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UNISON CALLS FOR A 5% PAY RISE FOR ALL – AND THE FOUNDATION LIVING WAGE FOR THE LOWEST PAID

UNISON, GMB and Unite today lodged the following pay claim for all council and school workers employed on NJC pay in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

The deletion of NJC pay points SCP 6-9 to reach the Foundation Living Wage of £8.45 (UK) and £9.75 (London) and a 5% increase on all NJC pay points

The claim is attached and has been submitted to the Local Government Association.

Below are the key arguments made in the claim:

1. Declining value of NJC pay:

- For the vast majority of NJC workers in local government and schools - last year's pay 'rise' actually represented the EIGHTH consecutive annual pay cut since 2009.
- Pay in local government and schools is one of the lowest in the public sector. No-one is paid a fair rate for the job they do.
- A continuation of the 1 per cent pay cap would represent a further squeeze on our members' quality of life that is even worse than during the 1980s and 1990s, exacerbating an already desperate situation for many.
- The bottom rate of pay in local government - £7.78 - is only 28p above the National Living Wage (NLW) and well below the UK Foundation Living Wage rate of £8.45 and £9.75 in London.
- Inflation is predicted to remain in excess of 3% for the next five years. This means that the cost of living for our members will rise by nearly 18% by 2021. In that context, a 1% pay offer for the sector would be unacceptable.

- If pay is capped at 1% from 2018 - 2019, the average local government wage will fall in value by nearly £1,200. This would be on top of a real terms loss in pay of some 21% since 2009.
- NJC workers on the bottom pay point will require a 15.7% increase in pay to reach the currently projected rate for the National Living Wage of £9 per hour by 2020.
- Women are more than three quarters of the NJC workforce. The gender pay gap has widened in the public sector since the pay cap was introduced, even though it has narrowed in the wider economy. Endemic low pay is a gender issue and represents the undervaluing of women's skills, knowledge and experience in schools and council services.

2. **Pay-related conditions of work:**

- Most councils are slashing conditions of work such as unsocial hours payments – alongside the decline in basic pay. This means workers providing services that require them to work regular overtime, shift work and unsocial hours work, are suffering further reductions in pay as additional payments are cut.

3. **Job losses:**

- Since June 2010, local government has lost over 750,000 jobs. Those workers left behind face increased workloads, pressure and stress – on top of shrinking pay packets. As a result, local services, and those reliant upon them, suffer.
- Many employees who have been made redundant have been replaced by agency staff – a false economy for councils in both the short and long term. Agency workers are expensive and public money is wasted in often high agency fees.

4. **Recruitment and retention:**

- With pay comparing so badly with the rest of the public and private sectors, 71% of councils unsurprisingly report recruitment and retention problems.

5. **Equal pay:**

- The National Living Wage has been introduced by the Government without any extra funding for councils and schools to pay for it. Indeed council budgets have been slashed by at least 40% since 2010. With NJC pay kept low by pay freezes or below-inflation increases, the National Living Wage has become the determinant of the bottom pay rate. This means that fair and transparent pay grades, based on job

evaluation, are being squashed together at the bottom of the pay structure.

- With supervisors being paid similar rates to those they supervise, this leaves councils at risk of another round of costly equal pay claims. Applying the legal minimum pay rise to the bottom of the pay scale, and cutting pay for everyone else is unsustainable and not an option for the unions.

Gear Up for the Pay Campaign!

The Local Government Association have told us they will now start their consultation exercise on the pay claim and respond to us in late September.

It is crucial we maximize political pressure on council and school staff employers during this period. We will also be seeking meetings with Government and Shadow Ministers to press the case for funding for the NJC claim and the pay spine review. The first stage of our campaign is to build awareness of the NJC pay claim at local level with members.

We need YOU to make our campaign a success.

A campaign plan for branches to develop at local level will be sent to you next week. A range of materials are in production to be available for branches soon. These include.

- Members leaflet
- Stewards briefing
- PowerPoint presentation
- Recruiters Script
- A postcard for members to send to the Prime Minister

We welcome any comments or ideas from branches about how to build the campaign. Please email us at NJCPay2018@unison.co.uk