

Council 12th November 2015 (adjourned to 17th December 2015)

Trade Union Bill

Lead Member - Cllr. Robin Moss

Labour Group to move:

This council notes:

- In July 2015 the government announced its Trade Union bill – a set of proposals which pose a threat to workers' rights. If this bill becomes law, it will undermine the basic right to strike and make it harder for workers to organise effectively in trade unions. It will also give a green light to bad bosses to take advantage and treat workers unfairly.
- A specific proposed change in the bill is to scrap subscription arrangements known as “check off”. Trade union members can currently choose to pay their union subscriptions by deduction from their wages. Employers may lawfully make deductions, but only where the worker has given written consent. It is a voluntary arrangement, and there is no statutory duty to operate it. In abolishing check-off, the Government designs to drive down union membership and weaken the rights of public sector workers.
- Another proposal is to allow employers to substitute agency workers for strikers during disputes, effectively undermining the industrial action. This risks long-term damage to cooperative working and could potentially put the public at risk if agency workers are asked to undertake technically demanding jobs they are not qualified or experienced for.
- Whilst these unnecessary changes are being proposed, strikes in the UK are at historically low levels.

Council believes:

- The bill clearly demonstrates that the government is not on the side of working people. It would remove the ability for workers to have a voice that is represented by their Trade Union in the negotiation and protection of their terms and conditions of employment.
- No worker ever wants to go on strike, but it is a crucial last resort when an employer refuses to listen, negotiate or compromise. Ordinary workers should have the right to take action when they are treated unreasonably, or have strong concerns about service cuts, safety in the workplace or safety of the public they serve.
- We continue to value the importance of meaningful workforce engagement and representation through trade unions in Bath and North East Somerset. The right to strike and protest are fundamental rights which should be valued and respected in a free and democratic society.

Council objects:

- To the Trade Union Bill. It is an unnecessary attack on workers' rights that will undermine the collective bargaining powers of Trade Unions and impact on workers in the Bath and North East Somerset area.

Council calls:

- Upon the government to think again about these plans.

Council resolves:

- To write to the two Conservative MPs in the Bath and North East Somerset constituencies informing them of our position and encouraging them to oppose the trade union bill.