



Subject:	Council Response to the Department for Economy's Consultation on the Employment Rights Bill
Date:	20 September 2024
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy
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Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To present a draft Council response to the Department for the Economy's consultation document on the 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and agree the Council's response to the Department for the Economy's consultation document on the 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill. The response will be submitted subject to ratification at the October Council meeting.
3.0	Main report
3.1	In July 2024, Economy Minister Conor Murphy, released the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill consultation.
3.2	The consultation is open for responses from 1 July to 30 September 2024.
3.3	The aim of the consultation is to gain an insight into the opinions of the public, stakeholders and other parties involved in various employment rights with a view to enhancing the Employment Law framework in Northern Ireland to ensure it is fit for purpose.
3.4	Key objectives of the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill consultation include replacing zero-hour contracts with a more flexible option and protecting workers' rights and removing unfair barriers for trade unions, specifically in low-paying sectors. In addition, the consultation will gather views on a broader range of potential employment law enhancements to boost terms of employment, voice, and representation, pay and benefits, and a healthy work-life balance.
3.5	The consultation seeks views on four aspects of a Good Job, as defined by the Carnegie Trust, namely: Terms of Employment; Pay and Benefits; Voice and Representation; and Work-life Balance. Appendix 1 sets out a brief outline of the topics under consideration.
3.6	The consultation responses will be summarised and placed on the Department for the Economy website. This will include a list of organisations that responded but will not include personal data.
3.7	<p>In formulating the Council's response to the consultation document, the views of each council department, Legal Services, and Audit Governance and Risk Services have been sought.</p> <p>There are a number of sections contained in the consultation document that do not apply to the Council as an employer. Where this is the case, the following sections have not been completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understanding Employment Status and addressing bogus self employment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Employment Agency Inspectorate Information Sharing - Call for Information ➤ EAI Enforcement Powers: Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings & Labour Market Enforcement Orders ➤ Pay and Benefits ➤ Working Time Regulations: Record Keeping Requirements – Call for information ➤ Working Time Regulations: Right to Disconnect – Call for information ➤ Collective Bargaining: Recognition – Call for Information ➤ Information and Consultation Definitions – Call for Information ➤ Information and Consultation Thresholds – Call for Information
3.8	<p>In addition, the Committee will note that the Council offers favourable terms and conditions of employment and policies and procedures which make it an employer of choice, and which exceed current statutory requirements. That being the case, it should be noted that the consultation document sets out a number of proposals that the Council already applies, for example, neonatal leave, flexible working etc. These arrangements have been subject to consultation with our trade unions in accordance with the Industrial Relations Framework.</p>
3.9	<p>The commitment to good jobs and good work is central to the Belfast Agenda’s ambition to drive inclusive growth and tackle anti-poverty. Therefore, an overarching civic response is also attached for submission to the Department along with the detailed Council’s response as an employer.</p>
3.10	<p>While broadly supporting the four main themes in the drive to create ‘good jobs’, the covering response recognises the diversity of the business base in Belfast, where 87% of businesses employ fewer than 50 employees and the persistent challenges the local (and regional) economy faces in terms of high levels of economic inactivity, low unemployment and low productivity which make it a challenging economic environment.</p>
3.11	<p>As a result, it focuses on the standards and ambition for the city, highlighting some of the initiatives that can support good jobs and create a framework for more inclusive practices across the city, such as the Belfast Business Promise, as well as the role of anchors and the public sector in enacting social value procurement. This also recommends the need for consideration to be given to encouraging the adoption of the Real Living Wage and support to create inclusive pathways to employment.</p>
3.12	<p>Council Officers have also made their external networks aware of the consultation period on the Good Jobs Employment Bill.</p>
Financial & Resource Implications	

3.13	None
	Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications
3.14	The Department for Economy has undertaken draft equality and rural needs screening and has been screened out. Currently we do not anticipate the policy to result in any adverse impacts on any of the Section 75 groups or for those who live rurally. The Council will be required to undertake Equality & Rural Needs screening whilst carrying out any review of our own policy.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – outline of topics under consideration. Appendix 2 – draft consultation response from a BCC Employer perspective Appendix 3 – draft cover response as a Civic Leader