

Report on	Extension to the Partnership Liaison Officer post shared between Councils and HSENI
Date of Meeting	10 th January 2024
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
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Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with information on the extension request for the Partnership Liaison Officer (PLO) post between the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) and district Councils and to seek approval to continue with Mid Ulster District Council's financial contribution until 31 st March 2026.
	Background
2.1	Since 2002, Councils have contributed to a jointly funded post to facilitate an effective working partnership between the regulatory stakeholders for health and safety. The role was developed to allow the aims and objectives outlined in the HELANI strategy for workplace Health and Safety to be brought forward and to ensure the operational delivery "Saving lives not stopping them".
2.2	In September 2018, Members at the Environment Committee resolved to approve annual funding towards a 'Partnership Liaison Officer' post (minute reference: E248/18). This is a shared resource between all eleven Councils within Northern Ireland and the HSENI.
2.3	Subsequently the Development Committee in February 2022 resolved to continue funding the Partnership Liaison Officer for a further 2 years until the next review in 2024 (minute: reference D028/22).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) are the employing authority for the Partnership Liaison Officer, and they recover the overall cost of the post equally from all eleven Councils within Northern Ireland and the HSENI.
3.2	The current cost to Mid Ulster District Council is £4,500 per annum and provision has been made each year within the annual Environmental Health departmental budget.
3.3	Previously in February 2022, it was noted that the funding contribution would be continued for a further period of two years until 31 st March 2024.
3.4	The current post via the employing authority LCCC has been occupied since 21 st July 2020 via a two-year interchange secondment and subsequent extension to end of March 2024.
3.5	However, during the Covid -19 pandemic the postholder operated as a point of contact between 'The Executive Office' and other groups. It is only since Covid-19 that there has been the opportunity to build on the partnerships between Councils and HSENI to deliver on the key priorities of the region.

3.6	Whilst financial constraints on Councils is acknowledged, all local authorities are being asked to give consideration to the extension of the current secondment for another 2 years. It is also proposed that during the second year of this extension, the Northern Ireland Health and Safety Liaison Group will conduct a review of this post and make future recommendations.
3.7	Whilst the final cost to each council has not yet been determined, it is estimated given an increase for pay awards etc. the cost should not exceed approximately £6,000 per annum, should the arrangement continue.
3.8	<p>Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council are suggesting that this post be offered as a 2-year extension to the current secondment contract if the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All 12 partners (11 Councils and HSENI) must be committed to the post 2. Costs associated with the post must be divided equally amongst the 12 partners. 3. LCCC will continue to host the PLO in Lagan Valley Island and give day-to-day management support as the host council, with the assistance of HSENI. 4. LCCC will continue to be the employing authority and recover costs as before until March 2026. 5. A review of the effectiveness of the PLO will be conducted in the second year to inform whether the post should continue post March 2026 and if so in what form.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: approximately £6,000 per year – can be met within current annual Environmental Health budget.
	Human: LCCC are the employing authority for the PLO post.
	Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note the contents of this report and give approval to continue with the provision of annual funding towards the Partnership Liaison Officer until 31 st March 2026.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A