A fully funded proper pay rise for council and school workers!

The three NJC trade unions have submitted a joint pay claim for the majority of council and school workers, who are covered by the National Joint Council (NJC) Green Book collective agreement (24 July 2019)

The claim:

- 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 Green Book minimum paid annual leave entitlement
- A two hour reduction in the Green Book standard working week
- A joint national review of the workplace causes of stress and mental health throughout local authorities

Why this claim is important

- **Staff have endured a decade of pay restraint**: with the majority seeing their pay devalued by 22% when the cost of living is compared to NJC pay increases. For someone on the most populated pay point (scp 11), the shortfall is £5,626.

- **Council and schools are low paying sectors**: pay for most NJC jobs is well behind the private and public sector. Private sector settlements have been running far in advance of NJC pay. When an average pay rate was last reported by the LGA it was 19% below the public sector as a whole.

- **Prices for everyday goods** meanwhile have risen faster than both NJC pay and inflation - bus/coach fares (51%) electricity (48%) house prices (37%) and childcare (32%).

- **Inflation is rising fast**: predicted to run at 3% or more in the next four years, meaning the cost of living the NJC workforce faces will rise by over 15% by 2023.

- **A £10 an hour minimum wage**: this is a common sense solution to the unsustainable problem of topping up low pay via tax credits. It also creates headroom above future minimum wage increases.
Our claim is reasonable: it provides some catch up on lost pay. The huge gap between inflation and NJC pay in the last decade means our claim goes some way towards reversing the real cuts in pay.

It is not just about pay

Other terms and conditions have been slashed: for the last nine years councils across the board have cut working conditions like unsocial hours, overtime and car allowances – alongside the decline in basic pay. This means workers providing services that require them to work regular overtime, shift work and unsocial hours are suffering further reductions in pay as additional payments are cut.

Recruitment and retention issues: with pay comparing so badly with the rest of the public and private sectors, 78% of councils unsurprisingly report recruitment and retention problems. The average local government vacancy rate of 8% is significantly higher than the averages for wider public sector and in the economy as a whole. In 2017/18 Councils spent £335 million on agency social workers.

876,000 job losses in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of 30%. Those workers left behind face increased workloads, press and stress – on top of shrinking pay packets. As a result local services and those reliant on them suffer. There has been no decrease in the statutory functions of local authorities - with many of these services seeing a significant increase in demand.

Work-related stress, depression and anxiety soaring: now an acute issue within local authority services - with local authority sickness rates now over double those for the economy as a whole. Local government workers are significantly more likely to work unpaid overtime compared to those in other occupations. Long hours can lead to serious and long term mental and physical ill health, stress, fatigue and workplace accidents.

Work life balance must be a priority: given the immense pressure staff work under. Our claim calls for an extra day’s leave, two hour reduction in the working week and a national review of workplace stress and mental ill health.

The pay rise must be funded

The Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund our claim: it should not put the burden on councils whose funding has been cut to the bone. 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.

The Local Government Association must make urgent representations to central government to fund the pay claim. 10 years of austerity is taking a huge toll on staff with low pay settlements, expanding responsibilities and redundancies leading to increased workloads and a culture of long hours.

New money is needed to fund this claim: it cannot and must not be funded by local attacks on locally determined conditions. Local government workers have delivered efficiency savings year-on-year against immense pressure.

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. Paying local government staff properly is an investment – in people, communities and the economy. Money well spent.