



For council and school workers

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Issue Number 01

UNISON calls for the bottom NJC pay point to be £10 per hour and a 10% pay rise on other pay points

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:

- A real living wage of £10 per hour to be introduced for NJC scp 1 and a 10% increase on all other NJC/GLPC pay points
- A one day increase to the minimum paid annual leave entitlement set out in the Green Book
- A two hour reduction in the standard working week as set out in the Green Book
- A comprehensive joint national review of the workplace causes of stress and mental health throughout local authorities

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

Below are the key arguments made in the claim:

Context of our claim

- Local Government has endured central government funding cuts of nearly 50% since 2010
- 1 in 3 councils fear they will run out of funding to provide statutory, legal duties by 2022/23
- Central government says that austerity is over - and all political parties now agree public services need greater investment.
- Two thirds of the public want the government to increase spending on public services

Economic background

- RPI inflation is expected to average 2.7% and 2.8% respectively over 2020 and then run at 3% or above every year until 2023
- If these rates turn out to be correct, the cost of living the NJC workforce faces will have grown by over 15% between 2019 and 2023
- Most spine points have been devalued by 21.8% in real terms and for new scp 11, the most populated NJC pay point by headcount, the shortfall versus RPI inflation is £5,626, meaning a 26.6% pay increase is needed to catch up
- Between 2010 and 2018 a number of core costs rose faster than both NJC pay and RPI, including bus/coach fares (51%) electricity (48%) house prices (37%) and childcare (32%.)

Comparing NJC pay

- A £10 an hour minimum wage has cross party support as a common sense solution to the unsustainable problem of topping up low pay via tax credits
- Establishing a £10 minimum hourly rate in this pay round enables the NJC to build in headroom and avoid skirting a new legal minimum wage
- If scp 1 was increased to £10 an hour (an 11% increase) then a 10% general increase would protect the new differentials established in the last pay settlement
- Pay in local government is still among the lowest in the public sector

Pay related conditions

- For the last nine years councils across the board have cut working conditions like unsocial hours, overtime and car allowances
- 50% of the workforce is made up of part-time employees, working regular unpaid overtime
- A GMB survey found local government workers are significantly more likely to work unpaid overtime compared to those in other occupations
- Sickness caused by work-related stress, depression or anxiety is now an acute issue within local authority services - with local authority sickness rates now over double those for the economy as a whole
- Long hours can lead to serious and long term mental and physical ill health, stress, fatigue and increases in workplace accidents
- Local government workers are significantly more likely to work unpaid overtime compared to those in other occupations
- The proposal to cap exit payments at £95,000 will have a particularly negative effect on local government workers

Job losses

- Across the UK, an estimated 876,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of 30%
- Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector
- There has been no decrease in the statutory functions of local authorities - with many of these services seeing a significant increase in demand

Recruitment and retention

- As of 2017/18, 78% of councils are experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties
- Local authorities' reported average vacancy rate of 8% is significantly higher than the averages for wider public sector and in the economy as a whole
- Councils spent £335 million on agency social workers in 2017/18.

Morale under threat

- A survey of over 21,000 UNISON members found that 83% say that budget cuts in the past two years have had an impact on their ability to do their job
- 89% said that budget cuts have had a negative impact on staff morale and 54% said their workload is unmanageable
- A Unite survey found that only 11% of members rated morale as good or excellent in their workplace, with over 50% rating it as bad or terrible

Equality impact

- Cuts to real pay, terms and conditions, and employment totals by NJC employers have had a disproportionate impact on workers who share protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act

Conclusion

- Local government workers have delivered efficiency savings year-on-year against immense pressure
- New money is needed to fund this claim. It cannot and must not be funded by local attacks on locally determined conditions
- Paying local government staff properly is an investment in both local services and the local economy
- The Trade Union Side notes that the LGA's engagement with us on collective bargaining has deteriorated in recent years. We expect the LGA to enter into meaningful negotiations with us on the claim in keeping with the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention 1978 (No 15.)

Gear Up for the Pay Campaign!

The Local Government Association have told us they will be consulting councils on the pay claim in September and October. It will be crucial we maximize political pressure on council and school staff employers during this period. The first stage of our campaign will be 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 so that you are ready to start campaigning at the beginning of September. A range of materials are in production to be available for branches during next month. 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 NJCPay2020@unison.co.uk