

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2024
title: ANNUAL REVIEW OF UNION FACILITIES AGREEMENT
submitted by: JANE PEARSON– DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: DAWN EVANS-STOREY – HEAD OF HR

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on the operation of the Union Facilities Agreement over the last 12 months.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions:

- Community Objectives – None.
- Corporate Priorities – Monitoring of time spent on union matters ensures that we meet our main objective to be “a well-managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.”
- Other considerations – To ensure that the Council can accurately fulfil the requirements of the Local Government Transparency code and that time spent on union duties by representatives is effective, proportionate and does not affect service delivery.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued a revised Transparency Code in October 2014, which specified what open data local authorities must publish. One category of data was specifically concerned with time spent on union duties and the Code specified that Councils must publish the following items of information:

- Total number (absolute and full-time equivalent) of staff who are union representatives (including general, learning and health and safety representatives).
- Total number (absolute and full-time equivalent) of union representatives who devote at least 50 per cent of their time to union duties.
- Names of all Trade Unions represented in the local authority.
- Basic estimate of spending on unions (calculated as the number of full-time equivalent days spent on union duties multiplied by the average salary).
- Basic estimate of spending on unions as a percentage of the total pay bill (calculated as the number of full-time equivalent days spent on union duties multiplied by the average salary divided by the total pay bill).

2.2 At the point the Code was introduced the Council did not have a system or arrangement in place to record the information required.

2.3 The Council recognises UNISON as the official representative and negotiation body for staff and the current Branch Secretary is Linda Boyer from the Community Services Department.

3 ISSUES

3.1 In order to meet the requirements of the Code and to more effectively manage the amount of time spent on union duties we worked with Linda to reach agreement on a formal Facilities Agreement.

3.2 The Agreement was formally agreed in June 2016. A copy of the Agreement is attached at Appendix A.

3.3 As part of the Agreement, we confirmed that Linda could have 3hrs per week (1hr per day on Monday morning, Wednesday afternoon and Friday morning respectively) as designated 'surgery' time when UNISON members could make appointments to discuss matters with her or for her to complete UNISON admin work. This system has worked very successfully throughout the year. In addition to the 'surgery' time, Linda also has regular meetings with myself and accompanies UNISON members at various meetings.

3.4 In order to meet the requirements of the Transparency Code we now keep a record of time spent on union duties and for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 this can be broken down as follows:

Time spent at Regional meetings, UNISON Conference and training	82hrs.
Time spent dealing with Internal meetings*	23hrs. 33 mins

Total 105 hrs. 33 mins = approximately 14.5 days

(based on a standard day of 7hrs 24 mins)

For 2021/2022 (April 2021 to March 2022) the total number of hours was 125 hrs. 11 mins i.e. approximately 17 days (based on a standard day of 7hrs 24 mins).

* This includes regular monthly meetings with HR, CMT meetings, Job Evaluation work and accompanying staff at HR related meetings.

We will use this data to meet the criteria outlined in section 2 above.

3.5 The Facilities Agreement has worked very well over the course of the last 12 months, and I will continue to produce an annual report to Committee for information purposes.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- Resources: The Facilities Agreement ensures that time spent on union duties represents an effective use of time and fits in with department workloads.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal: We are required to publish specific information to meet the demands of the Local Government Transparency Code.
- Political: No implications identified.
- Reputation: No implications identified.
- Equality and Diversity: For all RVBC Policies and Strategies and in line with the Council's approach to equalities, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) checklist has been completed and a full EIA is not required. This will identify the potential impact of the organisation's policies, services and functions on its residents and staff, and will actively look for negative or adverse impacts of policies, services, and functions on any of the nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

5 **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The data recorded and collated will enable us to publish the necessary information to meet the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code.

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