

ULG/68/2007

Our ref:

Your ref:

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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

3 July 2007

NJC Pay 2007/8: Offer and Consultation

Branches in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are asked to consult on the 2007/8 local government pay offer of 2%. The union's recommendation is to reject the Employers' offer. Details for consultation and the timetable are set out below. The deadline for returning the results is 23 July 2007.

At its meeting on 13 June the NJC Committee decided to hold a formal consultation under the Service Group's Pay Consultation Procedures on the employers' formal offer of 2% or any further other offer received before the end of June. No further formal offer from the Employers has been received (although the Employers have hinted at a further offer of 2.5%). The UNISON NJC Committee wants to get a clear view of membership feeling on both the 2% offer and industrial action through this consultation and advises branches to prepare for possible industrial action in the meantime.

The Offer

UNISON has decided to consult members (directly conditioned to NJC pay rates for local government services) **on the offer of 2% on the basis that all members would need to take decisive "all out" industrial action to secure any improvement.** The union's recommendation is to reject the Employers' offer.

Context of the offer

The negotiations have taken place within an increasingly challenging political and policy environment, which includes:

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- The Government's pay policy which is demanding a strict 2% limit to pay awards in the public sector
- The widespread use by Government of the Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index. This excludes housing and council tax costs on which the Treasury has demanded public sector pay deals to be based
- The LGA under strengthened Conservative control, with widespread privatisation of public services and our members are under ever increasing pressure to deliver efficiency savings and improved public services.
- The Local Government Employers (LGE) have started a consultation with councils over a new NJC Agreement and new pay systems and negotiating arrangements without any discussion with the Joint Trade Union Side (see Circular ULG 57/2007 for details).

However, for our members:

- The cost of living is currently increasing by 4.5%
- Increases in the cost of housing, fuel and energy, council tax and childcare are even higher
- Pay across the economy is rising by 3.6%

The Consultation Process

It is important that as many members as possible take part in the consultation process. Branches are asked to refer to the Service Group's Pay Consultation procedures. These were circulated to branches on the 31 May circular, ULG/54/2007. They are also available on the pay campaign pages of the UNISON website.

The Consultation Procedures are designed to ensure maximum participation of members and branches are urged to hold meetings with national and regional speakers where possible before the voting takes place. Branches are also asked to ballot members, rather than rely solely on consultation meetings which rarely attract members from "hard to reach" workplaces or those whose working hours fall outside of "core" working patterns. This has proved successful in raising participation rates in previous consultation exercises. Regions will be asked to provide assistance and aggregate branch responses.

The Consultation Procedures were updated in 2006 to include the recommendation that regions are encouraged to hold delegate meetings for branches in order to debate the proposals and encourage membership participation. It will be for regions to determine the arrangements for any such meetings.

Branches are asked to distribute the enclosed leaflet explaining the offer and setting out UNISON's recommendation as widely as possible. An order form for further copies is attached.

The basis of the consultation should be through branch ballots following workplace meetings in as many workplaces as possible to ensure the maximum possible vote on the offer. **Branches are asked to ensure that returns on the consultation record only those members actually voting, not branch membership figures.**

Timetable

Branches have until **12 noon on Thursday 26 July 2007** to forward the results of their consultation to their Regional Head of Local Government at their regional office. Regional Heads have been asked to send the results to the Local Government section by **Tuesday 31 July 2007**.

Consultation questions

It is important that every branch consults on the same basis. The UNISON NJC Committee is proposing the following wording and recommends rejection of the Employer's offer:

- I wish to accept the offer of a 2% on all pay scale points for 2007-8
- I wish to reject the offer of a 2% on all pay scale points for 2007-8

You are reminded that if voting to reject the offer, you must be prepared to take part in industrial action, including strike action, in order to secure an improved offer.

A model ballot paper is enclosed along with the form to be used by branches to return their consultation results to the region. Also included with this circular is a leaflet for members and an order form. A PowerPoint presentation and speaker's notes are also available on the UNISON pay campaign website and from the Local Government Section and Regional Offices. Please use them as extensively as possible.

Who should be consulted?

Many UNISON members are not directly employed by local government but are on NJC pay and conditions. There are some members employed by local government who are not on NJC conditions, including craft workers, youth and community workers, Chief Officers and some members in Northern Ireland Boards.

Branches should only consult those members who would directly benefit from any pay offer. This means only those directly conditioned to National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay and conditions. This would include some staff in the Fire and Emergency Planning services and National Parks, the voluntary sector, on private contracts in local government and in grant maintained and foundation schools.

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Branches should **not** consult those members covered by other agreements such as craft workers, youth and community workers, chief officers, Soulbury staff, probation service ancillary workers, staff in airports, new towns or FE and sixth form colleges. Members on local pay and conditions or individual contracts not related to the NJC agreement should **not** be consulted either.

If branches have any difficulty in deciding who to consult, they should seek advice from their regional office.

Thank you for your help in the consultation.

With best wishes,



Heather Wakefield
National Secretary
Local Government Service Group