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UNISON'S NJC COMMITTEE MEETS AND THREE NJC UNIONS AGREE TO PRESS FOR FURTHER URGENT NEGOTIATIONS

UNISON's NJC Committee meets

UNISON's NJC Committee met on Friday 15 March before a meeting with GMB and Unite at the NJC Trade Union Side. Your Regional representatives on the Committee had a detailed discussion about the current state-of-play following the Local Government Employers' (LGE) pay 'offer', **which the NJC Committee rejected at its earlier meeting on 27 February.**

The Committee heard that NJC pay has declined by 16% since 2009, when there was a small pay increase. Since that date, pay has been frozen, while the cost of living has risen by 18%. At the same time, around 300,000 jobs have gone through redundancy and deletion of vacant posts in local government. **Our members are doing much more, for much less.**

Head of Local Government, Heather Wakefield, told the meeting that she felt that there was no mandate from local authorities for the offer that has been made by the Local Government Employers because:

- At least three Regional Employer bodies have stated their support for an increase of 1% with no 'strings', in line with government pay policy and other councils agree
- 25 councils are now paying the Living Wage and more are following. If councils can afford the Living Wage, they can afford an increase for all NJC workers

- Councils not in the NJC who have settled pay this year have settled above 1%
- The overall NJC pay bill fell by 9.3% between 2010/11 and 2011/12, with a similar drop in the previous year
- Some senior HR managers have expressed dismay at the offer
- The Chair of the Public People Managers Association (PPMA) had stated publicly that any cuts to conditions would only be 'symbolic'
- Some councils – like Oxford City - have agreed a higher pay increase and a local Living Wage, in return for opting out of the NJC. The employers stance is breaking up sector-wide collective bargaining, which UNISON supports

Many councils have also cut conditions of work and redundancy pay, while spending £ millions on consultants and agency workers which they could be investing in their own staff through a decent pay increase. Council reserves have risen from £13 to £16 billion in the last two years!!! **Councils are putting money in the bank, but not into the pay packets of local government workers.**

The Committee noted that there had been some early responses to the e-mail sent to all councillors in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, supporting an improved offer - (although some councillors appeared more concerned about their own expenses!)

The Committee agreed that:

- We should press ahead with urgent negotiations to improve the offer, but not be drawn into lengthy discussions which will prevent members being consulted at the earliest opportunity
- **All branches and Regions should lobby councillors hard over the next two weeks to secure agreement for an improved offer**
- Negotiators should follow the decision of UNISON's NJC Committee and the NJC Trade Union Side in 2011 *not* to negotiate over reductions to Part 2 conditions such as sick pay
- All members will be consulted over any final offer through branches, using branch ballots where possible
- Branches should work closely with GMB and Unite activists at local level to ensure a united opposition to the LGE 'offer'
- NJC pay should be at the heart of UNISON's recruitment and organising activities

UNISON's campaign

The NJC Committee also discussed UNISON's pay campaign, which will continue from now until we secure a better deal for local government workers. **All Regions, branches and members are being called upon to increase pressure on the employers by contacting councillors and highlight the scandal of poverty pay in local government.**

The following materials and campaign materials are being produced:

- A Time To Take A Stand Facebook page will be launched in the next week
- A members' leaflet is being printed (pdf attached)
- A further e-mail to all councillors
- A powerpoint presentation and speakers' notes

Three unions agree to press for further urgent negotiations

The NJC Trade Union Side met after the UNISON meeting. GMB and Unite have not rejected the offer, but agreed with UNISON that urgent negotiations need to take place to improve it. The meeting was reminded that joint union campaigns such as that between Unite and UNISON in Southampton had been a great success and that we should try and **ensure maximum unity between the three unions and joint campaigning over pay this year.**

Heather Wakefield reminded the meeting of the Trade Union Side's decision that negotiators should **not** negotiate over Part 2 conditions in the Green Book, like sick pay and annual leave. The meeting was also reminded that many UNISON members are losing money through local moves to cut mileage allowance to the HMRC rate. **It was agreed by the Trade Union Side that Part 2 conditions should not be subject to negotiation at NJC level, in line with the Trade Union Side's earlier decision.**

Go forth and multiply!

UNISON's NJC Committee agreed that our NJC pay campaign should be at the heart of the union's current and future recruitment activities. **All local government members are asked to recruit at least one non-member in the next two weeks and double our membership in local government.** Recruitment materials are available at <http://www.unison.org.uk/recruitment/index.asp>