



Fair Pay Strike Ballot 2013

Campaign Guide

(check for updates. This version online 6 June www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013)

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Key dates

List of materials available

Briefing FAQs for stewards

Model letter to councillors – ask members to complete their address and sign and date it

Model motion – ask councillors to propose / support the motion at council/other meetings

Model news release – remember to get members who can speak about how they are affected.

Social media messaging – encourage members to use Facebook and Twitter

Key Dates:

Fair Pay Day of Action Tues 11 June

Branch workplace activities/lobbying councillors/get members to sign letters etc.

Fair Pay Day of Action Tues 25 June

Branch workplace activities/lobbying councillors/get members to sign letters etc.

Dundee – Fair Pay Day City centre street theatre fat cat stunt/leafletting

Lunchtime rally in City Square (venue tbc)

(Dundee events are part of STUC Austerity Uncovered There is a Better Way tour

More details at thereisabetterway.org and on There is a Better Way's Facebook)

Ballot opens Wed 3 July

Ballot closes Tues 13 August

List of materials available:

Yes to Fair Pay A3 and A4 posters, A5 leaflets and stickers – distributed to branches.

Small numbers of these are also in the four UNISON Scotland offices.

A second A5 leaflet will be produced and sent to branches in time for 25 June Fair Pay Day.

Posters and leaflets are also online. They can be printed off from the website, as can FAQs for members, this guide and 3 A4 leaflets with key information on the back.

A series of UNISON Scotland news releases/briefings will highlight arguments, with new back-up facts and figures, so check online for regular updates.

www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013

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. www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013

When does the ballot open?

The ballot runs from 3 July to 13 August. Ballot papers will be posted to the home addresses of all members entitled to vote. It is important members use their vote.

Why is UNISON asking members to vote for strike action?

Members voted to reject the offer from the employers, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities . COSLA has since said no to reopening talks. We are now asking members if they are prepared to take strike action to persuade the employers to improve the offer.

What was the offer?

A 1% increase and a Living Wage of £7.50 an hour (to be applied after the 1% rise).

Hasn't UNISON been campaigning for the Living Wage?

Yes, and this part of the offer is welcome. However, it does not 'consolidate' the Living Wage as there is no commitment to increase it in future years.

Anything else?

The employers indicated that they want to link pay increases in future years to changes in terms and conditions. This could mean attacks on sick pay in future.

What is UNISON asking for? What was our claim?

We want a fair pay rise and a promise to increase the Living Wage annually.

In 2011 the trade unions submitted a pay claim for £500 and the Living Wage. In 2012 we asked for £1000 and the Living Wage. The employers ignored these claims and imposed a pay freeze for two years. This followed a 0.65% pay rise.

Shouldn't we just accept a 1% rise?

Members have voted to reject it. In fact, it isn't a rise - we are continuing to have effective pay cuts. During the last three years, most local government workers have seen the value of their pay fall by nearly 13%, while living costs soared.

Inflation saw prices rise by 11.2% (RPI). The UK currently has the highest food and energy inflation in Western Europe. Meanwhile the wealth of the richest 1000 people went up by £116 billion. They could pay off the UK deficit three times over.

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

Pay restraint has not protected us from cuts. More than 34,500 jobs have gone from local government since 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 budgeted for more than 1%. Most have been building up their reserves. Total unallocated reserves increased by more than 23% last year. And we calculate that councils have saved around £860m from job losses during the pay freeze. Council staff have also contributed to making hundreds of millions of pounds of efficiency savings (£888m in 2010/11 alone).

Generally, councils can re-shape and re-prioritise budgets to improve the offer. The Labour group on COSLA proposed in April that the offer be increased to 2.5%, but this was rejected. However, clearly that means some councillors believe the offer can be improved. 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.

What kind of strike action is UNISON asking members to vote for?

UNISON's Scottish Local Government Committee concluded that action needs to be significant and to be sustained over a long period to maximise the impact on the councils. If members vote yes, we propose a minimum of 3 days of strike action over a 7 week period. First, a one day Scottish wide strike. Next, a rolling programme of one day strikes in different areas. Then a further Scottish wide strike.

What about selective action?

Selective action is being considered. This is where smaller groups of members take strike action for longer periods of time or where members in key areas take further one day strikes. If necessary, it will be part of the programme. We are discussing which particular groups and what areas.

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 3 days' pay 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. And remember the employers also indicated that they want to link pay increases in future years to changes in terms and conditions. This could mean attacks on sick pay in future.

What about other unions?

Unite are also balloting their members on strike action in line with UNISON.

Is this dispute only about pay?

The vote for strike action is on the employer's 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. Our employers have said they want to cut our sick pay and local councils are already cutting terms and conditions. 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. And branches are organising Fair Pay workplace Days of

Action on June 11 and 25. Our Fair Pay of Action in Dundee on 25 June is part of the STUC Austerity Uncovered – There is A Better Way nine days of action, 21-29 June.

thereisabetterway.org and There is a Better Way on Facebook

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 www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013

TO:
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Dear Councillor,

Say yes to Fair Pay for council workers

UNISON is balloting members over strike action to win an improved pay offer. I am writing to ask you to please support hard working staff in their campaign for a fair pay increase and yearly rises in the Living Wage.

As you know, COSLA only offered a miserly 1%, yet the value of council workers' pay has fallen by nearly 13% in three years. We welcome the Living Wage part of the offer, but this needs to be consolidated by committing to annual increases.

We can provide a motion for you to propose at council and other meetings. Please support it if other councillors propose it. I note that the Labour group on COSLA proposed 2.5%. Although this was not carried, it shows that they believe money can be found to improve the offer.

Indeed, we know that some councils budgeted for more than 1%. Most have been building up reserves. Total unallocated reserves increased by 23% last year. And councils saved around £860 million from job losses during the pay freeze.

The motion points out the importance to the local economy of the spending power of local government workers, who spend more than half of their pay locally.

Fair pay for staff and properly implementing the Living Wage would be good for services and for the economy of this area. www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013

Yours sincerely,

Model motion

For asking councillors to propose/support at council and other meetings.

Fair pay for council staff

This council values the contribution made to XXXX by its workforce - who continue to deliver high quality services despite diminishing resources and staff numbers.

Council notes the contribution staff have made to efficiency savings realised over the last three years.

Council notes the study by APSE on the Economic Footprint of Local Services, which estimates that local government employees re-spend 52.5p of every pound in their pay locally. Council recognises that in addition to the immense value delivered to the communities of XXXX by the services delivered by council staff, the wages that they spend are an important part of the local economy.

Council notes that, for the vast majority of council staff, the value of their wages has declined by more than 10% in the last three years.

This council believes that the current 1% pay rise and Living Wage offer from COSLA is inadequate and that fair pay for staff will be good for services and good for the economy of XXXX

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support council staff in their campaign for a much improved pay rise for all local government staff across Scotland.
2. Take efforts to establish the impact on the local economy of reduced staff numbers and the declining spending power of council employees.

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.

Council workers in Anytown launched (*or stepped up*) their campaign for fair pay today as they prepare to vote on strike action.

UNISON members were holding workplace meetings and surgeries and lobbying local councillors as part of a Fair Pay day of action.

The public services union is holding a strike ballot in July and August, asking members to support a minimum three days of strike action in the autumn. Members earlier rejected an offer of a 1% pay rise.

Branch secretary Ann Smith said that many members in Anytown are struggling to pay bills after the value of their pay fell by nearly 13% over three years.

She said: "Council staff here work extremely hard providing quality public services. We've had two years of pay freeze after a tiny 0.65% increase in 2010. And now we're only being offered 1%.

"We know there have been cutbacks. We see the effects locally all the time and are working under pressure after so many local government jobs have gone.

"But councils can afford it and we want to know why they don't value their staff more? Paying us a fair increase and making sure the lowest paid have a Living Wage that rises every year, will boost local economies here and in all the other council areas."

UNISON members are asking councillors to support fair pay for their workers.

Karen Brown, a classroom assistant, said her gas and electricity bills have soared and she finds it very difficult to afford childcare for her children Jane (4) and Alan (2).

She added: "It's not right that we are being offered so little when you see bankers getting bonuses, the rich getting richer and everyone knows the financial crisis was not the fault of ordinary workers.

"I am angry at being treated so badly and I will be voting yes for strike action. We deserve fair pay."

ENDS

For information please contact:

Contact information – including mobile nos - for branch secretary

Notes to editors: *(select what is suitable/adapt for local references)*

1. UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union representing 160,000 members working in the public sector in Scotland, including staff at all 32 local authorities.

2. The union's local government membership includes cooks, cleaners, classroom assistants, housing staff, library workers, cleansing and environmental protection staff, technicians and trading standards workers and early years workers and social work staff.

3. Members whose conditions are linked to local government pay and conditions are also being balloted.

4. The ballot will run from 3 July to 13 August, with a proposal, if members vote yes, of a minimum of three days of strike action over a seven week period in the autumn. Two of these would be national one day strikes and there would be a rolling programme of one day strikes around the country. Selective action is also being considered.

5. In the run up to the ballot opening, UNISON branches is holding two Fair Pay Days of Action in council workplaces around the country. These will be on June 11 and 25.

6. The June 25 Fair Pay Day events in Dundee also form part of the STUC's Austerity Uncovered -There is A Better Way nine days of action across Scotland, focusing on the effects of cuts to services and benefits.

7. Unite is also balloting members in local government.

More information on our Fair Pay for Local Government 2013 campaign page:

www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013

(branch website information as appropriate)

Social Media Messaging

Sample tweets or Facebook posts (adapt to suit) below for use by branches & activists - and encourage members to get involved too. The main message is 'Say Yes to Fair Pay for council workers' and we are using the hashtag #YestoFairPay. For tweeting, try to keep shorter than the full 140 characters where possible to encourage reTweeting and commenting. Try to include #JoinUNISON in some messaging as well as the www.joinunison.org link Check what UNISON Scotland is doing on Facebook and Twitter too and like/reTweet etc.

Find out Facebook pages or Twitter accounts or email addresses for your councillors and send them a message/tweet asking for their support. (you could use parts of/adapt the model letter to councillors in this guide)

Say Yes to Fair Pay for Scottish council workers #YestoFairPay

I support Scotland's local government workers campaigning for fair pay #YestoFairPay

Please RT to support UNISON's #YestoFairPay campaign

Read why Scottish council workers deserve Fair Pay and yearly rises in the Living Wage

(include a link with this, or the other shorter messages, to the online materials - leaflet or poster – that you like best, or the branch website or the main UNISON Scotland Fair Pay web page www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013)

Scottish council workers deserve a fair pay rise & yearly #LivingWage rises
http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2013/LEAFLETA5_20130603.pdf Support the #YestoFairPay campaign Pls RT

A fair pay rise and yearly increases in the Living Wage for council workers will boost local economies #YestoFairPay

#YestoFairPay for council workers. Councils can afford it and workers deserve a fair pay rise. #JoinUNISON www.joinunison.org

UNISON is campaigning for Fair Pay for Scottish council staff #YestoFairPay
#austerityuncovered #LivingWage

Support today's Fair Pay day of action for council workers. Please RT & contact your councillors. Ask them to support #YestoFairPay

UNISON is balloting on strike action to win Fair Pay for Scottish council workers
#YestoFairPay

What's not fair: 2 yr pay freeze. Now a miserly 1% offer, while living costs soar & richest 1000 could pay off UK deficit 3 x over. 1/2

What would be fair for Scots council staff: A Fair Pay rise and a promise to increase the Living Wage every year. #YestoFairPay 2/2

Fair pay for council workers boosts the local economy #YestoFairPay