

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE & COUNCIL**

**Date of Meeting:**

**Report of: Deputy Chief Executive**

**Title: Creation of a Full Time Union Representative Post**

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

#### **1 What is the report about?**

- 1.1 The report sets out the logic for the creation of full time union official post within the City Council.

#### **2 Recommendations**

##### **2.1**

The Executive recommends to Council that:

1. Each year, the employee elected into the role of Branch Secretary (within Unison) be seconded into a full time "union official" post to be created for the period of their office, normally 12 months.

2. During this secondments, their pay and conditions will match their substantive role.

3. A budget to cover the cost of each annual secondment. For this financial year a budget of £36,500 is required.

4. That this newly created post sits within the Deputy Chief Executive's budget.

5. The Role Description to be applied to this seconded post is attached as Appendix 1 to this report for information.

#### **3 Reasons for the recommendation**

- 3.1 It is clear that in order to ensure that both staff and senior management aspirations are progressed in a positive manner, a closer working relationship with unions is both desirable and necessary. The creation of this post will enhance this relationship and provide a single point of contact for both staff and senior managers. To continue to try and provide a service based on facility time alone is no longer adequate during these turbulent times.

#### **4 What are the resource implications including non-financial resources?**

- 4.1 There will be a cost implication associated with creating this new post. However since this new post will be filled by the incumbent Unison Secretary, who could potentially be replaced each year, the cost will vary depending on the substantive grade of the individual. At present the post holder is a grade 8, with direct salary costs of £29,854

(£36,500 with on cost).

## **5 Section 151 Officer comments**

The additional funding is noted and will be allocated from Reserves. The funding will be built into the budget from next year based on an estimate of salary. Additional Supplementary budget requests will be made where the appointed representative is on a higher grade.

## **6 What are the legal aspects?**

None identified.

## **7 Monitoring Officer's comments**

The Monitoring Officer considers this a prudent step to ensure the continued good working relationship with the Union to ensure process are clear, transparent and accessible to all staff.

## **8 Report details**

8.1 The future for local government is uncertain and the particular role of Exeter City Council in that future will change over time. In light of this uncertainty and potential change, there will need to be a closer working relationships between managers and unions.

8.2 At the same time it is clear that a closer working relationship with the unions is both desired and necessary. Access to at least one of the elected officers of the Unison City Council branch, which represent the majority of unionised staff, is already required on a regular basis through JCNC attendance and/or informal meetings with senior management. The agenda for change already places a demand on unions to respond quickly to meeting requests as issues arise. This can only increase as operating models become more complex in response to changes in both the funding and wider environment.

8.3 Other local authorities in Devon already provide for secondment by union office holders from their substantive role to their union position. It is understood that Devon County Council, for example, have three full time posts filled by way of secondment. It is also believed that North Devon District Council provide for secondment albeit on a part time basis. Clearly, the County Council, as a major employer and with a larger geographical area to cover, will require that level of full time attention from union officials, and equally a smaller district council will get by with one or perhaps a part time secondment. However, given the size of this council and the role the council plays in the local economy and its vision for growth and development, it sits midway between the two and hence why this proposal is for a secondment facility that is limited to one full time equivalent post.

8.4 It is therefore proposed that Executive recommends and Council agree to the proposal that the employee holding the post of Branch Secretary (within Unison) should be on secondment from their substantive role for the period of their office, i.e. normally 12 months. During secondment their pay and conditions will match their substantive role.

8.5 Discussions have taken place with Unite who are also content that any such post, if agreed, should be filled by the Unison Branch Secretary.

**9 How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 The creation of a secondment post will support the Council's objectives of having a well-run Council.

**10 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 There are no direct risks associated with this report.

**11 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

11.1 Not applicable.

**12 Are there any other options?**

12.1 Options available would be either not to agree to the proposal or to implement a part-time rather than a full time role. In respect of a part-time role this is not deemed appropriate in line of the size and complexity of Exeter City Council.

**Deputy Chief Executive**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None

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