14 June 2017

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

The House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Dear Prime Minister,

**2018 pay claim for local government and school workers – National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC)**

We are writing to you as the lead negotiators for UNISON, GMB and Unite, the trade unions which form the Trade Union Side of the NJC, to seek your support for a fair increase in the pay of 1.6 million council and school workers within its ambit. 78% of them are women, many working part-time. The NJC covers school support staff and all local government employees below chief officer and senior manager grades.

We are attaching our pay claim for 2018-2019. We are asking for our lowest paid members to be paid the Foundation Living Wage and for a 5% increase for everyone else. The claim has been submitted to the Employers’ Side of the NJC. It contains some startling facts which demonstrate the impact of austerity on our members:

* NJC workers have effectively had an 8-year pay cut, including a three-year pay freeze from 2010 to 2013, followed by below-inflation increases for each year up to 31 March 2018
* The pay freeze applied for one year more than all other public sector workers and NJC employees did not receive the £250 for those earning less than £21,000 awarded by the then Chancellor, George Osborne
* This dramatic decline in income has come as the cost of living rose by 22.6% between 2010 and 2016
* In 1999, the lowest NJC pay rate was 24% higher than the statutory National Minimum Wage. By 2016, it was just 0.3% higher than the National Living Wage
* NJC workers are the lowest paid in the public sector – from the bottom to the top of the comparable pay scales in the civil service, the NHS and elsewhere
* Recent pay awards have had to be ‘bottom-loaded’ to avoid the lowest pay rate falling below the statutory minimum. This has caused compression and erosion of job-evaluated differentials at the lower end of the pay scale, which is causing industrial disharmony and could give rise to costly equal pay claims
* At the same time, ONS reports that 750,000 jobs have been cut from local government alone, leaving our members covering vacant posts and additional tasks on ever-declining pay
* Furthermore, most have suffered cuts to their working conditions, particularly unsocial hours payments, overtime pay, annual leave and sick pay, which impact on their incomes

As a result, many of our members providing essential local services and supporting children’s education are now ‘just about managing’ or not managing at all.

Obviously the cuts to our members’ pay and conditions are a consequence of the average 40% cut to local government budgets since 2010 and government public sector pay restraint policy since 2010. During this time, social care pressures have risen and no additional funding has been provided to fund the National Living Wage. The ending of pay restraint and adequate funding of councils and schools is therefore critical to pulling our members out of poverty.

In addition to submitting our claim, we are working jointly with the Employers’ Side to review the NJC pay spine. We want to iron out irregular gaps between pay rates, ensure that it reflects job-evaluated differentials and is ‘future proofed’ to accommodate future increases in the National Living Wage. This will help prevent costly equal pay litigation and provide the pay transparency required by the Equality Act. This too will require funding. We would like to discuss with you or your officials how it can be provided.

We realise that this letter is somewhat technical. We would, of course, be happy to discuss it with you or your advisors. We are also sending it to the Chancellor and look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely

Heather Wakefield UNISON .....................................................................

Rehana Azam GMB .....................................................................

Fiona Farmer UNITE ..................................................................