



Tameside



Pay—final offer 2.45%

Pension Contributions ALL CHANGE!

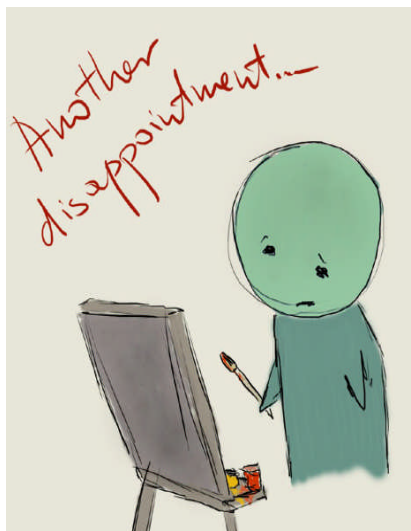
If you're in the Greater Manchester Pension Scheme there are several changes afoot from April.

You should have received a copy of the Fund's "Pension Power" newsletter which explains everything in more detail—if not ask them for a copy of it on 0161 301 7000 (have your NI number handy) or go to their website www.gmpf.org.uk

The obvious change is that instead of paying 6% of your pre-tax wages into the fund you'll pay less or more. Roughly speaking if you work full time and earn less than £18,000 a year you'll pay less—but over that amount you'll pay more.

Those former manual worker members currently paying a protected rate of 5% will lose that protection. Instead their rate changes to 5.25% this April, 5.5% from April 2009 and more the next year until they pay on the same basis as all other scheme members from April 2011.

Remember though that the scheme is (in our opinion) one of the best pension schemes going—deciding to leave it for the sake of a few quid a month would be a serious mistake.



DISAPPOINTMENT EXPRESSED.

EVERYTHING GOING UP FASTER THAN OUR PAY

CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS SOON

Unions representing more than a million local government workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, have expressed disappointment at a revised pay offer of 2.45% for the majority of staff, with 3% for those on the bottom three points.

Members of UNISON, GMB and Unite, who include home care workers, teaching assistants, nursery nurses, library staff, park keepers and bin men, have already endured four years of below inflation pay deals.

Heather Wakefield, UNISON Head of Local Government, said:

"Local Government employers need to wake up to the fact that 2.45% is not a realistic or fair offer. The value

of local government workers' wages are falling while the cost of essentials such as food, energy and housing are spiralling.

"Even with the bottom loading, the lowest pay rate in local government will still be less than Tesco's.

"Our members should have had an increase in their pay packets this month. The employers should come back to the table with a decent offer and allow local government members to get back to their jobs caring for the public and delivering quality public services. We will be consulting our members on what course of action they want to take at a national meeting next week."

GMB National Secretary, Brian Strutton, said:

"GMB is very disappointed with this cheapskate offer. Those at the top of local government have had 11% pay rises over the past two years – beating RPI – while the rest of local government has had half that. The hard-working people delivering front-line council services to the public deserve better. GMB will put this to a national conference of stewards on 24 April to determine our stance. Then we will consult our members to see if they want to accept the offer or take strike action."

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Sickness Absence Update

Unison recognises that employers need to manage absence, however we're concerned with the current punitive approach. Rather than the emphasis being on valuing staff the policy adopted by TMBC implies that no one is justified in being ill and controls rather than manages sickness absence.

We are continuing to argue for:

A fair and consistent approach in every department

The health safety and welfare of all employees

The need to identify the causes of absence and to be able to recommend where changes are necessary

Full compliance with the DDA

The need to use the policy in conjunction with other policies e.g. domestic violence, stress at work, DDA, maternity, industrial injuries, etc. Absences attributable to disability, maternity, domestic violence etc. will be recorded but no disciplinary action should be taken.

A supportive policy rather than one that punishes people for being ill. Staff need to have more confidence that their health problems will be addressed fairly and with sympathy and that there is **effective** support from appropriate sources such as Occupational Health, Counselling, or Physiotherapy.

Procedures that take into account the diversity and nature of the work across the council.

A policy that keeps those away from work those who are unfit to work; the existing policy forces people into work because of the crude use of triggers.

The employer to carry out its duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure the safety health and welfare of their employees. In its present form the policy does not protect staff as it forces staff either to not go off sick or if they do, it forces them to return before they are fully recovered. This not only hinders their short term recovery it also means that other employees may catch the germs.

Unison members see the current policy as a punitive one and one which undermines every initiative the Authority has undertaken in terms of promoting good health amongst its workforce.

We are particularly concerned about those of us who are disabled. Where the employer makes reasonable adjustments to comply with the DDA we think they should wait at least 12 months to see if those adjust-

ments work. We believe the current policy places disabled employees at a disadvantage if they are unlucky enough to fall under a formal warning. In some cases the disabled worker may be more likely to be off sick due to their condition, and therefore less likely to 'get out' of the sickness absence process.

Management need training to gain competency to exercise discretion—and we don't want that to turn into either favouritism or victimization.

We firmly believe that any sickness absence policy should make clear that there are certain circumstances where the policy doesn't apply at all. Where staff are off through a work related injury, where they have been assaulted by a member of the public or a service user, where the absence is pregnancy-related or related to the DDA, where staff have been sent home/told not to come into work, planned absences for surgery etc, absences due to communicable diseases to protect work colleagues, and domestic violence. These absences may need to be collated but they shouldn't be counted as a trigger for punitive action.

If this approach was adopted the Council's statistics for sickness absence would go down massively and more accurately reflect the real sickness absence situation.

Here's some statistics of our own

In a Unison survey into local government 59% of staff were worried about being off due to sickness absence policies.

56% of refuse collectors, 41% of gardeners and 33% of homecare workers experience verbal and physical abuse and harassment whilst at work.

61% of homecare workers have to deal with urine, excrement and vomit on a daily basis.

63% feel more stressed in their jobs than five years ago and felt significantly more worn out.

Not yet a member of a union?
There's never been a better
time to join us.
Contact UNISON Direct on 0845
355 0845 for details and an
application form.

A thing worth doing...

As an accredited Trade Union representative one of the regular questions you will hear from your members is “what is the union doing for me?” Whilst this question is entirely reasonable, the trade union rep in you cries out to hear the entirely different query of “what can I do for my union?”

This exact thought crossed the minds of all of your elected branch officers, stewards and reps before they took the plunge to get more involved.

You don't need any experience as full training is provided by way of paid time off at UNISON-run training courses. Being involved in the work of an organisation that wants to improve the lot of the ordinary Joe and Joanna, and see more fairness and equality in the wider world is actually really enjoyable not to mention worthwhile.

So come on, if you're interested in becoming a departmental steward, health & safety rep, or taking on the newer role of learner rep, ring the branch



Hope not Hate

UNISON campaigns hard against far-right extremists in this region. In this we get invaluable help from our close working relationship with Searchlight who co-ordinate much of the anti-fascist activity across the UK.

To help support our work, Searchlight have revamped the 'Hope Not Hate' Website as an organising tool. With vital, up to the minute, information, this is a must for all activists.

The BNP's campaign failed miserably in 2007 and its leader, Nick Griffin, admitted being “out-organised” by “Searchlight and trade union allies” which is a back handed compliment to our efforts. Take a look at www.hopenothate.org.uk

Job Evaluation

It's now spring 2008. Job Evaluation/Pay & Grading talks, have resumed, albeit haltingly, although there continues to be little to report from the Evaluation Team other than that job evaluations are continuing.

However, it is now hoped that evaluations will be sufficiently complete by May to begin Pay Modelling. That means putting £'s to points, but it is not quite that simple. This will be where the real negotiation begins, call it, arm wrestling, horse-trading, what you will. It will be a fight, gloves on or off.

This whole exercise has been about making sure people get equal pay if they are doing jobs of equal value. Sadly our current pay schemes have perpetuated inequalities so the exercise needs to be done to ensure fairness all round.

So it's all very well if you're a winner, and the council says you should get more money; it's not too bad either if you stay the same as you are now. But if the result of the exercise is that you've been overpaid then there are obvious problems.

You applied for a job at the rate of the pay advertised and you've adopted a lifestyle based on that income level. It is important that we stand together to help support these folk and negotiate the best deal, whether through protection or job re-design and training or whatever we can do them.

The job we have before us is not easy, and when the pay modelling is finally released there's inevitably going to be some trouble. Make sure that YOU and your colleagues are in the union—preferably ours. Call 308 2452 for details and an application form. We need to stand together if we are to get the best deal.

Let's face it we all come to work for the money -don't be short-changed!

Government criticises failures of privatisation

“For Better – For Worse” – The Audit Commission

A new report “For Better – For Worse” by the Audit Commission looks at large-scale Service Delivery Partnerships with the private sector and finds that many of the claimed benefits cannot be justified.

Shared Services and Strategic Service Delivery Partnerships (SSPs) are now in place or being considered in half of local authorities. They have been encouraged by government as a way for councils to get more efficient and ‘joined-up’ services but consultants and others in the private sector have seen them as a vehicle for privatisation. The report states that:

- The propaganda about the benefits of these arrangements is often repeated, but there is often little hard evidence of it.
- In the private sector, most of this type of partnership actually fails.
- They can be rigid and inflexible. Councils tend to take the concept of partnership on trust, whilst the priority of the private sector is with profits.

Some councils have relied unduly on the language or spirit of partnership, believing erroneously that contractors would pursue shared goals without incentives to do so. (Page 2)

“... companies tend to focus solely on the impact of a partnership on market-based measures of success. They seldom have the multiple objectives which characterise councils’ use of SSPs.” (Page 29)

Claims for their benefits ignore the potential for in-house improvement There are long term problems with being committed to the market

“Once the option of an SSP is chosen, no comprehensive tracking information on the alternatives (including in-house provision, traditional outsourcing, or public-public shared services) will be available again.” (page 26)

Like many types of contracts, SSPs often leave the ultimate risk associated for service failure with the public sector whilst privatising the profits. One in five cases in the study was actually terminated “because anticipated benefits had not materialised.”

PFI – National Audit Office

A second report, “Making changes in operational PFI projects” by the National Audit Office, attacks the failings of the PFI system. PFI has now been used 750 contracts costing £55 billion, and most new schools and all hospitals are built under PFI.

The report says that NHS trusts and authorities spent 75% more than expected on external consultants and In 2007, £180m was spent on changes to 500 PFI deals despite 82% of the changes being small. Many schemes were not even competitively tendered.



Blood on our hands?

MILLIONS of pounds of Greater Manchester Pension Fund’s money are still being invested in arms and tobacco according to the Tameside Advertiser. Last year UNISON reps and other campaigners asked for a review of the fund’s ethical policy – but the fund bosses refused to change their stance saying their first priority was a return for members of the scheme.

Shares in a number of arms firms have been sold over the last year, but £8m is still being invested in defence companies. These firms include those that manufacture cluster bombs and shells containing depleted uranium, Tomahawk and Patriot missiles, and military aircraft.

If you want to get more involved in the campaign against the arms trade visit the CAAT website – www.caat.org.uk or contact the local Manchester-based group:

Manchester Campaign Against the Arms Trade

Website: www.manchestercaat.org.uk

Email: info@endarmsprofits.org.uk

Address: PO Box 24, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester M4 7HR