

**LG/27/2010**

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To: Secretaries of Local Government Branches in England, Wales  
and Northern Ireland  
(Scotland – for information)  
Regional Heads of Local Government  
Registered Professional/Sectional Bodies - for information

11 May 2010

**NJC Pay 2010 – 2011: Update**

**This circular brings you up to date with the NJC pay. Branches are asked to keep up the pressure on councillors and MPs for negotiations.**

**Lobby of the Employers**

Thanks to those branches and activists who attended the joint trade union lobby of the Employers. It hasn't led to any further response from them, but it did make the point to a large number of councillors attending a conference on Total Place.

**No sign of a thaw in England Wales and Northern Ireland...**

In light of the lack of response from the Employers the NJC Executive Trade Union Side met on 28 April 2010 and has agreed to seek ACAS involvement in conciliation with a view to opening discussions with the Employers.

It was also agreed to continue with our campaign for better services, better jobs and better pay and a meeting has been set up for the NJC Executive Trade Union Side to consider the campaign and the Employers' position post the local and national elections.

**What's happening in Scotland?**

On 19 April the Scottish local government employers made a three-year offer on pay as outlined below:

- 1% on all spinal column points, on all scales with effect from 1 April 2010
- 0% on all spinal column points, on all scales with effect from 1 April 2011
- 0.5% on all spinal column points, on all scales with effect from 1 April 2012

All the SJC trade unions are recommending rejection of the offer. The offer falls well below the level of the claim<sup>1</sup>, especially with inflation running at over 4%. In addition, other than political expediency, there is no virtue in having a three year pay deal. The Employers also rejected trade union arguments to consider re-distribution of the offer to afford greater help to the low paid. UNISON Scotland will be conducting a member's ballot recommending rejection of the offer between 21 June and 29 July.

The offer begs the question, if Scottish local government employers can afford a 1% increase this year, why can't the NJC Employers? Margaret Eaton, Chair of the LGA, presents some tired arguments:

- She highlights that 'for many employees, the employers position does not amount to a *'pay freeze' as they are contractually entitled to an automatic increment this year that, in some authorities, will add as much as 2% to the pay bill cost'*
- There are 'many staff' at the top of their grade who would receive no increase at all! **We need to make the point that incremental increases are paid to reflect individuals developing skills and experience.** It does nothing to help maintain or improve the relative position of their role to other jobs in the labour market. Paying only an increment will add to the gender pay gap as 75% of the work force in local government is female. We have made these points before and we will continue to make them. **UNISON and the employers have different perspectives on the issue which can only be resolved through negotiations, not press releases.**
- She also says that '*a pay increase in 2010/11 could lead to job cuts in services that would adversely affect local people and put council jobs in jeopardy'*

**We are dealing with political choices, not financial inevitability** – we can see that from Scotland. Choices have been made to freeze and reduce council tax. Let's be clear, if we don't stand firm on fighting for fair pay and protecting jobs then pensions will be next in the firing line. The Scottish employers have analysed their financial position and believe it's justified to make a pay rise this year. Their financial position is no worse than councils south of the border.

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<sup>1</sup> SJC Pay Claim 2010/11: The claim is for a one-year rise of 3% or £600 (whichever is the greater) with a significant underpinning for the low paid - including a claim for all workers to be paid a living wage of at least £7.00 per hour.

We have sent Freedom of Information letters to all councillors in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, asking them what they have budgeted for pay and what is contained in their Medium Term Financial Plans. We will let you know the outcome once all the results have been received.

### **Keep the pressure up on Councillors**

The NJC Executive Trade Union Side agreed to write one final letter before the elections to councilors and MP's highlighting the pay freeze. We need you to continue to keep your local councilors involved in the need to get the Employers to talk to us about pay.

We know that many councilors already support a pay rise and with inflation at 4.4% (March 2010) our arguments become even more justified. To re-cap, here is what the main political parties have said about pay in local government:

- ❖ The Labour group on the LGA support a 1% increase
- ❖ The Liberal Democrats support a £400 maximum increase irrespective of starting salary in future years
- ❖ The Conservatives will freeze pay in the public sector from 2011 onwards for all those earning above £18k a year.

Several politicians have responded to our letter saying they support our position for a pay rise, especially for the lower paid and for the Employers to enter into negotiations. Those who do not support a pay rise have expressed sympathy with our position. It's time to turn that sympathy in to support.

We have received responses from three of the party leaders so far and they are available to read in full at:

[http://www.unison.org.uk/localgov/pages\\_view.asp?did=11166](http://www.unison.org.uk/localgov/pages_view.asp?did=11166)

- The Leader of the LGA Independent Group said that, 'a vote for Independent candidates might well be a vote for mediation'.
- The Leader on the LGA Labour Group restated Labour support for a 1% pay rise and personal support for ACAS referral to, 'explore ways of opening negotiations'.
- The Green Party Leader expressed support for ACAS referral and, 'commitment to ensuring that pay reflects rising inflation'.

The Local Government Employers have flexibility to make us an offer. They now have a precedent from Scotland which runs counter to their un-affordability claims. We can continue to put pressure on councilors by fielding a number of questions:

- **With inflation at 4.4% do you agree to the 0% 'freeze' in wages, even for those who earn only 37p above the minimum wage?** (members on

the lowest NJC scale point) - *If you don't, then we need your active and vocal support*

- We are not going away! Our differences will not be resolved through silence. **Do you support a mature and constructive approach to industrial relations through the commencement of negotiations?** – *Supporting dialogue may not mean you support our position but it does mean you support attempts to resolve our differences in a respectful fashion*

We need to keep the pressure up and get the employers to the negotiating table! Our lobbying is effective, building momentum and bringing people around to the unfairness of the employers' position. Keep up the good work.

With best wishes,

Heather Wakefield  
National Secretary  
Local Government Service Group