



Dear Councillor

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY AWARD 2010- 2011

We are writing to you as the UNISON members representing NJC workers inCouncil to make you aware of our members' anger at the pay 'freeze' imposed on them for the 1 April 2010 – 2011 pay settlement. We believe that, as a councillor, you should be aware of this, particularly in a year of local – and the General – elections, when issues such as pay will obviously influence how our members vote. **We are urging you to ask our council and the LGA to reconsider their support for an effective pay cut for our members this year.**

There have been no negotiations over our pay this year. At the last meeting of the NJC Joint Secretaries – at which they were expecting to open negotiations – they were told that the Employers' Side had decided that there would be no increase in pay for our members this year. We understand that there was cross-party consensus amongst LGA Group Leaders on this decision. We are surprised and disappointed at the decision itself and the manner in which it was arrived at. The consequences of it are likely to be very serious indeed – for our members, service users and for local government itself.

As you will already know, 75% of NJC employees are women. They do very demanding work on low pay, while making a vital contribution to their families' income and spending within our local economy. They are social workers, home carers, teaching assistants, 'one-stop shop', welfare rights and housing workers – all providing 'front line' services which have sustained local people through the current crisis, floods and snow. Many are covering for vacant posts as well as doing their own work - over 13,000 jobs have been lost in local government in the last year alone. 30% work regular unpaid overtime just to get their work done. Our members' contributions to the LGPS have risen by 14% in the last year, compared to an 8% increase for employers.

CPI inflation is currently running at 2.9% and RPI at 2.4%. Forecasts for 2010 by the Bank of England and others suggest even higher inflation up to the Autumn, and possibly beyond. The imposed pay 'freeze' is really a completely unacceptable pay 'cut' for our members. It goes alongside far higher pay settlements for other public sector groups, making the already unfavourable position of NJC employees – and local government employment - even less desirable. NHS staff will receive 2.5% and teachers 2.2% this year. Before the imposed pay cut, our members were already at the bottom of the public sector pay and conditions league. Those on the bottom pay point earn less than 90% of the bottom rate for all public sector bargaining groups. Many have not yet received equal pay, required by both the Equal Pay Act and Single Status either.

We believe that our members deserve a pay increase this year and that it is affordable. Medium Term Financial Plans for 2008-9 showed that the average budget assumption for

pay this year was over 2%. Each year, formula grant to local authorities increases to enable councils to meet the additional costs of new responsibilities, including demographic change and inflation, including pay inflation. The Government has increased formula grant by 2.65% and general and specific grants by over 4% for 2010-2011. Council reserves have grown consistently in recent years. What has happened to the pay element in the grant for our council?

Below-inflation pay increases in recent years have already left our members – your employees - struggling to make ends meet. As a councillor, we know that you will appreciate the vital contribution they make to local people in our local authority and will want to ensure that our council can continue to recruit and retain such dedicated staff. We are sure that you will be seeking their support to continue to provide vital services as redundancies and workloads increase, but they will be reluctant to do so with only a pay cut to reward them for their efforts! Their commitment is being severely challenged and you will appreciate that 1.6 million employees, their families and friends will be unlikely to show electoral support for those who appear to value them so little.

We would like to hear from you and would ask you to give us a response to the following questions:

- Do you agree with this year's pay cut for NJC workers in our council?
- What was the budget for pay this year in its Medium Term Financial Plan in 2008-9?
- How does this council intend to use the pay element of the formula grant from central Government?

If you support our members' right to a pay increase this year, we would ask you to write to the Chairman of the LGA, Margaret Eaton, urging the LGA and the Local Government Employers to change their minds.

We look forward to a response to our letter.

With best wishes,