

# Gateshead UNISON News

December 2017



Protecting jobs, protecting terms and conditions - proudly representing over 5000 members

## Council and school workers' pay offer received

UNISON, GMB and Unite have received a two-year NJC pay offer from the Local Government Employers. Under the offer:

- Those currently on SCP 6 (Gateshead Council staff start at SCP 9) would receive a pay increase of 16% over two years.
- Employees on scale points 7-19 will receive increases of between 9% and 3.7% in year 1.
- Employees on scale point 20 and above would receive an increase of 2%.
- Employees will be assimilated on to a new pay spine in year 2.
- Those on the bottom pay point will receive £9 an hour. New scale points 2-22 from 1 April 2019 will have new, even 2% differentials.

**fairpayNOW!**  
for council and school workers

Employees on new scale point 23 and above receive a further 2% increase on 2018 salaries.

We were expecting to receive the LGA's offer at the NJC Executive in late December and UNISON's NJ Committee will then consider the detail of the offer - then a period of consultation will be expected to be undertaken.

## Gateshead UNISON Annual General Meeting 2018

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 5.15pm Bewicks Restaurant, Gateshead Civic Centre

Buffet from 4.30pm - Bar - Refreshments - Free Prize Draw



*Wansbeck MP Ian Lavery recently clinched the top of Labour Party Chair in Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet. He was a key architect in pulling together Labour's current manifesto - widely accepted to be the most radical, credible and responsible manifesto since 1945.*

*Incidentally - during the 1984/85 miners' strike Ian was the only apprentice in the North East area who refused to go to work ..... says it all really!*

## Budget Update - Reviews, Delivery Models, Reducing Demand ...

Extensive discussions and negotiations are being undertaken across the council attempting to achieve extremely challenging savings targets - as always discussions will be entirely focused on protecting jobs and services.

65 draft budget proposals totalling £15.46m savings which could impact on 64.3 FTE's have been prepared. The council's budget forecasts show an estimated funding gap of around £88.044m for the next five years to 2022/23 and the annual funding gaps are £20.6m 2018/19 and £21.2m 2019/20

£115.7m of the controlled budget is spent within Care, Wellbeing and Learning and £98.8m is spent on targeted Social Care recipients. Consequently managing Social Care demand continues to be key activity to safeguard the long-term financial stability of the council.

Proposals being developed include expanding early intervention and demand management across Children and Families and increasing Adult Social Care and Public Health demand management prevention strategies. A range of significant recommissioning activities will also be undertaken to make sure commissioning activities provide value for money and affordability into the future

Ramping up income generation activities is also seen as crucial, especially across Services to Schools, Adult Social Care and a range of other areas.

TGHC have again opened up limited opportunity to employees considering Voluntary Redundancy. We continue to work closely with TGHC on a number of ongoing reviews linked to efficiencies including the integration of the housing services and the repairs and maintenance teams.



Stars in Our Schools is an annual celebration of school support staff. This year's event was on Friday 24 November 2017. In the run up to the day of celebration, staff from the branch and our regional office visited every school in Gateshead to deliver freebies, a resource pack (full of information advice and guidance specific to members working in schools,) the previous branch newsletter and details about our prize draw.

The main prize was a Dinner, Bed and Breakfast stay at Eslington Villa Hotel in Low Fell and was won by Joanne Dutta from Emmaville Primary School

Runner up bouquets were presented to both Lisa Petrie from Whickham School and Debra Grey from High Spen Primary School



Lisa Petrie



Debra Grey



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## Pension fund hidden fees - a far bigger scandal than PPI?

Trade unions are preparing to pile pressure on pension funds and asset managers around the world over investment costs and fee transparency, as concerns mount that hidden charges are eating up returns. The Global Unions Committee on Workers' Capital (CWC), which brings together officials from 25 countries, said it plans to roll out "a global initiative on asset management fee transparency".

Fund companies have come under pressure to disclose the true cost of investments to their clients.

A study last year found that pension savers in the UK are routinely hit with more than 100 charges, many of them hidden that potentially consume more than a third of the value of their funds over their lifetime and impacts also on employers contributions levels.

The CWC is made up of more than 200 members globally, including senior figures from the International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 181m workers across 163 countries, and the International Transport Workers' Federation, which has a combined membership of 16m employees.

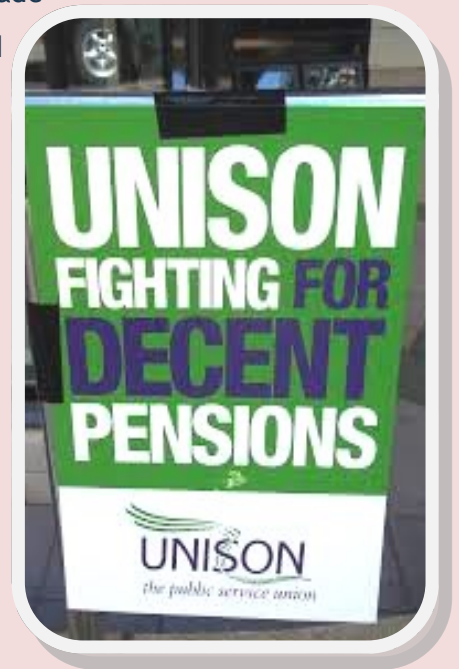
Several countries, including the Netherlands, have introduced systems aimed at ensuring investors have more clarity over the costs they are paying in recent years. Dutch pension funds have to report all costs in their annual reports, including implicit and explicit investment costs together with estimates of transaction costs.

Following pressure from UNISON and other trade unions - from January, asset managers overseeing money on behalf of millions of workplace pension savers in the UK will be forced to disclose hidden charges under new rules from the Financial Conduct Authority, the regulator.

Colin Meech, national officer at UNISON said workers' representatives globally were becoming increasingly concerned about asset management fees, which affect net returns and the funding levels of pension pots. "Pension fund costs and transparency is a major issue," he added. In the US, a study released by the American Federation of Teachers in May urged pension funds and politicians to "challenge the status quo when it comes to fees" in the investment industry.

According to its research, excessive fees paid to alternative investment managers are a significant contributor to funding shortfalls in retirement pots.

Mr Meech said 'it was important that pension funds understood the true cost they were paying in asset management fees, particularly because many were struggling with large deficits. He argued pension funds would often be better off negotiating to reduce fees as a solution to shortfalls, rather than cutting employee benefits.'



Many thanks to Gateshead UNISON member Andrew Phillips who travelled to parliament on 17th October to lobby MP's on the devastating impact of the pay cap. Andrew got the chance to lobby most local MP's however Andrew's own MP - Conservative Guy Opperman - declined to show up along with his other North East Conservative colleague.

## NJC Job Evaluation Scheme - equal pay, for work of equal value

In 1997 the Local Government Single Status Agreement came into being and, through working in partnership with trade unions, Gateshead Council agreed a comprehensive Pay and Grading Structure in 2006/7. During this process, the concepts of openness and transparency were seen as crucial principles underpinning the long-term integrity and long-term viability of the scheme.

However we recently felt it necessary to highlight our concerns around elements of the local application of the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme directly with the council via a detailed report including:

- The lack of a transparent historic and ongoing monitoring of the scheme.
- The lack of scheme maintenance in relation to the national and local conventions - including a unilateral decision not to adopt or use nationally agreed updates to the scheme guidance notes.
- Specific worries raised about lack of openness, transparency, consistency or fairness within the local application of the scheme.

Unfortunately, UNISON is now concerned elements of the JE scheme across Gateshead Council have become distorted so that they now appear not to be following the principles of 'equal pay, for work of equal value'. Although the fundamentals of Scheme are generally robust, it is our firm view that the scheme as currently operated locally may no longer meet either national guidelines or local conventions, and so fails to satisfy the mutual understandings around which it was originally agreed.

We will update members if and when we receive a response .... watch this space.

there  
for you supporting UNISON members  
when life gets tough

# Get help staying warm this winter

With rising fuel costs and another cold winter many members are worried about how they're going to pay this year's winter fuel bills.

### Help is on hand

"There for You" has set up a limited fund to help UNISON members on low income by way of a one-off payment of up to £50.

To apply and download the application form visit [unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://unison.org.uk/thereforyou) or simply contact your UNISON branch office.



UNISON  
the public service union

There for you is the working name of UNISON Welfare, a registered charity supported by UNISON the trade union. Registered charity no. 1023552/SC038306