



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Industrial Action – 16 and 17 July 2008
Date:	22 August 2008
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive.
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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update members on the impact on the council of the national industrial action which took place on 16 and 17 July 2008.; and
- advise members of the current national position in relation to the 2008/09 pay negotiations.

Relevant Background Information

After failure to agree on the 2008/09 NJC pay negotiations, trade unions balloted their members on industrial action in June 2008. NIPSA, Unite (including T&G and AMICUS), UNISON and SIPTU all voted in support of industrial action. As a result, strike action took place on a national level on 16 and 17 July 2008.

Strike action did not apply to craft workers, who are employed under different terms and conditions and UCATT did not ballot their members. The GMB voted against strike action.

Key Issues

Impact nationally

National figures indicate that around 90,000 employees went on strike on 16 July, representing around 8% of the local government workforce of 1.2 million. That figure was slightly lower on 17 July 2008.

The overall figure for Northern Ireland has not yet been confirmed, although some councils reported up to 24% of staff on strike. Given that the level of trade union density in Northern Ireland is significantly higher than elsewhere in the UK, it is unsurprising that Northern Ireland figures for participation are likely to be higher than the national average.

Impact on Belfast City Council

The breakdown for numbers of Belfast City Council employees participating in the industrial action is as follows:

	16 July	17 July
Monthly paid	212	203
Fortnightly paid	528	516
% of workforce	26.5%	25.8%

- The Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services met the Party Group Leaders on 3 July to discuss the contingencies to be put in place for the strike. Considerable contingency action was then put in place to ensure that disruption to the public was minimised.
- A co-ordinated approach to communication with members, the media and the workforce was planned, agreed and implemented.
- Impact on service delivery and key sites across the council was monitored on the days of action by a Central Information Control group.

The main areas affected by the industrial action were in Cleansing Services, Waste Management, Community Services and the Parks and Leisure Department (Appendix 1 details which council buildings were open/closed) Considerable efforts were made to ensure disruption to the public was minimised through media updates, leaflet drops to householders and public notices.

A number of key events went ahead successfully on the days of industrial action, including the Rose Trials event in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, the Opera in the park at Botanic Gardens and two weddings at Malone House.

Current situation

The National Employers Organisation, UNISON and Unite have announced that they will enter into further negotiations with the aim of securing an agreed employment package which resolves the current dispute. The agreed talks began on Wednesday 13 August and will continue on Friday 22 August. No dates have been planned for further industrial action. Members will be updated on the progress of these discussions.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the information set out in this report.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Council buildings status during industrial action