

# Strike vote over contracts dispute

W.F. GUARDIAN 12.1.12.

By DANIEL BINNS

dbinns@london.newsquest.co.uk

A UNION is to ballot council workers on strike action over new pay and conditions, which it claims will impact on Waltham Forest's most vulnerable residents.

The vote, to be held by Unison early next month, will propose weekend walk-outs and a staff boycott of using their own cars for council business.

It comes after the authority forced workers to sign new contracts which included cuts to overtime pay, travel allowances and emergency call-out allowances.

The council threatened to sack anyone who did not agree to the new terms by the end of November.

A council worker, who contacted the *Guardian* but asked not to be named for fear of losing his job, said a large number of frontline workers would be forced into financial hardship and vital services will suffer.

He said staff such as care workers, social workers and emergency support would be hit hardest by the contract changes, while managers and administrators would be significantly less affected.



Unison members will be balloted over strike action (EL25742-2)

"These are staff and services which are directly responsible for the well-being and safety of not only the most vulnerable and most needy but the borough as a whole," he said.

"The work these staff do is mostly carried out un-noticed by residents as it is often in the middle of the night, at weekends, during bad weather and often during public holidays - all times when their presence is most needed."

He added that some staff will see a reduction in their income by thousands of pounds a year and are currently having to work to rule, which is undermining critical support services.

He said: "The financial savings compared to the potential effects upon the residents of the borough is hard to justify, likewise the

financial savings from such a specific group of staff compared to the total number of staff employed by Waltham Forest Council mean a small percentage are funding the largest savings."

He also claimed that credible alternative proposals devised by staff and managers aimed at lessening the impact of cuts had been blocked.

The council leadership say the measures are fair and vital to prevent further job losses by saving £3 million following an unprecedented cut in Government funding.

The Government insist the cuts are necessary due to the overspending of the previous Labour administration.

The new contracts are due to come into effect on January 23.