

County looking at staff pay and grades

UNION FEARS JOBS REVIEW

BY BEN NORMAN

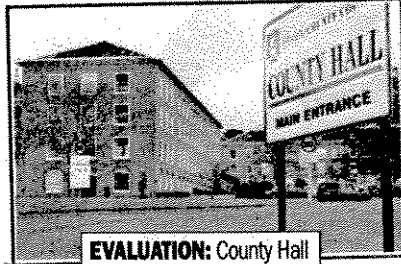
UNION bosses fear thousands of Exeter-based workers could end up being worse off after a job evaluation exercise.

The prospect of performance-related targets being set for staff is also causing alarm at County Hall.

It comes as Devon County Council carries out a grading and pay review of posts. There are worries the review — similar to the now postponed shake-up that led to civilian staff walkouts at Devon and Cornwall police — could leave some council workers worse off.

According to the unions, under the job evaluation the grading level of posts across the authority may change. Although some workers could see their grades and pay go up or stay the same, others may see their jobs downgraded and salaries fall.

Unison, the largest union on the council, wants to ensure county staff are given protection to soften the blow of possible wage cuts. It is also worried about proposals which it claims amount to bringing in performance-related bonuses.



EVALUATION: County Hall

Roberto Franceschini, vice-chairman of Unison's county council branch, said: "The job evaluation is going to affect thousands of county council workers.

"Our main goal is to avoid a repeat of the recent police authority situation where dozens of workers faced large amounts of pay change without being given adequate protection.

"Under the job evaluation process some workers are likely to see the grading for their posts go down and that could lead to them receiving less pay. Other workers may go up a grade and some may stay the same.

"As a union, we are concerned that staff whose posts are downgraded are

given proper protection to cushion the impact of the changes.

"This has to be either by postponing the introduction of the lower grades for certain posts over a period of time, or not introducing the new grade until the individual currently in the post leaves the authority.

"Our other concern is that we are unhappy with how the job evaluation process, which is part of a national agreement, is being used to bring in a performance and review system. The council seems to have dreamed it up itself."

A county spokesman said: "In the light of the Government's recent revised pay and workforce guidance to local authorities, the county council is consulting sensibly with the trade unions about a measured way forward that ensures the contribution our dedicated, hard-working staff make to our vital public services is properly recognised and rewarded.

"It is important to take into account Government guidance to ensure our employment policies are fair, progressive and help to deliver great services."

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