



## For Council and School Workers

20 February 2020

Issue Number 02

### Keep up the Pressure – What you need to do now!

*This bulletin contains updates on the NJC pay negotiations. It gives branches and members ideas about how they can take part in the campaign and keep up the pressure on the government. A range of new campaign resources will be launched early next week.*

#### **Initial 2% pay offer rejected**

As you know, earlier this month UNISON and the other local government unions rejected an initial offer of a 2% pay rise from the employers' (represented by the Local Government Association).

Our claim was for a new minimum rate of £10 an hour, and 10% for everybody else. We also asked for improvements in annual leave and working hours, and joint work on mental health.

The employers made an initial pay offer of a one-year deal of 2% across all pay points from 1 April.

During negotiations, UNISON's representatives expressed huge disappointment with the opening offer. We argued that pay settlements elsewhere have been higher and that this pay offer would leave local government further behind other parts of the public sector. It even fell short of rises needed to meet the Government's long-term plans for the national living wage.

Since 2010, local government workers' pay has lost fallen significantly in real terms, and as a result many of our members are struggling to get by.

UNISON called on the employers to think again and make a better offer. They agreed re-convene their full negotiating body to consider the points we made, before meeting with us again for further negotiations. We urged the employers to carry out this process as quickly as possible.

## **Regional pay briefings**

Following our meeting the employers decided to launch a new round of regional pay briefings, to get local authorities' views on local government pay and how they should respond to our rejection of the 2% offer.

We have expressed our concerns over this additional delay – although it does show they are taking the negotiations seriously. We hope they will use these regional meetings to get support for a significantly improved pay offer.

In the meantime, we need to put maximum pressure on councillors, to get their support for our pay campaign and get their councils to support a better pay offer.

We are updating our 'email your councillor' online tool, to report on the initial offer and make clear that councils need to put pressure on the government to fund an improved pay offer. The updated tool will be launched next week, at our campaign website, <https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/fair-pay-now-council-school-workers/>. We will notify you when it's ready.

Please encourage as many members as possible to use this tool to email their councillors – even those who have done it already, as we have updated the text and we must keep the pressure up.

## **Write to the Chancellor!**

We are also producing a model letter to send to the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, highlighting our pay campaign and demanding that he funds local authorities to allow them to meet our pay claim. The model letter will be launched next week on our campaign website, <https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/fair-pay-now-council-school-workers/>. We will notify you when it's ready.

UNISON recently published research showing that if the government funded our pay claim in full, they would recoup more than half of the money, through local government workers paying more tax, needing less in benefits and tax credits, and spending more in the local economy. You can read the research here: <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/02/Public-Finances-Local-Gov-Pay-Claim-202021.pdf>. Make sure members and local councillors are aware of this research!

## **Budget meetings – make sure you're there!**

Most councils will be holding their final budget meetings in the coming weeks. It's vital that branches have a presence there – either in the meeting, or making your presence felt outside – so that councils are clear about the strength of feeling about local government pay. They need to make sure they budget for a decent pay increase for staff.

You might want to work with the other NJC unions locally to organise a deputation to the relevant budget meeting. And why not invite one of your region's NJC Committee members to come along and speak to members, if they are available?

## **Pay loss calculator**

Next week we will publish our online calculator, with which members can see exactly how much money they have lost in real terms due to 10 years of pay freezes and below inflation pay rises. Look out for it, and make sure you get members to look at it and use it.

And make sure you talk to non-members about it, to help get them to join UNISON and involved in our campaign.

## **Update your membership records**

Branches are asked to ensure that your membership is mapped and your membership records are up to date, so that if an industrial action ballot is called, the process of preparing our membership records can be done as quickly as possible.

Our Pay Up Now campaign web page contains a link for members to update their details – please encourage them to do this! <https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/fair-pay-now-council-school-workers/>

## **Identifying non-local authority employers that we could include in a potential ballot**

We need to make sure we are prepared for any possible industrial action ballot over NJC pay. Getting ready for an industrial action dispute is always complex in local government because of the number of employers involved and the complexity of relationships to NJC term and conditions.

While a ballot register to data cleanse would only be constructed if we went into dispute, it is important to do the groundwork by mapping the type of NJC link each non-local authority employer has.

We wrote to branches and regions in October 2019 asking them to establish which non-local authority employers fit certain tests that UNISON's legal advisors have set, to determine whether the members in each employer can be included in any potential industrial action ballot.

You can read that guidance here:

[http://msgfocus.com/files/amf\\_unison/project\\_131/Pay\\_Up\\_Now\\_2020\\_campaign\\_mapping\\_vice\\_non\\_LA\\_employers.pdf](http://msgfocus.com/files/amf_unison/project_131/Pay_Up_Now_2020_campaign_mapping_vice_non_LA_employers.pdf)

Please carry on with this vital work, so that if we do move to an industrial action ballot, we are as ready as possible to include as many members as possible.