

## MEMBERS VOTE FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT

At packed meetings on 9 and 10 September at the Elizabethan Suite and Radcliffe Civic Suite UNISON members voted overwhelmingly for a motion calling for a ballot on taking Industrial Action to combat the Council's decision to implement a pay and grading structure that results in the loss of thousand of pounds a year for a large proportion of the members at Bury MBC.



Elizabethan Suite, Bury

**Reduction in Pay**  
Speaking at the meetings Branch Secretary Steve Morton said "Our employer is not talking to us and they are intent on imposing a new pay structure that results in a large number of members facing the prospect of real

financial disaster. We therefore need this mandate from the members for industrial action to force the council back to the negotiating table."

Steve Stott, UNISON North West Regional Manager said "We signed up to Job Evaluation on the understanding that any increased costs would be borne by the employer, not by the employees. We believe that Bury Council have skewed the pay line to obtain a reduction in the pay bill."

### Action

Bury branch officers will now start making preparations for the ballot as well as setting up an Industrial Action Fund to be used for those members who may experience hardship as a direct consequence of being involved in a strike or other official industrial action.

Members also agreed that the Branch set up a campaign fund to oppose the employer's proposals and to build support for UNISON's position. The fund will be used to lobby Councillors, MP's and the wider community of Bury to seek to persuade Bury Metropolitan Borough Council to withdraw and review its current proposals and to deliver a fair and transparent system of pay for all employees.



Radcliffe Civic Hall

# CHAOS SPILLS OVER IN COUNCIL CHAMBER

UNISON members at the council meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> September witnessed exactly where their employers priorities lie when they saw them curtail attempts by the opposition parties to have a debate on single status by moving business on to an item about public toilets".

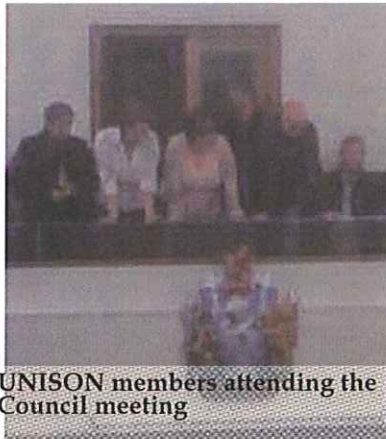
The 85 members who were allowed into the Council Chambers, many who stand to lose up to £8,500, heard disgraceful comments from Tory Councilors', in how they will, or as many expected, would not deal with the crisis. They stated that members will not be able to attend their appeals in person, and that 90 day notice will be issued on the 1st January 2009 Apparently they are in meaningful talks with Blackburn and Darwin Council (an authority which has ripped the heart and soul from its staff) the purpose of which is to discuss how to deal with difficult staff.

## Heated Debate

Members tempers started to flare during the heated debate between the Labour and the Tory groups (one Lib Dem councillor decried the unfair appeals process). UNISON members showed a lot of respect and patience and listened to the debate, but fireworks broke out when the Mayor moved next business which was all about public toilets in Bury.

## Lack of Respect

The Labour group were astounded by the lack of respect shown to the staff present and also at the refusal of the Tories to openly debate the issue in front of their victims, some members shouted "shame" at which point the Tory Mayor instructed they should leave the Council chamber. The Labour



UNISON members attending the Council meeting

Leader stated that if the staff were ejected the Labour Group would follow and proceeded to do just that to rapturous applause and cheers from the gallery., leaving the Council meeting in complete disarray.

## Keep talking

UNISON is still committed to talks with the employer and will continue to keep its door open and strive to deal with this crisis, but a Council who are slashing members pay, intend to issue 90 day notices to staff, might need a reminder of the consequences of being an uncaring and head in the sand employer.

## More good news for employees

If you were thinking "phew that one missed me I've got away with it" well don't because the next wave is about to hit. Management have now informed the branch that other terms and conditions such as, overtime rates, holidays, shift allowances and retainer pay, are to be reviewed and as they have already shown, what they can't negotiate they will impose - it s obvious it will not be for the better.



Branch secretary Steve Morton, addressing members outside the Town

## Ballot for Industrial Action

UNISON members having voted overwhelmingly for the branch to liaise with the Region on organising a ballot for industrial action to do as a last resort. The branch will continue to talk with the Council, but if these talks flounder sooner or later members will be balloted on industrial action, up to and including strike action.



Mirza Hamie, UNISON Branch Chair, with two of the members losing pay.

### **Further developments.**

Having analyzed the financial information, finally provided to UNISON by the authority, we have established that despite pronouncements to the contrary the authority are actually saving money on the proposed pay bill.

The figures show a that £139000 will be cut from the current pay bill when the councils proposals pay bill is in operation. This is despite assurances from prominent council figures that the pay and grading review is not a cost cutting exercise. If it isn't why is there a net saving?

The haste with which the authority are proposing to carry out the appeal process and implement their pay line has caused many members to wonder why a delay, with possible back dating of any rises, has not been considered thereby giving more time for solutions to be discussed.

The reality is that the council leadership know, that if they miss their April deadline, people will become eligible to an increase in line with their incremental progression. By removing this as a possibility they save on the pay bill increase for 2009/10 and prevent people having to be protected at the higher rates. The projected saving produced by this strategy have not been shared by management with UNISON

We have now been informed that more cuts are proposed to terms and conditions some of which will impact severely on pay.

### **Retainer Fees**

individuals employed in schools will no longer receive retainer fees during school closures.

### **Harmonisation of Overtime Payments**

introduce a single rate of overtime payments. This rate would be time and a half.

### **Enhancements**

The Council's proposal is that enhancements are harmonised and simplified.

### **Annual Leave**

It is intended that annual leave be harmonised at 23 days for all employees.

### **Working Week**

The proposal is that the working week for all employees is 37 hours.

### **Other payments:**

#### **Shift, Sleep-in and Standby**

It is recognised that many of the issues are complex. Therefore, the Council would look to resolve shift, sleep-in and standby payments by 1 April 2010

Most of the proposals will cost employees money thereby giving the council further savings. This despite Councillor Bibby's assurances to staff that the council would "do whatever we can to minimise the impact on them and their families" and coming on top of previous proposals it would seem that far from his assertion that "I cant do a thing about it" Cllr Bibby can sit by whilst his council rubs salt in already deep wounds.

### **Appeals.**

Having listened to members concerns about the appeals procedure UNISON branch officers have had negotiations with management about their approach. This has resulted in them agreeing to members being able to appear in person at appeals. This concession has been given with apparent strings and this will be the subject of further talks in the coming week.