



ROCHDALE PIONEER

Members Newsletter from ROCHDALE UNISON

October 2014

Strike For Fair Pay Tuesday 14th October

In October unions in Health, Local Government, Schools and the Civil Service will be taking the next step in the campaign for pay justice in the public sector. It starts on Monday 13th October with a strike in the NHS. On Tuesday 14th October UNISON, UNITE and GMB members in Local Government and Schools (including Academies) will be striking. On Wednesday 15th October Civil Servants in the PCS will be out and on Saturday 18th October everyone will be getting together for a huge TUC march through London for pay justice.

Can you afford not to strike?

If we accept this year's pay offer we are accepting a 20% real terms pay cut measured against 2010 prices. What does that mean? It means that the Government has held your pay down while inflation has risen. The cost of childcare, housing, transport, gas, electric, water and food have all increased. How long can we go on with one fifth of our wages missing?

Working Friday for free

To put it another way if your employer had come to you in 2010 and said we want you to work a full week but we are not paying you for Friday you would have probably politely told them where to go. But that is what they have done in a sneaky way by not awarding full cost of living increases while inflation soared. Are you going to put up with that?

Local cuts make it worse

Many of our members have already experienced significant losses in pay in the last five years. We have just had more local cuts announced for Rochdale Borough Council staff (WHICH EXCLUDE MEMBERS DIRECTLY EMPLOYED BY SCHOOLS) which if they go through will make it even tougher to make ends meet. (See inside pages and back page for UNISON's response to the council's proposals for terms and conditions)

We need to stand together on 14th October. Join the union. Join the Strike.

If any member has experienced financial hardship as a result of the last strike action please contact the branch 01706 925952/1 we may be able to help through our hardship fund.

Why are we undertaking a consultative ballot for strike action?

Rochdale UNISON have responded to the council's proposals for changes to terms and conditions. We are against all of their proposed changes. We do not believe they will save the money that the council have said they will. They will if implemented cause untold damage to staff morale, to our standard of living and that of our families and to the local economy. We have written a detailed response to all of the proposals which is available on our website- www.unison-rochdale.org

Rochdale UNISON is in the process of conducting a consultative ballot of our members who are affected by the council's proposed changes to terms and conditions.

(THIS WILL NOT INCLUDE STAFF DIRECTLY EMPLOYED BY SCHOOLS)

Here are some key points:

Sick pay

Sick pay is a fundamental right that trade unions have fought to win over the decades. If you are sick you should not feel forced to come into work by a scrooge employer who will not pay you when you are ill. The council's proposal not to pay sick pay for the first three days will affect cancer patients having chemotherapy, people recovering from routine operations as well as anyone who gets flu. Some employees with disabilities will be especially penalised because they occasionally need time off due to their long term health condition. You never know when you are going to get sick or have an injury that is not your fault. In addition the council will be more at risk of receiving personal injury claims where employees seek to recover loss of pay for accidents, including for example where these are deemed to be stress related.

5 days unpaid leave

Reducing employees pay by 5 days would lead to losses in the region of £400 a year based on a £20,000 annual salary. It will impact on our members pensions. No doubt employees will be expected to absorb the backlog of any work which in some cases may necessitate overtime working or for front line services the council will need to arrange cover resulting in no overall cost saving. School based staff including kitchen assistants and cleaners will still be required to work as per the contract between the council and individual schools, so it is difficult to understand how 5 days unpaid leave would work in practice in some areas.

Premium payments for working unsociable hours

The changes to premium payments for working unsociable hours (nights, weekends, shifts) will all hit low paid staff working with vulnerable people particularly hard. If you are working on low pay you cannot afford to lose 25% of your wages. Full details of our response are on our website.

Essential car user allowance

The council's proposal to remove the lump sum payment will mean employees will lose £423 per year. Support planners, social workers, environmental health officers, occupational therapists, building control officers and others are all required to use their cars for work. Equivalents in the private sector would be offered company cars.

Freezing incremental payments

This proposal if applied would affect 1024 employees over 2 years. Given the average increment is worth between £300 and £800, this represents yet another substantial cut in members' earnings.

Have your say

Our members in the Emergency Services Out of Hours team have written to UNISON to explain how the cuts will affect them.

They provide emergency services for Social Services Emergency Duty Team, Highways Services, Street Lighting Services, RBH Emergency Repairs, Public Buildings, Stairlifts & other disability aid repairs. They deal with and co-ordinate responses to all public emergencies for all residents within the Borough of Rochdale.

It is a demanding job:

"We have to use an understanding nature, to listen very carefully and to deal with people who can be suffering various emotions i.e. angry, depressed and demanding at times, nowhere else to go for help / advice. Obviously, we have to maintain a professional attitude & act fast to resolve their requests."

They are especially concerned about the way the changes to premium payments and bank holiday time off in lieu will affect them:

"This proposal is by far the most alarming to us as we are dedicated OOH staff. On our current contracts it states that we receive 10% for shift allowance and 25% Premium Payments for weekend work and 15% for weekday evening and night work.

This is our recompense for us working these unsociable hours and we find it disgraceful that RMBC are proposing to get rid of this.

We also get days off in Lieu when we work Bank & Public Holidays. The proposal to get rid of this is again unfair as we work Good Fridays / Bank Holidays/Christmas/Boxing Days and New Year Days. We do this because we get time off in Lieu so we can spend Annual Leave on other occasions as we work all the Public Holidays. Whilst everybody else is off we are working evening/nights/weekends 365 days a year on a rota basis so that the general public have some point of emergency contact over these periods.

Why is it that when other comparable public service bodies operating emergency contact centres (such as Agilisys, RBH, Police, Fire Brigade & Ambulance) all compensate their staff with an appropriate shift allowance for working similar anti-social hours, RMBC are seeking to do the complete opposite and pay no allowance at all to their own OOH staff?

I'm sure you understand the effect of working rotating shifts out of hours has on our health and family. Surely we should be compensated for working these kinds of hours. We are not asking for the earth. "

Taken together with the 5 days unpaid leave the team are facing a £474.00 per month cut in pay- **£5688 per year**. This will have a massive effect on their pension and if they get sick at any time it will be even worse.

How will the cuts affect you? If you want to tell your story as an individual or a group please email UNISON - unison@rochdale.gov.uk

Are you one of the Essential Car Users?

If so — please email the branch office unison@rochdale.gov.uk to confirm, as we are compiling a list for a future meeting with these members and do not want to miss inviting you to the meeting.

Will you be affected by the proposals re the following?

- Reduction of Overtime
- Premium Payment—Weekend working
- Premium Payments—nights
- Shift Allowance
- Bank Holiday Payments

If so — please email the branch office unison@rochdale.gov.uk to confirm, as we are compiling a list for a future meeting with these members and do not want to miss inviting you to the meeting.

Keep us Updated

To keep up with technology and save resources, we are hoping to eventually send all members this newsletter via email.

To ensure that our records are kept up to date, please can you email us with your name, address, membership number (if possible) and personal email address and we can update our membership system. The email address to send this to is unison@rochdale.gov.uk

Together We Are Stronger

Rochdale UNISON represents over 4000 members. If you are reading this and you are not a member but would like to join then please contact the Branch Office on 01706 925951/52, email unison@rochdale.gov.uk or join UNISON at www.joinunison.org

Please visit our new website at: www.unison-rochdale.org

