

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2011

TRADE UNION FACILITIES BUDGET

Report from: Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

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Summary

This report covers the implications of the decision made at the Council Meeting on 24 February 2011 to reduce the budget for non-schools trade union facilities by £46,000, which is from £88,382 to £42,382 from 1 April 2011 and makes a recommendation to this Committee on implementation of this decision.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, it is within the remit of this committee to take decisions on this issue.

2. Background

2.1 At the (budget) Council meeting on 24 February 2011, a reduction of the budget for non-schools trade union facilities by £46,000, i.e. a reduction from £88,382 to £42,382 per year from 1 April 2011, was agreed as part of additional proposals announced at the meeting.

2.2 In July 2003, this Committee agreed that the facilities arrangements for the non-teaching staff trade unions should be based on a formula that linked trade union facility time to membership numbers.

2.3 The present arrangements provide corporate funding for:

UNISON: 1 x part time Branch Secretary and 1 x full time equivalent Assistant Branch Secretaries.

GMB: 1 x full time Branch Secretary and 1 x part time Assistant Branch Secretary (funded by UNITE vacancy)

UNITE: 1 x part-time branch secretary - vacant

There are therefore presently 5 employees on full or part time secondment to trade union duties.

3. Advice and Analysis

- 3.1 In view of the decision taken at the recent Council meeting, it is considered that it is no longer viable to utilise the formula agreed back in 2003, supported in further reports to this Committee on 10 February 2005, 25 May 2005 and 29 March 2006.
- 3.2 It is therefore recommended that the Assistant Director, Organisational Services commence discussions with the Branch Secretaries of UNISON, GMB and UNITE and their Regional Officers, on how they wish to utilise the £42,382 remaining in the budget. As this is just over a 50% cut in funding, it is recommended that the current arrangements are simply cut by around 50%.
- 3.3 It is acknowledged that this reduction will have an impact on the trade unions ability to support organisational change and individual employees. Therefore, it will be important to review how the council manages its employee relations and insure that individuals are able to obtain suitable representation.
- 3.4 Employers are required to provide for reasonable time off for employee representatives to undertake their duties. In addition, employers have a legal responsibility to both enter into full and meaningful consultation during situations involving redundancy and allow individual representation for formal employment proceedings.

4. Risk management

- 4.1 The risks in relation to these changes relate to potential delays in relation to the Council being able to deliver speedy resolutions to organisational change and individual cases, but it is believed that this may be mitigated by additional support from the Regional Officers and local stewards.

5. Financial and legal implications

- 5.1 These savings were agreed at Full Council on 24 February 2011 and require implementation.
- 5.2 There are no further legal implications other than those set out in 3.4 above.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The committee is asked to agree that the Assistant Director, Organisational Services commences discussions with the Branch Secretaries of UNISON, GMB and UNITE and their Regional Officers, on how they wish to utilise the £42,382 remaining in the budget in accordance with paragraph 3.2 and report back to the next meeting of this committee.

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Background papers

Employment Matters Committees 30 July 2003, 10 February 2005, 25 May 2005 and 29 March 2006.

Minutes of Council meeting 24 February 2011