

**CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF  
DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD**

**Employment Conditions Committee: 23 March 2005**

**Report of Chief Executive**

**APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL STAFF FOR ELECTION DUTIES**

**Background**

1. Increasing difficulty is being experienced in attracting staff to fulfil election duties undertaken during normal office hours.
2. The roles affected in this way are Senior Election Staff, Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks to manage polling stations, Count Assistants where re-counts are held on the day following polling day, and staff to issue and open postal ballot papers.
3. Members are requested to review the current requirement that staff appointed to undertake election duties take leave or flexitime for these purposes.

**Issues**

4. 243 polling stations will be open at the next Parliamentary election, at which 243 Presiding Officers and 270 Poll Clerks will be needed.
5. Appointment to these positions is routinely invited from all sections of the community, and not restricted to Cardiff Council employees. At the last 2 major elections, the criteria for staff appointments was reduced to allow less experienced staff to assume responsibility for polling stations. However, this move did not produce sufficient applicants to comfortably fill the number of vacancies for these important roles.
6. Despite widespread advertising, there has been great difficulty in achieving sufficient levels of staff. The major reason given by those who have not applied is that Cardiff Council requires appointed staff to take annual leave or flexitime whilst undertaking election duties.
7. With the fees provisionally set at a lower level for the next Parliamentary election as compared to the combined European and Local Elections in 2004, there are serious concerns about the ability to maintain all the usual polling stations.
8. A survey of Welsh Councils shows, (Appendix A), that the majority of Authorities do not require staff to take leave for election duties.
9. The Electoral Commission in it's 2003 report 'Funding Electoral Services' recommended that *'it should become standard practice that local council employees are not required to take annual leave to fulfil election duties, in order to ensure that*

*the Returning Officer is able to rely on sufficient staff to deliver an effective election service.'*

## **Proposals**

10. It is proposed that to encourage more County Council staff to apply for election duties to sustain the delivery of an effective election service that duties undertaken as Senior Election Staff, Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks, Count Assistants and Assistants for the issue and opening of postal ballot papers be included in the Council's Special Leave Scheme.

## **Investment for Reform/Benefit to service user**

11. The aim of the proposal is to ensure that Polling Stations are adequately supervised and run by experienced staff as well as ensuring that the postal vote process, which has expanded substantially in recent years is also adequately resourced.

## **Council Policies Supported**

13. This report supports the Council's commitment to increase voter turnout and increase democratic engagement.

## **Advice**

14. This report has been prepared in consultation with relevant Corporate Directors and reflects their advice. It contains all the information necessary to allow Members to arrive at a reasonable view, taking into account the following advice.

## **Legal Implications**

15. There are no unusual legal implications arising from this report and if the recommendation is adopted it is legally achievable. All decisions taken by or on behalf the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers of behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. standing orders and financial regulations; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

## **Financial Implications**

16. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The impact of lost time and any associated costs will be borne by service Areas in which the staff are employed and met from existing budgets.

## **Human Resource Implications**

17. Currently, Council staff are required to seek managerial approval to take annual leave to carry out Election duties. This ensures continuity of service delivery. The same approval would be required under Special Leave arrangements.

## **Trade Union Comments**

18. The Trade Unions welcomed the proposal to amend the Special Leave Policy to incorporate paid leave for staff involved in election duties.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the duties undertaken by all staff involved in Elections, as detailed in paragraph 10 above, be included in the Council's Special Leave Scheme.

**BYRON DAVIES**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**8 March 2005**

The following appendix is attached:  
Appendix A – Survey of election leave given by Welsh Councils

Background Papers  
The Electoral Commission report 203 - 'Funding Electoral Services'