



**NEWSLETTER 4**

**13 FEBRUARY 2009**

**For local government branches in England, Wales and Northern Ireland only**

**(Scotland – for information)**

This Pay News tells you about the arbitration hearing at ACAS on 10 February, what's happening about the NJC pay claim for 2009/10, negotiations in opted-out councils and our plans for a campaign to link a fair deal for local government workers with our fight to keep jobs and local services.

## **ACAS**

The oral hearing with the arbitration panel took place at ACAS on 10 February. The Trade Union Side presented our submission, followed by the employers. We argued that local government has treated NJC workers as 'poor relations' for a long time - failing to invest in pay, training and good conditions, while making over-the-odds efficiency savings and putting ever-larger off sums of money into reserves. We also pointed out that the local government settlement for the next three years will far exceed inflation if economic predictions are correct. The employers argued that pay offers had been constrained by Government pay policy and the cost of the LGPS and Single Status.

Each side asked the other questions and the panel asked questions too. They were particularly interested in unallocated reserves - which have increased significantly in the last few years, and whether they can be used for pay purposes. We agreed to provide them with further information on unallocated reserves as a proportion of revenue for 2007/8 and 2008/9. We have obtained this information and are now waiting for the employers to agree it so that it can be sent to the ACAS panel.

We don't have a date for the ACAS panel's response to our submission and will let you know as soon as we get it.

## **NJC PAY 2009/10**

As you know, the NJC claim for 2009/10 has been submitted to the employers. They have responded by saying that their Regional consultation process is now underway and will end at the end of March.

They will not be able to respond to us before then. They will also want to have the outcome of the arbitration process. We have made it clear that we want to hear from them by the beginning of April.

We know that some councils are threatening very low - or no - increases this year. Some may be strapped for cash, but we believe that overall councils can afford a settlement that properly rewards you for your hard work, will help keep local economies afloat and which recognises the vital role that local services will play in a recession.

In the meantime, we need to know from branches what your employers have budgeted for pay this year. Please approach them to make the case for a decent settlement and find out what they have budgeted for. So far we have heard from only a minority of branches and most employers are budgeting for a 2- 2.5% increase, although one or two have threatened no increase at all and a couple have budgeted for below 2%. **Please fax the attached pro forma back to Jon Hoskin on 0207 551 1195 as soon as possible.**

## **'OPTED OUT' COUNCILS**

Branches from the 46 councils which have opted out of the NJC were brought together at Mabledon Place recently to discuss the issues they face and what support they need from the union to organise and bargain in what are hostile circumstances for some of them.

Some branches have no bargaining rights and others are just 'consulted' over pay and conditions issues. Other do have negotiating rights and we are drawing up a plan of training and support with the South East, Eastern, East Midlands and North West Regions to give those branches equal access to UNISON's resources and information for bargaining.

## **MAKE A BIG NOISE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT - THE FIGHT FOR JOBS, FAIR TREATMENT AND LOCAL SERVICES STARTS HERE!**

Together with Regions, we are planning a campaign to support branches fighting against redundancies and cuts in services and for fair pay and conditions. We need to make a strong case to Government, councils and the public for continued investment in local services and the workforce to keep decent jobs, vibrant local communities and viable local economies during the recession. Let us have your ideas for the campaign by e-mailing [j.hoskin@unison.co.uk](mailto:j.hoskin@unison.co.uk)! We are planning to produce campaign materials and set up web-based initiatives that you can take part in.

With the call for further 'efficiency' savings from Government, accelerating redundancies and pressure on pay, we will need a concerted campaign to fight off the vicious propaganda of the Taxpayers Alliance and their friends who want to use the recession to cut back on public services. We can't let that happen! Watch this space and make a big noise for Local Government!