

Pay Claim submitted by Unison on 17 May 2012

Pay Claim 2012/13

After consultation with staff earlier in the year this letter sets out the Test Valley Unison Branch response to the third year of a pay freeze and asks TVBC to do three things:-

To pay the £250 promised by the Chancellor to all employees in their council from 1 April 2012 as an on scale and pensionable payment.

To identify part-time employees who may be affected by the change in conditions for Working Tax Credit and seek to enhance their hours to 24

To resist making (further) cuts to pay, hours and conditions at local level

After two long years of frozen pay, our members are worse off now than in any year since 1998. The two year pay freeze has completely wiped out the relative increases in pay that the Trade Union Side has achieved since 1998. Our members face an assault, on all fronts. This pay claim sets out the key points in our arguments for an increase in pay for our members for 2012 – 13 and is for a one-year settlement.

The increase of £250 on all pay grades would mean between a 0.2% for the highest paid and a 1.5% increase for the lowest paid.

According to the Office of National Statistics, over the second quarter of 2011 alone, 57,000 jobs were lost in local government, many of these being jobs carried out by women. The Local Government Workforce Survey in 2010, (this year's survey is yet to be published), states that 50% of authorities had implemented a reduction in the number of staff posts and a further 34% were planning to implement a reduction in the following two years. Since then, the first year of the frontloaded CSR settlement has put many more of our members on the scrapheap. They are having their pay and terms and conditions slashed and are under siege from all sides: job and service cuts, pension increases, pay freezes and rising inflation. NJC workers are doing even more for even less.

TVBC workers struggling to make ends meet have been faced with the fastest rise in the cost of living for 20 years. The headline rate of inflation, as measured by the annual change in the all-items retail prices index (RPI) for the year to August 2011, was 5.2% (up from 5% in July). In October, the RPI rose further to 5.6% meaning the disposable income of TVBC workers is continuing to shrink against a background of pay freezes and pay cuts. TVBC staff may also suffer from the reforms of the working tax credit system.

The TVBC workforce has endured an alarming reduction in their spending power since the last pay award in 2009. Since April 2009, the percentage increase in prices up until August 2011 stood at 11.63%. This means that our members would need a pay rise of more than 11% just to keep up with the rise in inflation since April 2009.

Pensions – adding insult to injury

Adding to the burden of low pay and rising inflation, TVBC workers are faced with yet another possible pay cut in the form of increased employee pension contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme. Public service workers earning above £15,000 are being asked to pay more in pension contributions by an average of over 50%. That is the equivalent, on average, of a further 3% pay cut.

The Trade Union Side believes that our claim this year for a substantial increase in pay is a just one and long overdue. We hope that elected members and officers of local authorities covered by our claim will give its contents very serious consideration and recognise that without a new deal for NJC workers, councils will not be able to recruit and retain the staff they need into the future.