

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

Employment Conditions Committee: 17 October 2005

Report of Assistant Chief Executive

Reimbursement of Professional Fees

Background

1. Whilst the harmonisation of many terms and conditions of employment have been secured since Local Government Reorganisation in 1996, a small number of contractual differences remain between former South Glamorgan County and Cardiff City employees.
2. One difference concerns the reimbursement of professional fees. The former South Glamorgan County Council did not reimburse such fees whilst the former City Council did and this entitlement transferred with those staff at Local Government Reorganisation. This was because a commitment was given at that time that any staff transferring from the predecessor authorities to the new Cardiff Council would be transferred on their existing terms and conditions of employment and that these would be retained until the Council reached an agreement to remove or vary the condition.
3. It was subsequently determined that the reimbursement of professional fees should not be addressed via the harmonisation approach referred to under paragraph 1 above but should be dealt with under the implementation of the Single Status Agreement.
4. Unfortunately, delays in progressing Single Status meant that the plan to address the reimbursement of professional fees stalled. However it has remained an entitlement of former Cardiff City staff who have, since 1996, continued to claim reimbursement.

Issues

5. The current position is that fees are **not** currently reimbursed to:
 - staff who transferred from former South Glamorgan County Council at 01.04.96
 - staff who transferred from the former Taff Ely and Mid-Glamorgan Councils at 01.04.96
 - staff from external organisations who joined Cardiff Council since 01.04.96.
 - staff at OM3 and above (from April 2000) as JNC Terms and conditions do not include reference to payment of professional fees
6. In summary, employees within the Council have acquired membership of professional organisations by examination and use Continuing Professional Development to maintain and enhance their levels of knowledge and expertise. Of these employees some have their fees reimbursed by the Council, whilst the vast majority do not.

7. It is also recognised that in some cases mandatory registration fees are payable by employees to various bodies without which it would be impossible to carry out their duties. The fact that these are not treated in the same way as essential professional qualifications is a further source of inequity.

Proposals

8. In view of the Council's commitment to the development of staff (it is a key driver for change), this clearly inequitable position now needs to be regularised. The knowledge and skills associated with the professional status of certain roles will be key to driving the organisation forward. As the organisation develops, the demand for staff at all levels with professional skills will increase. The Council recognises the potential benefits of employees being members of these organisations, where it enhances their ability to carry out their job. The Council's established framework for building capacity through sustainable leadership and encouraging staff to participate in their professional bodies is an important part of that.
9. The potential costs of extending the former "City Council provision" to all staff have been estimated, based on information provided by Chief Officers, as an additional minimum cost of £110,000 per annum.
10. This approach would be clearly more equitable and groups of staff not previously covered would have the opportunity to have any professional fees reimbursed, as appropriate. Members will also be aware that the Hay report on Remuneration for Operational Managers, being considered as part of the agenda today, highlights the reimbursement of professional fees as an area that needs to be addressed.
11. Further, it would evidence the value that the Council places on professional development of its staff at all levels. It will also address an inequality that has existed for a number of years thus removing an industrial relations issue.
12. It is important that there is a consistency of approach and application if a decision is taken that the Council should reimburse professional fees for relevant staff. Consequently, the following principles need to be agreed and incorporated into a new procedure:
 - membership of the professional body must have been acquired by examination.
 - the professional organisation for which the fees are claimed or the mandatory registration fee must be relevant to the employee's current job
 - the categories of staff for which subscriptions will be paid by the Council is a matter for each Chief Officer to determine
 - staff should in the first instance pay their subscriptions direct to their relevant institute/professional organisation and reclaim them from the Council in a similar manner to other reimbursable expenses eg. travelling expenses, PET etc. with appropriate supporting evidence such as a receipt;
 - expenses will be reimbursed via the payroll;
 - only one professional subscription per employee per financial year will be reimbursed;

Investment for Reform/Benefit to service user

13. Membership of professional organisations enhance the ability of employees to carry out their job. The reimbursement of professional fees will reflect the Council's commitment to professionalism and will better support a quality, highly skilled workforce to serve the people of Cardiff.

Council Policies Supported

14. This report supports the Council's Drivers for Change framework.

Advice

15. This report has been prepared in consultation with relevant Corporate Managers 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

16. The contractual entitlement of former Cardiff City staff will continue. In respect of those staff who have no entitlement, the proposal is that reimbursement by the Council of professional fees will be discretionary rather than contractual - it has to be if Chief Officers are to determine categories of staff in respect of which subscriptions will be paid.

Financial Implications

17. It is estimated that the cost of extending the provision for the reimbursement of professional fees will be a minimum of £110,000 per annum. The implications for individual Service Areas will vary depending on the incidence of the fees and the arrangements within each area. However, any costs arising will have to be met by the Service Areas from within their existing resources.

Human Resource Implications

18. The proposal to extend the former City Council scheme across the Council will remove a current inequality that periodically has created some industrial relations unrest. These proposals will demonstrate the Council's commitment to the professional development of its staff. The Council recognises the potential benefits of employees being members of these organisations .

Trade Union Comments

19. UNISON welcomed the proposal to extend the former Cardiff City provision across the Council and the fact that eligibility concerned relevance to the employee's current job. Other Trade Unions (GMB and T&G) felt that the reimbursement of professional fees should be restricted to those individuals for whom membership of a professional body and/or possession of a recognised qualification was an essential requirement of the post. Further, they considered that a schedule of professional organisations that the Council recognises for reimbursement purposes should be clearly defined and agreed .There was also a concern that leaving the categories of staff for which subscriptions would be paid to Chief Officer discretion could lead to

inequity of treatment and an inconsistent approach to managing the issue. They felt that clear criteria should be developed to clarify eligibility of staff to claim reimbursement of professional fees. Some concern was raised that this scheme would benefit professional staff rather than manual or craft employees.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

20. It is recommended that:-
- (i) the principle of reimbursing professional fees be agreed as outlined in the report and that Chief Officers be authorised to pay a professional subscription where it is considered relevant to the employee's current job;
 - (ii) the principle of reimbursing mandatory registration fees paid by an employee without which he/she would be unable to carry out their duties be agreed
 - (iii) based on the principles outlined in paragraph 12, the Chief Human Resources Officer develop and issue to CIS a procedure, clear criteria and relevant documentation to be used;
 - (iv) the scheme is to be effective for professional fees due from 1st April 2006.

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6 October 2005