

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2017  
title: ANNUAL REVIEW OF UNION FACILITIES AGREEMENT  
submitted by: JANE PEARSON – DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES  
principal author: MICHELLE SMITH – HEAD OF HR

## 1. PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on the operation of the Union Facilities Agreement over the last 6 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 trades 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), and
- 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 payroll).

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 negotiating body for staff and the current Branch Secretary is Linda Boyer from Environmental Health.

### 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 the Branch Secretary to reach agreement on a formal Facilities Agreement.

3.2 The Agreement was trialled between January and May last year and then 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 the Branch Secretary 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, the Branch Secretary also has a regular monthly meeting 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 June 2016 to December 2016 this can be broken down as follows:

Time spent at Regional meetings and UNISON training	56 ¼ hrs
Time spent dealing with internal meetings*	28hrs
Time spent in weekly surgeries	27hrs
<b>Total</b>	<b>111¼ hrs</b>

\* this includes regular meetings monthly meetings with HR, 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 We have also made arrangements with UNISON Regional Offices to be compensated for some of the time that Linda spends attending external UNISON meetings and events in her capacity as Chair of the North West Local Government Service Group. Compensation is calculated based on the Branch Secretary's hourly rate (including on-costs) and we submitted a claim for £438.17 at the end of the year for the period June to December 2016 and based on 27¾ hours.

3.6 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 & Diversity - no implications identified.

## 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.

MICHELLE SMITH  
HEAD OF HR

JANE PEARSON  
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Michelle Smith, ext 4402.



Ribble Valley  
Borough Council

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# **FACILITIES AGREEMENT TIME OFF FOR TRADE UNION DUTIES**

1. The Branch Secretary will be allowed 1 hour between 11am and 12 noon on Mondays, and Fridays, and between 2pm and 3pm on Wednesdays, to deal with union matters.
2. The Branch Secretary may book one of the rooms in the Council Offices to use during this time.
3. In addition, the Branch Secretary will be allowed to attend any meetings called by the Employer e.g CMT, monthly meetings with the Head of HR, attendance at capability/review meetings, disciplinary hearings etc. The Branch Secretary will also be allowed up to an hour of preparation time for any of these meetings.
4. The Branch Secretary will be allowed to deal with urgent emails or phone calls on union matters outside the weekly allowance provided they are dealt with promptly. In most cases it is expected that the Branch Secretary will respond with a 'holding' email/telephone call and defer dealing with a matter until the next prescribed 'slot' as outlined at point 1.
5. The Branch Secretary will also be allowed to attend any regional or national meetings where matters relevant to NJC terms and conditions are to be discussed. A schedule of regular meetings should be submitted to the Head of Service (with a copy to the relevant flexi administrator) for approval at the beginning of the year where possible, so that service delivery is not adversely affected by the representative's absence. Any additional extra ordinary meetings will need to be approved in advance by the Head of Service.
6. If the Branch Secretary has any other official role that requires attendance at National meetings e.g Regional representative, he/she will be allowed to attend subject to approval from the Head of Service. Compensation for attendance at such meetings will be claimed back from UNISON Regional offices.
7. Union members will be given up to an hour to attend the Annual General Meeting. The Council Chamber can be booked for the meeting.
8. The Branch Secretary and any associates must clock out when dealing with Union matters as outlined above (with the exception of point 4 above) or deal with matters in their own time.
9. The Branch Secretary and associates will be allowed time for official union training subject to the approval of their Head of Service and existing workloads/ impact on service delivery. Requests to attend the training must be submitted to the Head of Service well in advance. Members who attend training will be credited with a standard half or full day as per our normal arrangements for training.

10. The current Branch Secretary is Linda Boyer

Other associates are:

Eamonn Roberts	Health & Safety
Judith Paliga	Membership
Karen Kenyon	Treasurer
Joanne Ormerod	Welfare
Adrian Biddell	Depot Health & Safety

In addition, Linda has a small 'team' of staff who she uses for consultation purposes, namely: Sharon O'Neill, Christine Speak, Melissa Thorpe and Zenny Ukadia.

All the above named must clock out if they are dealing with Union matters during works time and complete a flexi adjustment card accordingly.

Signatures:

..... Chief Executive

..... Head of HR

..... UNISON Branch Secretary