

## LOCAL GOVT BOSSES REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE

Despite formal requests from GMB and the other Trade Unions, the local government employers refuse to meet to discuss pay and conditions. In fact, they actually wrote to us saying that they would meet only if we agreed not to talk about pay.

Article 6 of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services sets out the functions of the NJC and the first one is "to negotiate collective agreements on pay and conditions." Clearly a refusal to meet and talk about pay is a direct and deliberate breach of the national agreement. Furthermore, under Article 11, either side may call a meeting which "shall take place within fourteen days." The employers are obviously in breach of that too.

Why won't they meet and debate pay with us? Maybe because they don't want to admit that -

....local government has had a 4% grant increase from central government this year

....48 Tory councils are freezing council tax to get themselves re-elected at the expense of services

....local government has made £3 billion of efficiency savings, thanks to the workforce

....councils are still hiding cash in unallocated reserves, now up to £12 billions

....councillors and chief executives have been pushing up their pay and allowances to astronomical levels.

Meanwhile -

....15,000 council jobs have been axed in the last year

...the start of the NJC pay scale is now only 37p above the new national minimum wage level. 37p!

....90,000 staff working for local authorities earn less than £18,000 per annum

...inflation, that is the rising cost of living, stands at 3% - so no pay rise means your living standards fall by 3%.

GMB believes that all local government workers deserve more respect than the employers are showing. We should not have to put up with the excuse that councils cannot afford a pay rise - they have not put forward one single shred of evidence to support that and GMB does not believe them. Nor should you bear the brunt of the financial problems caused by the greed of bankers and others that meant that they had to be bailed out with public money.

Why should low paid council workers have a real pay cut to pay for the bonuses of the very people who caused the mess? It is a fundamental injustice that we should not tolerate.

The political leaders are divided on the issue. The local government Labour Group supports a pay rise but the majority Tory group has voted that down. It is disgraceful and the Conservative leadership should come out and justify themselves.

### What You Can Do In Your Workplace

It's important that our members put the same kind of pressure on their managers in every council that GMB has been putting on the employers and politicians nationally. Your senior managers should be challenged to tell you whether they agree that you are not worth any increase in pay this year. GMB is seeking meetings in all workplaces to give all of you the chance to have your say and plan your local campaign. You can organise these yourself with your local GMB workplace organiser or seek the help of your GMB Officer. At these meetings you may want to consider organising local petitions, lobbies of councillors, contacting the local papers or sending delegations to meet managers to express your opposition to the pay freeze. Between all our efforts we must make sure that Local Authority leaders at every level understand the strength of feeling of GMB members. Yet again we are paying for their mistakes and mismanagement.

So let's speak up for fairness, about why you deserve a pay rise and tell your managers and senior managers. It's time everyone was heard and your GMB representatives will help you organise meetings and contact others to attend.

*Brian Strutton*

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