

FAIR PAY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS

There has been a clamour amongst the right wing press and think-tanks to slash public spending and hack back public services; this is now promised in the ConDem manifesto. In December 2009 a collection of respected economics Professors, led by Prof. David Blanchflower, wrote that

“Reducing the deficit now through spending cuts would undermine the recovery and ultimately damage the public finances further.”

One of the most common targets for attack, by those arguing for spending cuts, has been public sector pay. This is already hitting those working in local government – the Tory led Local Government Employers have not taken part in meaningful negotiations this year, instead telling the trade unions they want to impose a pay freeze. This is a pay cut in real terms.

Local government workers did not cause the economic crisis – they should not have to pay for it.

WHY UNITE BELIEVES LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS DESERVE BETTER

Local government workers face a fall in living standards

- The trade unions asked for 2.5% uplift in pay or £500, whichever is the greater. This would help the lowest paid more. Inflation has risen sharply to 5.3% and it is predicted to remain high throughout the year.
- Over half of those working in local government work part-time – as inflation climbs people will be left struggling to cover essential living costs.
- Local government workers have worked harder than ever during the recession and a very difficult winter to provide essential housing advice and support, brought council houses up to the ‘Decent Homes’ standards and carried on providing vital community services such as social care, youth services, school catering, library facilities, refuse and recycling collections. These are all things we could not cope without, yet local government workers are being rewarded with a pay cut in real terms and a fall in living standards.

A fair pay award is part of investing in local communities

- Research from the Association of Public Service Excellence found that Council employees re-spent 52.5p from every £1 they received in wages within in the local economy. Cutting local government pay is not therefore a ‘saving’ – it is a cut in the money being invested in local communities, spent in local businesses and facilities’.
- Fair pay for local government workers should be part of a package of investment to stop local economies being depressed back into recession. Research by the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) has found that for each £1 spent by a local council, £1.64p is generated in that locality. This means that as well as losing the £1.165bn of spending we are losing the additional £745.6m it would have generated through local government this year alone.

A fair pay award will improve morale

- Public service workers *are* public services. Fair pay in local government will help to recruit and retain dedicated staff who work hard to deliver local services. Motivated staff are at the heart of quality local services – a pay freeze now after the past few years of low and below inflation pay awards will damage morale further.

