 of the Facilities and Recognition Agreement refers to funding of £15,000 received by Wiltshire UNISON on 1 April each year to assist with organisational costs incurred by the branch. The Branch Secretary's post has recently been evaluated and as from 1 October 2011 Wiltshire UNISON wishes to use part of this funding to cover the additional salary costs for the current post holder. We are therefore proposing that the wording of this section is amended to reflect this arrangement.

9. In consideration of whether to accept the Recognition and Facilities Agreement Staffing Policy Committee may want to consider the following.

Wiltshire Council encourages staff to belong to a trade union on the basis that this:

- Promotes a positive and constructive industrial relations climate
- Facilitates good communication between the authority and staff
- Promotes the union as representatives of staff and staff interests in collective consultation and negotiation
- Most, if not all, local authorities and larger organisations have Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreements. This is in acknowledgement of the mutual benefits of staff being fully consulted and represented by properly constituted trade unions

10. Given the above and the mutual benefits it is recommended that Staffing Policy Committee accept the Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement in its entirety, including time off and review in a further 12 months i.e. July 2012.

Environment Impact of the Proposal

11. None

Risk Assessment

12. Not having a clearly defined agreement could lead to a disharmonious employee relations climate.

Financial Implications

13. The proposed agreement continues to provide £38,000 per annum towards UNISON trade union activities.
14. In addition there is the facility for up to 80 days off per month from various UNISON branch officer roles. A summary of the time off taken between April 2010 and April 2011 is attached as Appendix B. There is no central funding for this; it is funded by individual departments.

The current arrangements allow for 960 UNISON days per annum. Although the take up of this allowance from 1/4/10 to 31/3/11 was 491 days there is no recommended proposal to change this.

Legal Implications

15. Where a Recognition Agreement exists, an employee who is an official of an independent recognised Trade Union has a statutory right to reasonable paid time off during working hours to carry out trade union duties.

Proposal

16. Staffing Policy Committee is asked to note the above and:
 - a) Agree to the proposed amendments to the Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement.
 - b) Agree the amended Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement for a further 12 months

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Appendices:

Appendix A Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement

Appendix B Summary of UNISON official Time Off: April 2010 – March 2011