

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Employment Committee  
**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Director of HR

### Report Title

**Review of Corporate Trade Union Facilities Agreement**

### Summary

**This report provides information about a proposed review of the corporate trade union facilities agreement, specifically in relation to the number of full-time convenors.**

**The number of staff working for the Council has reduced in recent years, however, the trade union facilities agreement and associated budget has remained the same.**

**Given that the existing staff who are seconded to the two full-time trade union official roles are due to leave the service of the Council on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014, it is timely to review the agreement to reflect current circumstances.**

**This review will be undertaken in conjunction with the trade unions and the outcome of the review will be reported back to the next Employment Committee.**

### Recommendations

**That the content of this report is noted.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Joanne Hyde  
Extension: 1586

Background Papers: Trade Union Facilities Agreement

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	These proposals align with the council's Corporate Priorities in respect to 'Low Council Tax and Value for Money' and 'Reshaping Trafford Council'.
Financial	This review will generate savings against the

	current budget that is allocated to trade union staffing costs
Legal Implications:	The revised agreement will be compliant with the legal requirements relating to trade union recognition.
Equality/Diversity Implications	An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken in line with the Equality Framework
Sustainability Implications	None
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	There may be an impact on the trade union's responsiveness to staff requests, however, work will be undertaken with Unison to encourage the engagement of stewards to assist at a local level.
Risk Management Implications	The reduction in facility arrangements may impact on the timeliness of employment processes.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	As above, if there is reduced responsiveness from the trade union, this could impact on staff health and wellbeing; support is available, however, via health management procedures.
Health and Safety Implications	None

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The existing Trade Union Facilities Agreement attached at Appendix 1 essentially provides for the following arrangement:

*“A total of two full time secondments are currently provided to Unison. The number of secondments will be periodically reviewed based on union membership numbers within the Council. Corporate funding for seconded positions will be up to the maximum of Band 9 (spinal column point 42). The appropriate Trade Union will meet any additional salary costs.”*

- 1.2 This corporate arrangement has been in place for a number of years and has not been subject to a review. A review has recently been undertaken with respect to teaching unions and this arrangement is now reviewed on an annual basis.

## 2. CURRENT SITUATION

- 2.1 The current facilities arrangement has worked well in recent years and Trafford Council is proud of the good relationships that exist with its' recognised trade unions.
- 2.2 There has, however, been a reduction in staffing numbers in recent years which has also had a relative impact on the number of Unison members within the workforce; this situation, coupled with the present situation whereby the two full-time Unison convenors will leave the services of the Council on 30<sup>th</sup>

September 2014, would seem to present an opportune moment to review the existing arrangement.

- 2.3 A review of the arrangement will also provide an opportunity for the Council to achieve savings on the revenue budget that is currently allocated to these roles.
- 2.4 In terms of staffing numbers, since 2010, the number of Council employees (excluding schools) has reduced from 3,700 to 3000. This is an overall reduction of around 20% and it is likely that these numbers of staff directly employed will continue to reduce as the Council reshapes.
- 2.5 In addition, trade union membership has fallen and Unison report that they currently have 1713 members, which includes membership across all Trafford schools. Given that schools make up over 50% of the Council's workforce, it is estimated that Unison membership for the core Council is likely to be in the region of 850.
- 2.6 It is therefore anticipated that current allocation of two full-time convenors is over and above what is required.
- 2.7 The current budget for these convenors is £70k. Again, in light of the reducing numbers, it is anticipated that savings can be made against this budget which will support the Council in managing the financial challenges which it is facing.

### **3. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 Whilst it is proposed to review the number of full-time convenors, it is not proposed to make any amendments to the other arrangements that are in place as part of the Facilities Agreement to support the employee relations framework across Trafford Council; this includes arrangements such as time off for trade union duties, time off for Health and Safety Representatives, time off for Union Learning Representatives, etc.
- 3.2 The review will be done in conjunction with trade union colleagues and will include a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities as well as a review of the scope of the existing arrangements as it is understood that Trafford Council Unison convenors are also called upon to provide services to partner organisations such as Trafford Housing Trust and Trafford Leisure Trust, as well as to a number of academies, who do not currently provide any financial contribution to the costs.
- 3.3 The review will also include working with Unison to encourage the recruitment and development of stewards, who can support members at a local level and thus minimise the impact on staff.

**4. TIMELINE**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the review is undertaken by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 to ensure that sufficient arrangements are in place for full and meaningful dialogue with trade unions at a local level during the forthcoming budget consultation process.
- 4.2 The outcome of the review will be communicated to the Employment Committee at its next meeting.

**Finance Officer Clearance** *(type in initials)*.....JR.....

**Legal Officer Clearance** *(type in initials)*.....JLF.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Harte'.

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE** *(electronic)*.....