



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Potential industrial action involving Belfast City Council Employees
Date:	19th June, 2014
Reporting Officer:	Jill Minne, Assistant Chief Executive and Head of HR
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, HR Manager, ext. 3226.

1.0	Purpose of report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide information on the potential industrial action involving Belfast City Council employees planned for 10th July 2014 and set out relevant issues for Elected Members.

2.0	Relevant Background Information
2.1	The pay and terms and conditions of employment of all UK local government workers, including Belfast City Council employees are determined by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) at national level. As a consequence, the Council has no direct control in the matter of pay negotiations as these are within the remit of these national negotiating mechanisms.
2.2	The 2014/2015 pay negotiations have been ongoing since October, 2013. Following a consultative ballot, members of the three national Local Government trade unions, Unite, Unison and GMB have rejected the NJC Employers' Side offer of a 1% pay increase.
2.3	The three trade unions, together with NIPSA and SIPTU, Belfast City Council's other recognised trade unions, have indicated that they will now ballot their members on industrial action.
2.4	In relation to the impact of this in Belfast City Council it is worth noting that 66% of the Council's workforce is a member of a trade union; 37% are members of NIPSA, 27% are members of GMB, 26% are members of Unite and 10% are members of SIPTU.

2.5	The composition of these unions at a service level has also been identified in order to establish those services potentially most affected by any industrial action.
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3.0	Key Issues
3.1	During June, the local government trade unions will ballot their members on industrial action with the result being known by the end of June 2014.
3.2	It is anticipated that this will result in strike action by Unite, NIPSA, GMB and SIPTU members planned for 10th July, 2014 .
3.3	Should this be the case, Belfast City Council will initiate its Industrial Action Contingency Group (IACG). This group is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive and Head of HR and will establish contingency planning arrangements in the event of industrial action.
3.4	This group will manage all issues arising from the strike through a planned and coordinated approach to ensure that essential services are maintained where possible and that communication is ongoing with elected members, the media and the workforce.
3.5	The IACG will determine exemption requirements, i.e. those individuals or groups of staff who should remain in work during industrial action to minimise disruption to service provision, meet health and safety obligations, and provide business continuity in so far as is practicable (e.g. Registrars, Malone House and Belfast Castle staff for weddings and civil partnerships; cemetery operatives; health and safety staff). The IACG will discuss and seek to agree these exempt staff with the Council's Trade Union Coordinators.
3.6	When the results of the ballot are known the Chief Executive will write to the Party Group Leaders and if the strike has been confirmed she will advise them of the contingency arrangements and contact details for the relevant senior chief officers and senior managers. Communication will be ongoing with elected members as appropriate through the Council's Senior Management Team and Corporate Communications.
3.7	The Assistant Chief Executive and Head of HR will write to all staff regarding the Council's intended action in response to and issues arising from strike action, such as, deduction of pay and pension arrangements.
3.8	The Council will issue public notices advising of the arrangements for key services on the day of industrial action, such as, bin collection, recycling centre and leisure centre opening times.

4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	This report has no financial resource implications. Human resource implications are outlined above.

5.0	Recommendation
5.1	The Committee is requested to note the information as set out in this report.
6.0	Decision Tracking
6.1	A report on the impact of strike action will be presented to Elected Members in August 2014.
7.0	Key to Abbreviations
7.1	NJC – National Joint Council for Local Government Services IACG - Council's Industrial Action Contingency Group
8.0	Documents Attached
8.1	None.