

## **CABINET 5 April 2016**

### **Item 11 Staff Pay Award – Staff Comments**

UNISON thanks management for the opportunity to respond to the Report regarding the Pay Award for 2016/17. Union members have been consulted and replies have been précised.

We note that the Council is recommending a 1% pay award for staff from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and a raise in the minimum wage to £7.52 for staff on the PG13 grade.

UNISON is glad that those of our lowest paid staff will see a reasonable increase to their hourly rate. However, we have grave concerns over the issue of differentials between the lower grades. We understand that this issue will be considered in the coming year and are motivated to ensure a fair outcome for all involved.

The 1% 'increase' for all other staff is however, somewhat derisory. For many staff it actually represents a net loss in income due to changes with National Insurance (for LGPS members) and the increase in Council Tax this year.

UNISON would like to remind the Council that staff are under increasing pressure to deliver services on budgets reduced by 20%. We were also somewhat dismayed to learn that our Councillors are in line to receive somewhere in the region of an 8% increase to their allowance. Whilst we accept that this may be the first increase in some time, at this time, for this Council, UNISON believes this to be inappropriate and it sets Councillors apart from the staff and in turn their own constituents.

Many of our staff struggle financially and a net loss coupled with increased pressure at work and a disparity between our 'cost of living' and the cost of democracy is perhaps a bridge too far.

Comments made by members:

*I have concerns over the amount of money that is being spent on 'projects', events and other non-statutory 'stuff' when mandatory services are not being protected.*

*My team lost a member of staff at Christmas and they won't be replaced. This effectively is a 20% cut in resources. The work load remains the same but now we have to do it with 20% less – I work in quite a high risk area and am concerned that this reduction could have a terrible impact. Who would be responsible?*

*As a council we are all very polite when it comes to accepting a pay freeze or 1% and if this is going to be the way forward for the foreseeable future I would expect our leader and Councillor's to be following the same trend.*

*I originally thought that in the present climate we are lucky to have jobs etc etc but I must say that the news of an 8% rise in Councillors allowances has changed my mind. To expect staff working in the current tough climate to accept what is, effectively, a net pay cut, whilst our elected Councillors receive a rise so out of line with inflation is unacceptable.*

*To be honest, 1% is about what I had expected, however I find it very upsetting that the councillors could consider an 8% rise for themselves whilst we have to accept 1%. I am the main earner in my household and 1% goes nowhere towards covering the rise in household costs. Given the stress and pressure that we are put under on a daily basis, it's laughable!!!! Am I really expected to go home after a long and stressful day, sometimes in tears and just accept a 1% pay rise??*

*I totally understand the 1% pay rise. I cannot see how BCKLWN could pay a higher rate than the rest of the Public Sector. Reluctantly and despite the NI contribution rise I think we have no choice but to accept this. Regarding our Councillors, I don't know what rises they have had in recent years, so 8% may not be as bad as it sounds but this doesn't look good when staff pay is being effectively cut. What is the cost of democracy? Why do we have so many Councillors many of who don't have a significant role. I believe there should be a full review of this and the cost of democracy should be cut as is occurring in just about every other area within the Public sector*

*I feel that 1% is not an adequate reward to staff that have remained loyal and performed duties so diligently in spite of the ever decreasing amount of money we have to spend. It is also an insult that Councillors are seeking huge increases to their allowances but as their political masters have rewarded themselves a handsome increase what more can be expected? We all know morale is very low and "pay" issues feature very highly towards this; it is no wonder that staff are afraid to put their points of view across; I continuously hear staff say things like "it is better to keep quiet than speak up as you only get picked on when you do"!! It seems to me that a lot of people are afraid of losing their jobs and therefore accept the situation.*

*Whilst the 1% pay rise was to be expected the fact that NI will increase by 1.4% and the Council Tax has just gone up means I will actually be worse off after my 'pay rise'. If our Councillors feel that 8% is fair why is 1% fair for the staff? It's good to see the lowest paid getting better hourly rates but the steady erosion of the gap between our grades is worrying – it's like there's less and less recognition for the (increased) workloads we have and the knowledge we need to do our jobs.*

*Whilst I accept that there are reductions that have to be made, and in the spirit of reluctantly accepting another minimal pay increase in an attempt to keep staff in employment, I find it rather shocking that the members are considering such a large increase to their allowance. It would appear that staff are under increasing pressure to perform their roles with less resources and pay, but the members are prepared to give themselves a disproportionate increase at the same time.*

*I feel the 1% increase is unacceptable given that the increase in cost of living and rise in national insurance will mean that again council employees will be earning less year on year*

*as we have done for the previous 7 years or so. This coupled with proposed / recommended increase of 8% for Councillors is offensive and is demeaning to staff moral and commitment.*

*I think a lot of people are concerned about the minimal 1% increase, but the matter is overshadowed by the impending 20% cuts and people are too scared of losing their jobs to make a fuss. I think people are therefore extremely reluctant to put their head above the parapet for fear of being a target when choices may be made regarding job losses. I know Councillors work hard for little remuneration, when worked out on an hourly basis, but so do council staff. Increasingly we are finding ourselves having to do the job of more than one person due to existing cutbacks and this will only get worse as the cuts continue. In fact, we are so flat out at the moment and doing overtime too, that I have not had chance to think about these important pay award issues until this email.*

*I have attended meetings regarding the need to save 20% and staff were quick to put forward ideas that would have a detrimental impact on their own working lives. It makes me angry that the Councillors have proposed an 8% pay increase for themselves. During the pay freeze we have had changes to the flexi system which a lot of staff were not happy about. This is something that could have been left alone or in fact enhanced to acknowledge that staff were having a hard time financially.*

*Originally I felt that, although 1% was not helpful/sufficient given that NI contributions are increasing as well as my Council Tax, it's what we've been having previous years and it is better than another freeze on pay. However, after further consideration I think, actually, it's rather unfair. NI and Council Tax increases will leave us worse off. Also, my team, and I'm sure others too, have been increasingly challenged with more work coming our way due to Councillors wanting to maintain services which other teams have dropped, or provide services which have never really been done before. We have taken on additional work but not seen any additions to staffing numbers or recognition of all our efforts. The Council's cost saving in some areas has seen roles dissolved through natural wastage and not substituted, therefore, increasingly, colleagues are taking on additional work previously done by others, as well and having to manage their own work. Yes, this could be individually recognised by PRP payments, but where whole teams take additional work, this will not happen. My team have initiated and run 2-3 additional roles/campaigns with no additional staffing.*

*Whilst I recognise that Councillors may not have had a pay increase in a few years, I think the timing is poor, and where the BC are trying to achieve savings of 20%, an 8.5% pay increase for Councillors in one hit, without any graduation over a period of time, is really making a mockery of employees' hard work and dedication. We've not had an increase! Councillors chose/volunteer into their role, and many are either employed elsewhere or retired. Many do it as they wish to give something to their community. If they are not happy with their allowances (and the extras like wi-fi allowances, lunches, iPads etc), I guess they*

*could chose to leave the role. This is our only means of income, and many employees have shown loyal service.*

*Frankly I'm appalled! 1% is pitiable when the Council insists on part funding projects which we don't need to. Add this to our 'pay cut', 20% budget reductions and increased stress at work and compare it to our Councillors seeking an 8% increase in allowance – as I said I'm appalled!*

*I am disappointed but not surprised at the proposed pay award for staff, which in real terms is not an increase. With the recommended/proposed 8% increase in member's allowance, 1% feels like an insult and underlining that we certainly "aren't in all this together". There may be more acceptance regarding the proposed staff award and certainly more respect from staff if the members allowance is 1% increase too or a little more but equal.*

*I don't really feel that after pay freezes & then minimum increases & now the rise in National Insurance contributions for those in the Pension Scheme that another 1% rise is adequate as I for one & I know I can't be alone already struggling living alone, trying to provide a pension, with mortgage/rent, & everyday living costs. The 'decrease' in income that this will result in will definitely not improve the situation. I believe that a 1.5% minimum will at least offset this & a 2% rise would actually give us some benefit to keep up with everything else we are paying more for.*