

TRADE UNION FACILITIES PAPER

As well as our main general Trade Union Facilities and Recognition Agreement, for a number of years we have had an annual supplement where we review TU facilities and facility time in view of the previous year and the year ahead. Unison is the only recognised Trade Union we now have. The current supplement is on the JSCC agenda.

Following comments from a number of lobby groups and national media outlets in March 2013 the DCLG published a document - Taxpayer Funding of trade unions – Making Sensible Savings, a link to the document is attached and the document summary is below. The document is described as “advice” rather than formal “guidance” or “regulation”.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxpayer-funding-of-trade-unions-delivering-sensible-savings-in-local-government>

Summary

1. Councils should save taxpayers’ money by significantly scaling back the cost of trade union facility time.
2. There should be full transparency on the level of facility time given to trade unions.
3. Employees should not be spending all or the majority of their working hours on trade union duties.
4. Time off for trade union activities should be unpaid.
5. The amount of facility time should be reduced and should be limited to a set percentage of an organisation’s pay bill.
6. Councils should adopt private sector levels of facility time.
7. Restrictions should be placed on the use of office facilities for trade union representatives.
8. Political material, or material which incites industrial action, should not be produced or distributed on or using taxpayer-funded facilities.
9. Councils should charge for collecting union subscriptions, or end the practice completely.
10. Councillors should declare payments and sponsorship from trade unions and ensure there is no conflict of interest.

Following publication of the DCLG advice we have :-

- Shared the document with Unison branch officials
- Discussed it at our Trade Union Consultation meetings

- Discussed and agreed with the Union for them to record their facility time over a couple of months so we can see what is being used. We are still undertaking that study.

We review facility time carefully each year and year on year we have been agreeing reductions with our TU colleagues.

When the Annual Supplement was last updated in January 2013, it removed the former Branch Secretary role, this made a saving of up to 0.25 FTE we also capped Trade Union release time at no more than 5% of ordinary hours.

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