

# Gateshead UNISON News

June 2015



Gateshead UNISON protecting Jobs, protecting terms and conditions. Representing over 5000 members in over 130 employers in over 400 workplaces.

## 2016/17 NJC Pay Claim Agreed

UNISON, GMB and Unite have agreed the following NJC Trade Union Side pay claim for 2016/17.

- ⇒ Deletion of NJC and all local pay points which fall below the level of the UK Living Wage and a flat rate increase of £1 per hour on all other pay points .
- ⇒ Retention and protection of Green Book Part 2 terms and conditions. (Part 2 are core elements subject only to national negotiation)
  - ⇒ Fair treatment for school support staff through a joint review of term time working .

The claim is based on UNISON's main proposals, which we consulted members on. Significantly, the deletion of the pay points was UNISON's preferred method for dealing with poverty pay by achieving the Living Wage and UNISON and Unite's preference for £1 an hour up the scale was adopted.

Remember your **Worth-it** - Council and School employees have paid a heavy price under austerity, forfeiting a staggering **£8.6bn** as pay has fallen in real terms every year since 2010. Furthermore, average pay increased by 2.7 per cent in the three months to April compared with the same period a year earlier.

## Attack on Trade Unions - Ideologically led?

As expected, the newly appointed Business Secretary Sajid Javid has said there will be "significant changes" to strike laws under the new Conservative government. A strike affecting essential public services will need the backing of 40% of eligible union members under government plans. There will also need to be a minimum 50% turnout in strike ballots.

He also inexplicably indicated he would not support UNISON's readiness to roll-out the use of workplace ballots and digital ballots, technology UNISON has been developing and successfully trialling.

Ironically, Mr Javid himself was elected with just 38% of the eligible votes in his Bromsgrove constituency and the West Midlands police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was voted in with just a 10.4% turnout. Even the outgoing Business Secretary Vince Cable said the Conservative proposals were "entirely ideologically-led and a brutal attempt to strangle the basic rights of working people in this country". The government will also lift restrictions on the use of agency staff to replace striking workers.

Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison said "We are gearing up to resist the attacks on trade unions with every means at our disposal, and if necessary we will take legal action. The attacks are also an attack on civil liberties, so we will join with community groups and others to try to isolate the Tories. On a positive note - Dave also revealed that 170,000 new members joined UNISON last year, including 4,400 in the week of the general election in May.

## TTIP Update - A battle between big business and everyone else?

UNISON has again confirmed its opposition to TTIP, the secret trade agreements being forged between the European Union and the United States, which could have a 'chilling' effect on public services.

Although most of the details of TTIP remain secret, it's thought to include a

mechanism that will allow private investors to submit clandestine tribunal complaints against governments and public bodies which corporations believe to be unfairly interfering with their commercial activities ..... i.e. profits.

War on Want's executive director John Hilary told UNISON's national conference 'the agreement was aiming to remove regulatory 'barriers' that restrict the potential profits to be made by transnational corporations on both sides of the Atlantic..'

'Yet these 'barriers' are in reality some of our most prized social standards and environmental regulations' he said, "such as workers rights, food safety rules, regulations on the use of toxic chemicals, digital privacy laws and even new banking safeguards introduced to prevent a repeat of the 2008 financial crisis."

Mr Hilary further noted that coverage of TTIP often focused on healthcare. However its impact elsewhere would be huge. For example, food hygiene would be at risk as it would become illegal to inspect meat that entered the country.....

"All government procurement contracts are fully open to market forces. Any provisions you might want to put in will be swept away as barriers to trade. **We need to see TTIP for what it is - a battle between big business and everybody else.**"

If multinationals continue to pick up big, neatly packaged public service contracts from their friends in government. TTIP could have a profound impact on services, including here in Gateshead.

If you would like to comment on TTIP, our local MEP is Jude Kirton-Darling:

0191 6200 105 or

[office@northeastlabour.eu](mailto:office@northeastlabour.eu)



## Update - Cars and Travel

Following ongoing consultation with members angry at the recent 33% increase in staff parking permits we are continuing to negotiate with senior council officers in an attempt to establish a cohesive, sustainable and ultimately affordable staff vehicle and travel plan.

Discussions also include the content of a formal grievance submitted by members in Care, Well-being and Learning.

Any outcomes will need to support safe, affordable and sustainable staff parking arrangements and acknowledges the crucial operational necessity for staff supplied vehicles to deliver efficient and effective services.

**We have therefore set a deadline of 6th July 2015 to conclude discussions - workplace consultation meetings will be arranged to feedback and discuss our response.**



## WANTED

We are looking to appoint a new batch of school based Health and Safety reps, able to raise health and safety issues, and help represent better the views of support staff on Gateshead's Schools Health & Safety Advisory Group. Ideally, we are looking to recruit one rep from each cluster. If you are interested, Unison will support you through accredited Health and Safety training.

For more information, please contact Kimberly Convery (Schools Convenor) or Adam Taylor (Branch Health & Safety Officer) at [info@gatesheadunison.co.uk](mailto:info@gatesheadunison.co.uk) or 4776638

## Tribunal Claims Review - Still Priced out of Justice?

A slump in tribunal claims was revealed by Ministry of Justice figures as the government announced there would be a review of the impact of employment tribunal fees.

New figures published by the Ministry of Justice show that the number of single employment tribunal claims brought by individuals in the first quarter of 2015 was 4,229, 25% lower than over the same quarter of 2014. And single claims were 69% down on the first quarter of 2013, shortly before employment fees were introduced. The Ministry of Justice claim that the trend in single claims had been gradually declining for the last five years, but the rate of decline increased in October to December 2013. The fall in receipts for employment tribunals seen from that quarter follows the introduction of employment tribunal fees in July 2013.

When fees were introduced in 2013 the coalition government promised to review their impact and this will now take place and be completed by the end of the year. The review will take into account a wide range of evidence.

The TUC welcomed the review, but warned that it must not be a "political stitch-up". General secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Tribunal fees have been a gift for Britain's worse bosses allowing many to flout the law. Charging people up to £1,200 to pursue a claim has priced thousands out of justice and ruined lives. "This review is a welcome, if long overdue, announcement. However, it must not shy away from telling hard truths. It has to be transparent and prepared to recommend abolishing the current system."

**It's widely accepted following successive cuts to legal aid, the ever increasing costs of legal representation and the introduction of tribunal fees and the access to justice is rapidly becoming out of the reach of the overwhelming majority of working people. However, being a UNISON member means you are never priced out of justice.**



### An austerity audit

Coalition cuts to local communities in England since 2010

[www.unison.org.uk/at-work/local-government](http://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/local-government)