



ROCHDALE

PIONEER

Members Newsletter from ROCHDALE UNISON

September 2011

IMPORTANT UNION MEETINGS

Item 1. Pensions- Come and hear the latest on the national fight by 3 million workers to defend public sector pensions - this item affects all employees.

Item 2. Conditions-Worse Sick Pay, Slower Incremental Progression, Car Allowances Cut, Longer Working Hours...How would the Council's proposals effect you and how can they be stopped?

Tuesday 27th September Phoenix Centre Heywood 6pm

Wednesday 28th September Rochdale Town Hall 12 Noon and 6pm

Thursday 29th September Middleton Arena 6pm

Make sure you come along

Some progress and some problems following lobby of councillors

Around 100 people joined in the lobby of the Cabinet meeting on 1st September called by UNISON and the other unions. The lobby was called to protest at plans to introduce at 2.5% pay cut, 7 days unpaid leave (equivalent to a 2.7% cut in wages) and a fresh round of attacks on terms and conditions for staff employed directly by Rochdale Council. The Council also planned to have a staff wide referendum on the pay cut and unpaid leave.

Pay and leave

Following the lobby the Council have agreed to go into further talks with the unions on the pay cut and unpaid leave.

This means that there will be **no** referendum on the pay cut or unpaid leave at present.

UNISON will be insisting in the negotiations that both the pay cut and unpaid leave proposal are unfair and counterproductive. We are opposed to both measures and if negotiations fail we will return to our members to look at action to oppose these cuts.

The councillors have also listened to the unions concerns about the referendum. We said it was going to undermine normal negotiations between management and recognised unions.

Staff referendums are expensive, have no legal status and in this case would be used to try to blackmail the workforce into accepting worse pay and conditions.

The cut in pay and enforced leave would have done nothing to prevent job losses or keep services running.

We are against referendums on the cuts. In this context the referendum would merely be a propaganda exercise designed to create false divisions between the workforce and the public. We want both fair wages and decent services and we will defend both.

Terms and Conditions

Despite progress on pay and enforced leave the Council still plan to push ahead with attacks on staff terms and conditions. The council want to cut sickness pay, make changes to car user allowances and increase the working week from 36 hours 15 minutes to 37 hours and more.

There is no evidence that if we accept these attacks our jobs and services will be protected. UNISON will be campaigning against these proposals.

We need UNISON members to come to the meetings in the last week of September (see top of page) and we also need ... Continued page 2

Continued from page 1....you to ask your colleagues to join UNISON. If we don't resist these cuts then management will walk all over us.

Even if you are not directly employed by the Council this still affects you. What they do in RMBC today can be done in schools, RBH, Link For Life etc tomorrow if they are allowed to get away with it. We need to stand together.

The lobby on 1st September allowed us to make some progress. So thank you to all who turned out. Imagine what we can achieve if everyone who is angry about the cuts gets active.

What is the Council proposing and what is UNISON's position?

1. Changes to Sickness Scheme

UNISON totally oppose this proposal. The sickness scheme is set out in Part Two of the National Joint Council (NJC), National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (the Green Book). It is a Key National Provision; this means it is applied by all local authorities to all employees covered by the NJC. This is a basic provision which constitutes a standard throughout the UK.

2. Changes to Incremental Progression, Cost of Living Pay Award

The most serious issue here is the Cost of Living Pay Award. Rochdale Council wants to make this Award discretionary. This would mean the Council withdrawing from the collective bargaining process of the NJC. We are very concerned that the Council is effectively derecognising the Joint Trade Unions. The cost of Living Pay Award is another Part Two, Key National Provision. Employees in Rochdale have had no pay rise for 2 years and no award has been budgeted for a further two years. If Rochdale Council implements this proposal it could be many years before Rochdale employees receive a pay increase. Incremental Progression is currently an annual award until an employee reaches the top of their grade. If the council's proposal is accepted and it becomes a two yearly award then it could take up to fourteen years before the top of the grade is achieved. In most cases it would be ten years. Linking Incremental Progression to performance is in our view open to question. This could be the first step leading ultimately to performance related pay. There are existing procedures in place for dealing with unsatisfactory performance.

3. Changes to Premium Payments

UNISON could never agree to most of the proposed changes to Premium Payments. Premium Payments can be negotiated locally as they are covered by Part Three of the Green Book. If we cannot reach a collective agreement with the council about Premium Payments then they would default to a Part Two condition and once again become a Key National Provision.

4. Changes to Pay Protection and Redundancy Selection Criteria

UNISON considers the current pay protection policy is inadequate. A reduction of pay protection from twelve to six months is in our view a very hard measure to take. We will resist this proposal very strongly. The Redundancy Selection Criteria have not been revised for many years. UNISON await the council's more detailed proposals.

5. Changes to Essential and Casual Car User Allowance, Free Car Parking & Travel Allowances

Essential and Casual Car User Allowance are covered by Part Three of the Green Book. Once more, if we cannot reach a collective agreement with the council about car allowances, then they would default to a Part Two condition. UNISON will resist any attempt to apply charges for Town Centre free car parking at this point in time. We understand that when the new Municipal Offices opens that there will be hardly any car parking available in the town centre. Therefore this proposal would realise very little savings (9 months worth at the most). UNISON requires more detail as to what "cease payment of travel allowances" means.

6. Changes to the Working Week and Leave

UNISON will not concede that the working week should increase to 37 hours for those employees currently working 36 ¼ hours. We have calculated an increase of 35 ¼ hours (45 minutes x 47 weeks, excluding 5 weeks annual leave) per annum per employee, almost an extra week each.

7. Changes to Other Conditions including: Transfer to Monthly Pay, Payment of Professional Fees, Various other Allowances

UNISON will engage in meaningful negotiations on these proposals. Some of these measures will affect very low paid employees. Some of these proposals are covered by Part Three of the Green Book but have to be negotiated locally.

All out to defend pensions on 30th November

Vote YES

Over 3 million workers could be involved in the largest strike since the General Strike on 30th November this year. UNISON has issued notification to 9000 employers that it intends to ballot members for industrial action.

Everyone in the public sector is affected - fire fighters, school caretakers, hospital cleaners, support workers, benefit advisers, social workers, medical secretaries, highways engineers, nurses, teaching assistants, ambulance drivers, IT support staff, kitchen assistants, cleaners and many more besides.

The NUT have calculated that some teachers could lose the equivalent of £250,000 over their lifetime if all the changes go through. All the schemes are different but in every case the government wants us to **work longer, pay more and get less**. The money that is saved will not reduce the national debt and it will not be used to pay for public services or jobs. It will be used by the Tory Government to give tax breaks to the super rich.

The Government knows that these attacks are not popular. They are a weak coalition with no mandate to ruin the retirement of public sector workers. Dave Prentis General Secretary of UNISON is urging members to go out and campaign for a Yes vote.

“It is time to take a stand. Time for the union to unite and fight these unjust pension changes - the schemes are not in crisis and pensions are sustainable and affordable for the long term. We cannot allow the government to dismantle the pensions that we fought so hard to win.

A hundred years ago pensions were the catalyst for the creation of our union - we won our battle then and we will win it now.”

We need everybody out to defend pensions on 30th November if we win the ballot.

If you are reading this and you are not a member but would like to join please contact Rochdale UNISON 01706 925952

We currently represent over 4,900 members in Rochdale Council, IMPACT, RBH, Link4Life, Hopwood Hall College and other employers. We have supported hundreds of our members through formal procedures, the Pay and Grading process and the Efficiencies Programme. We will go on supporting our members affected by redundancies and any other issues.



**MARCH AT THE TORY PARTY
CONFERENCE AND RALLY**

MANCHESTER **FOR THE** **ALTERNATIVE:** **JOBS • GROWTH • JUSTICE**



**SAY NO TO
UNFAIR AND UNNECESSARY
SPENDING CUTS**

more details at
www.tuc.org.uk/alltogether
join the campaign at
www.falseeconomy.org.uk



BACK THE ALTERNATIVE

- a Robin Hood tax on the banks
- closing tax loopholes
- policies for jobs and green growth



Sunday 2 October

Assemble 12 noon Liverpool Road (off Deansgate)

Speakers: Paul Kenny GMB, Len McCluskey Unite

Christine Blower NUT, Mark Serwotka PCS

Chris Keates NASUWT, Bob Crow RMT

Mary Bousted ATL, Rena Wood UNISON

+ community speakers

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