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To: Secretaries of Local Government Branches in England, Wales,
Northern Ireland (Scotland for information)
Regional Heads of Local Government

12 December 2023

2024 NJC pay claim: branch consultation

This circular starts the process of consultation on the NJC pay claim for England, Wales and Northern Ireland for 2024/25.

Branches are asked to consult members as widely as possible on the proposed headline pay claims for 2024/25 to find out members' views, and submit responses to their Regional Head of Local Government using the enclosed pro-forma by 5pm on Tuesday 23 January 2024.

Branches are also asked to use the consultation process to recruit and organise, to build UNISON's strength ahead of the pay campaign.

The UNISON NJC Committee met on 13 November 2023 to consider the contents of the NJC pay claim for 2023, as well as the process for consulting members.

The Committee launched a short consultation of regions on its proposed headline claims. Having received wide endorsement of those proposals, The Committee is now asking branches to consult members.

This circular sets out the issues the Committee discussed, before explaining the process for the consultation of members.

The 2023 pay settlement

For NJC 2023, we submitted a claim for an increase of RPI + 2% on all pay points. The Employers offered an increase of £1,925, pro rata'd for part-time and term time only workers (higher in London due to the way London Weighting is incorporated). As branches

know, that offer was ultimately accepted and implemented – but UNISON made clear that this did not indicate that members were satisfied with it.

The NJC Committee is therefore proposing that our claim for 2024 should seek an increase that is above inflation, while also addressing the particular continuing challenges for those towards the bottom end of the pay spine.

The 2024 pay claim – proposed headlines

The NJC Committee proposes that the 2024 pay claim is for:

1. An increase of 10% or £3,000, whichever is the greater
2. A commitment to reach a minimum rate of pay of £15 an hour over the next two years, with a clear plan for how this will be achieved
3. Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government

UNISON members in councils and schools continue to experience a significant cost of living crisis, with food, heating and transport costs continuing to increase. While headline inflation figures have begun to fall, RPI inflation, the inflation measure which UNISON believes is the most accurate reflection of the realities our members face, is currently at 6.1%.

The NJC Committee is therefore proposing a claim for 10%, which is above inflation, to ensure the real value of members' pay does not fall further behind, and begins to catch up on the years of lost earnings.

The £3,000 element of the claim would ensure that members who are paid the least receive the support they need in dealing with the continuing financial pressures they face.

It is hoped that this proposed headline claim is straightforward and clear and can be easily explained to members as our campaign develops.

The claim is based on the national pay spine; if our claim were met, we would expect the rates in London to be adjusted accordingly to take account of the way London Weighting has been incorporated into pay rates.

The claim for a clear move towards a £15 an hour hourly rate is in line with policy agreed at UNISON's Local Government Conference. Local government pay towards the bottom end is in clear need of a 'reset', so that staff are properly rewarded for their work and employers can recruit and retain staff.

The claim also includes clear demands for work on the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps, in line with UNISON policy.

Branches are asked to consult members on this proposal, ie points 1 to 3 above.

Following completion of the three unions' consultation processes, the 2024 pay claim will be submitted in February 2024.

Local government funding

There is a funding crisis in local government, with local authorities in the UK facing a combined funding gap of £3.4 billion for the 2024/25 financial year, rising to nearly £7 billion in 2025/26. These figures are based on recent UNISON research. And we know that schools are struggling financially due to the Government's year on year cuts in real terms public spending.

However, throughout the union we are campaigning hard for more funding from the Westminster Conservative Government for councils, and pay must be considered in this context. The Westminster Government can definitely afford to fund a decent pay increase for local government workers if enough pressure is applied. We know that far more can be done to make money available – for example some multi-national companies avoid paying huge amounts of tax, money that could be used for local government pay. The money is there if we can get the Government to fund councils and schools properly.

Consultation process and timetable

Branches are asked to carry out as wide a consultation as possible on the contents of the proposed claim and return their results to **your Regional Head of Local Government by 5pm on Tuesday 23 January 2024**. A pro forma is attached for you to record your results and send in.

It is very important that the NJC Committee gets a view from as many branches as possible and that members are engaged at this stage in the claim.

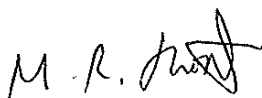
Regions are being asked to return their collated results to the local government section by **12 noon on Friday 26 January 2024**.

The UNISON NJC Committee will consider the consultation results, after which UNISON, GMB and Unite will meet to agree and finalise the claim, for submission in February 2024.

Recruit and organise!

The period for consulting members on the claim is longer than usual, partly because of the Christmas break. It is hoped that this gives branches more of an opportunity to engage with members, getting them enthused and active in the pay campaign, and to recruit new members to the union. If the 2024 pay campaign is to be successful, it is of course vital that we continue to recruit more members and build our strength in workplaces. Branches are strongly encouraged to use this consultation to begin that work.

With best wishes



Mike Short
National Secretary
Local Government, Police and Justice Section