



Fair Pay Strike Ballot 2014

Campaign Guide

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Briefing FAQs for stewards

NB: This Campaign Guide and the FAQs will be updated during the campaign. You can see on the website what the date of the most recent update is. Check regularly so you have any new arguments or facts and figures or other useful material.

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2014/index.html>

When does the ballot open?

The ballot runs from 9 September to 29 September . Ballot papers will be posted to the home addresses of all members entitled to vote. It is important members use their vote.

What is the dispute?

Last year the Scottish Employers intimated to UNISON that their two year pay offer (1% 2013/14 and 1% 2014/15) would be imposed on UNISON members given the fact that the other two trade unions had accepted it.

This action by the Employers is out with the agreed bargaining structures of the SJC and seeks to marginalise UNISON for not agreeing to their offer. This type of behaviour is completely unacceptable and shows a lack of support and understanding of members who are undertaking difficult jobs in difficult times.

UNISON also lodged a pay claim for 2014/15, however the Scottish Employers refused to enter into negotiations.

What was our claim for 2014/15?

Our claim for that period was:

- 1) £1 per hour for all staff;
- 2) Consolidation of the Living Wage;
- 3) Deletion of the spinal column points below the level of the Living Wage

What happens next?

UNISON will now run an Industrial Action Ballot from 9-29 September asking members if they are prepared to take industrial action in support of forcing the employers back to the negotiating table.

Why are we running an Industrial Action Ballot?

UNISON initially undertook a Consultative Ballot on this issue. The result of that ballot was that members wished to move to an Industrial Action Ballot by 65% to 35%

Is it only UNISON that is running an Industrial Action Ballot?

Yes. The other two trade unions, (GMB and Unite) accepted the employer's position.

What type of action am I being asked to take?

This is currently under discussion, however all options are being considered, including action involving all members and forms of selective action. All branches will be involved in determining the type of action to take.

Will there be a recommendation on how to vote?

Yes. UNISON Scotland are recommending that you vote YES for industrial action. We believe that we need to stand up to the employers on this issue, otherwise it will send a signal that they can simply bypass the negotiating procedures in future years.

Will it work?

There is no doubt that this will be a difficult dispute to win given the employers have already imposed 1%. However to do nothing is not an option.

It is important that our members stand up for what is right and send a message to the employers that Fair Pay is not just a slogan but something that we will fight for.

Shouldn't we just accept the imposed 1% rise?

Members have voted to reject it. In fact, it isn't a rise - it is in effect a further pay cut. Local government pay has continually failed to even remotely keep pace with inflation. During the last few years, most local government workers have seen the real value of their pay fall dramatically while living costs have soared.

Inflation has led prices to rise by over 25% (according to the Retail Price Index) since the bankers caused the crash in 2008. During that time the UK has had the highest food and energy inflation in Western Europe.

But council workers have lost thousands of pounds in real pay.

A library assistant on £20,500 in 2007 would need to be paid at least £25,800 this year, to just keep pace with inflation - but now that same worker has to get by on £22,200. That's an effective pay cut of £3,600. Other council staff face similar cuts.

Meanwhile the wealth of the richest 1000 people went up by £69 billion last year and £116 billion the year before. They're now worth £519 billion - that's nearly a third of the country's annual economic output. Their wealth has more than doubled since the crash.

Wouldn't increasing the offer lead to more cuts and more jobs being at risk?

Pay restraint has not protected us from cuts - in fact tens of thousands of local

government jobs have been lost since the crash of 2008. Remaining staff have seen huge increases in workloads, attacks on our terms and conditions and cuts to vital services.

This puts pressure on everyone and increases stress levels. Yet members continue to provide quality public services, despite being hit hard with severe sickness absence policies at many councils. We deserve a decent pay rise. It is not a choice between a pay rise and cuts or job losses. We need to tell the employers enough is enough.

Where would councils find the cash to improve the offer?

Some did budget for more than 1%. Most have been building up reserves. Last year we calculated that councils had saved nearly a billion pounds from job losses during the pay freeze. Meanwhile council staff have also contributed to making hundreds of millions of pounds of efficiency savings.

Generally, councils can re-shape and re-prioritise budgets to improve the offer. We need to lobby councillors hard as part of our Yes to Fair Pay Campaign.

Would a pay rise help local economies?

Definitely. It would help in their work promoting economic development. Local council workers re-spend 52.5 pence in every pound they receive in wages in their local economy. We refer to this in the model motion for councils in this guide. Members can ask councillors to propose/support the motion, which also suggests they should find out the impact on the local economy of fewer staff numbers and the related spending power of council employees.

I can't really afford to lose pay on strike. Isn't there another way?

No-one wants to take strike action and give up a day's pay each time. However, we can't afford to accept another year of pay restraint. As noted above, the 1% offer follows a rise of 0.65% in 2010 and two years of pay freeze. In that period, our pay has fallen in value by nearly 13%. We can't afford to keep on like this.

But if I lose pay by being on strike any increase won't make up for my loss.

That depends on the increase but any increase will add to your pay, your overtime payments, your pension contributions and will be there not just this year but in future years too.

Is this dispute only about pay?

The vote for strike action is on the employer's imposed pay offer and is designed to get an improved offer.

However, we are not fighting for a decent pay offer in isolation. The UK Coalition Government's austerity programme has led to public sector workers paying for a crisis that we didn't cause. Pay freezes, job losses, increased workloads, cuts in working tax credits and in-work benefits, huge rises in food and fuel costs.

Meanwhile bankers get their bonuses and the government plans to spend billions on replacing Trident missiles. A fight now over pay is the best way of showing councils and the government that we are not prepared to accept their attacks. There is a better way, but we need to fight for it.

Is strike action all UNISON is proposing?

No. We are stepping up our campaign to persuade councillors across Scotland to support an improved offer.

We are asking every member to contact your councillors – go to their surgery/send our model letter. And encourage all colleagues in your workplace to be UNISON members. www.joinunison.org Ask your workplace rep how you can be involved – and use the Yes to Fair Pay posters and leaflets to make our case.

Full information, campaign materials, model letters & supporting facts are at

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2014/index.html>

TO:
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Model letter to Councillors

Dear Councillor

UNISON members are looking for a decent pay rise this year

I write to you on behalf of the (number of) members of UNISON who work for (name) Council.

Over the past few years we have seen the value of our wages decrease by approximately 16%. We have had pay freezes, and pay rises imposed on us that were and are well below the inflation rate. Increasingly many of our colleagues are relying on welfare benefits to keep their families. Some have had to resort to using food banks on occasion. Our own UNISON charity, There For You, has seen a marked increase in the number of applications from members in financial crisis. As our wages have been frozen or held back our fuel, transport and food costs have all soared.

Few people have ever been attracted to work for the Council for high wages. We believe that we deliver essential services to the community that most of us live in. We are loyal to our service, our Council and our community. However we are now becoming a low wage Council workforce.

We understand that the Council has suffered cuts in funding and that the Council tax freeze has starved all councils of much needed additional revenue. This has led to cuts in jobs in this council and an increased workload on the remaining staff. We have taken the main burden of the cuts through this increase in workloads and the stress that comes with it. In addition we have been forced to accept reduced living standards over many years.

This is no longer tolerable for us as council workers and should not be acceptable to you as a Councillor.

UNISON is fully committed to campaigning, alongside you as a councillor, for a better funding deal for Councils to allow you to protect and improve local services.

However, we believe there needs to be a commitment to restoring the value of our wages. We accept that a 16% drop in value cannot be made up overnight. It will take time to restore funding levels to Councils and to address the issue of our pay. However a start needs to be made.

UNISON has asked for a £1 an hour increase this year and for the Living Wage, which we fought for previously, to be consolidated in our salary (as some councils have already done). We got 1% imposed on us in April. 1% is not good enough and simply imposing this on loyal staff is unacceptable. This was done in your name.

We would like your support to address this.

We ask that you

- 1. Indicate that you would support an improved negotiated pay offer this year.**
- 2. Show your support for the consolidation of the Living Wage into the pay structure now and for future years**
- 3. Support our campaign for negotiations on pay in coming years to be genuine and that they should re-dress the drop in the value of our wages over a reasonable time-frame.**

On behalf of UNISON members I would appreciate an early response to this letter.

Yours sincerely

2014 pay campaign

Briefing on lobbying local politicians

Our Fair Pay campaign is a long running political campaign that seeks to persuade Councillors across Scotland that local government workers are due a decent pay rise. Ultimately to win a pay rise we need these councillors to put pressure on their negotiators to make us a reasonable offer. This briefing sets out what branches should be doing to win support from Councillors.

Action for branches

1. Branches should write to every Councillor explaining why we are campaigning for Fair Pay. Use the model letter but try to amend this for local circumstances. This could include reference to local campaigning or the impact on the local economy. Your letter should ask them to do something. This could include raising the issue at their group meeting, agree to meet a delegation of UNISON members or branch officers, confirm whether they support a decent pay rise, and sign a statement in support.
2. Branches should identify Councillors who may be sympathetic and approach them individually for a more detailed discussion and encourage them to actively support our campaign. They could sponsor a motion to their group, speak at a union meeting, help to identify other sympathetic councillors.
3. Branches should identify any UNISON members who are Councillors and write to them as UNISON members and ask them specifically to support this UNISON campaign.
4. Branches should identify how many UNISON members (not just their branch members) live in the ward of the Council Leader/Provost/CoSLA and SJC rep (using the postcode information) and write to advise the councillor of this fact.
5. Branches should organise 'stunts' to draw attention to our campaign and to put pressure on the Councillors. Examples of this could be an Open Letter to Councillors published in the press signed by lots of members; hold a lunch time lobby of Council HQ to coincide with Councillor's meetings; organise a co-ordinated "posters on the windows" action so that Council buildings display the Fair Pay logo when Councillors are coming into the building for meetings.

Action for local Labour Link

1. Labour Link committees should send motions to all constituencies that they are affiliated to and prepare labour Link members to go along to Labour party meetings to speak to the motion.
2. Labour link committees should write to all Labour councillors, separate from but co-ordinated with the branch letters, asking that they take a lead in promoting a decent pay rise for their staff.

Action for members

1. Members should sign a petition calling on Councillors in their council to support a decent pay rise for their staff. This could be delivered to the Council Leader at the start of the ballot period.
2. Members should be encouraged to send postcards/letters to their own local Councillor.
3. Members should ask for an appointment to meet their Councillor or attend their surgery. Ideally a group of members should do this together.
4. Members should write to their local papers highlighting why council workers deserve a decent pay rise.

Model Petition to Council

We the undersigned members of staff at (name) Council call on all Councillors to recognise that the burden of council funding cuts has fallen on the staff who are relied upon to deliver quality services. We have suffered job losses and increased workloads, greater demand on our services and increased levels of stress as a result.

In addition we have suffered a 16% fall in the value of our wages so that increasing numbers of your staff have to seek secondary employment, claim state benefits and worry about paying bills and debts.

We therefore call on all councillors to recognise that we deserve nothing less than Fair Pay and for you to support an improved pay offer this year and proper meaningful negotiations next year.

Name (print)	Address	Job	Signature

Model news release

Adapt as appropriate. For this or other releases, in the main release, or in notes to editors, try to include brief local relevant facts and figures. You will have some to hand from council papers. Some further details will come in news releases/briefings from UNISON Scotland during the campaign.

Remember to have some workers ready to tell their personal stories to reporters. We have a strong case and need to make it with real examples of how members are affected.



Media release

Date: xxx

Embargo: For information and release

UNISON BALLOT LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS IN FIGHT FOR FAIR PAY

UNISON, Scotland's biggest trade union, is to ballot council workers for industrial action. If workers vote yes for industrial action – which could include strike action – council services will be affected from the October 2014. The ballot will run from 9 – 29 September 2014.

UNISON is calling for an extra £1 per hour for all council workers, for the consolidation of the living wage and for employers to open negotiations.

Xxxx, UNISON Xxxx branch secretary said, "Council workers had a paltry 1% pay increase imposed on them this year which is well below inflation. And over the past few years imposed pay freezes and below inflation pay rises mean that the value of council workers' wages has fallen by 16%. UNISON has been left with little choice but to ballot members.'

Local Government has taken the brunt of the cuts. There have been heavy jobs losses and terms and conditions are being eroded. UNISON members are forced to do more for less

UNISON spokesperson said 'UNISON members are angry about how they are being treated and are determined to fight for better public services and fair pay. We intend to send a message to our employers that they need to come to the negotiating table'

ENDS

Further information for Editors

1. UNISON is the biggest trade union in Scotland and it represents over 70,000 local government workers across Scotland.
2. Last year the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) intimated to UNISON that their two year pay offer (1% 2013/14 and 1% 2014/15) would be imposed on UNISON members given the fact that the other two trade unions had accepted it.
3. This action by the COSLA is out with the agreed bargaining structures of the Scottish Joint Committee and seeks to marginalise UNISON for not agreeing to their offer.
4. UNISON lodged a pay claim for 2014/15, 1) £1 per hour for all staff; 2) Consolidation of the Living Wage; 3) Deletion of the spinal column points below the level of the Living Wage. However COSLA refused to enter into negotiations
5. There have been 39,600 job cuts across local government in Scotland.

For more information contact:

- Xxxx UNISON local branch secretary xxx

GUIDE FOR USING LOCAL MEDIA

1. Build a relationship with your local media

Know your local media. Get names and contact details of local journalists who are most likely to cover your stories. Know their deadlines and how to submit stories. Get to know them. Build personal relationships with journalists and editors.

2. Basic guide for local press releases and media stories

- Make your story **locally** relevant.
- Keep it simple, provide facts.
- Remember the who, what, when, why, where and how?
- Give journalist 4 paragraphs.
- Provide quotes. Around 2 paragraphs per quote, 3 sentences per paragraph, no more than 2 people quoted. Use values and feelings and personal stories.
- Give titles for quotes
- Keep positive

3. Structure of press release

- UNISON LOGO
- Date
- EMBARGO 'for immediate release'
- Headline – it does what it says on the tin
- Structure: 1 sentence, 2 paragraphs, quote, paragraph, quote
- Use clear fonts
- Ends
- Information for editors: 'UNISON is the largest trade union in Scotland'
- Contact details (mobiles)

4. SEND a local story to journalist

Contact local journalist to say you are sending a press release. Give background. Keep enthusiastic. Keep it clear. Invite follow up call or you follow up with call.