

Single Status Action News #5



75% YES Vote Everybody Out !

Strike Tues 5 Feb

Members in UNISON's official industrial action ballot voted 75% in favour of strike action. The turnout was 26%. That's a great result and the first one day strike is now on. We have the full backing of our national union. And all the other trade unions have had similar YES votes and will be striking with us.

Councillors from the Conservative-Lib Dem ruling group have tried to criticise the turnout but most of them were elected with smaller majorities on a similar turnout in local elections.

The newspapers have given a lot of support to us but now say that the dispute depends on the 'silent majority'. We believe our members will strongly support our strike and we will have the biggest strike in living memory in the council. This dispute is building. The members will speak out on 5th Feb.

If all members take strike action together, we believe the council will be forced to back down.

Plan for the Day :

Midnight	Strike begins
7.00am – 9.30/10.00am	Pickets on all workplaces
9.30 – 11.30am	Street Protests – see below
12.00 – 2.00pm	City Centre Rally
Midnight	Strike ends



Morning Street Protests

We are urging members to meet up at strategic points along the major road arteries into the city with their placards to demonstrate to the people of the city how strongly we feel about this new pay and grading structure. This will also allow members from different workplaces to show that cleaners are supporting architects and care workers are fighting alongside clerical workers, all to stop this contract.

Northfield Swimming Baths	Selly Oak Area Office, Coop Pershore Rd
Yardley Wood Neighbourhood Office	Maypole Library, Idiminston Croft
Aldridge Road Day Centre (No. 127)	Poolway Shopping Centre, 189 The Meadway
Kingstanding Library	Kings Heath Library, High St KH
Erdington Library, Sutton New Road	Greencoat House, Stratford Road
Newtown Swimming Pool	Washwood Heath School,
Handsworth Library	Swan Shopping Centre Yardley
City Hospital, Dudley Road	Attwood House, Harborne High Street
CIBA Building , 146 Hagley Road	

Talks With Council. We are talking continuously to the council and have been doing so for years. At present, no formal offer has been submitted by management and of the issues raised for discussion

by management, there is little which would address our fundamental concerns about the 7 grade structure, the losses of pay, unacceptable assimilation process, the introduction of performance related pay and the dangers of the new contract.

Public Support According to a Birmingham Mail poll of shoppers in the city centre revealed “most people would back striking council workers despite the prospect of bin bags piling up and street lamps going on the blink.” In a poll of 250 people, 169 (68%) said they would give their support while 79 said no and 5 were undecided.

Appeals Process – 1 Month Extension Agreed

Councillor Alan Rudge has now formally agreed to extend the 10 week period for lodging the Stage 1 appeal forms. The period will now end on 31 March and not 29 February.

Carers, Cooks and Home Carers Lose Extra £270

Hidden within the new contract is an extra little insult on top of the unfair level of pay for 'gainers' placed on new Grade 2, which will cost them an extra £268 a year. The council have decided to alter the national pay spine by giving a lower value to spine point 11, which is the starting point for Grade 2. On the national pay spine, point 11 is paid at £14,197 per year. This national point 11 is not half way between 10 and 12, but much closer to 12. So the council are lowering point 11 to even out the steps from 10 and 12. Unfortunately, thousands of low paid women are placed on spine point 11 because of their historic low pay. They will receive £13,928, some £268 lower than they should do. This includes cooks, carers and home carers. Over 9,000 staff will be affected by this.

UNISON is demanding the council corrects this discrimination and sticks to the national pay spine.

Management Admit Progression is Performance Based

The trade unions were given a short briefing on the redesigning of PDRs (Performance and Development Reviews) which management say will be the mechanism for determining how people will move through increments in the new grading structure. After the first two or three increments which will be automatically granted each year, all other increments will be based on annual reviews. We said this meant performance assessment, management called it 'competence' based.

The truth is out now as the new process is clearly headed a Performance assessment. All the measures are of performance. Let's have no more pretence. Be under no illusions, future pay under this new contract will be in the hands of your managers assessing your performance every year.

Cabinet Agrees Limited Plan To Help Bonus Earners

On Monday 28 January the Cabinet agreed a plan to limit the losses of the bonus earning groups such as street cleaners, refuse collectors, street lighting workers and chauffeur drivers. These groups have not been issued with the new contracts, or given details of their planned grade, as management and unions are awaiting the outcome of some key legal cases expected some time in February. If the legal cases are lost, management has previously said the bonus earners would receive no protection.

Under the plan, hardship payments will be made in 2008/9 and 2009/10 for all bonus earners who face heavy losses in pay. The effect will be to limit the loss in total pay for those earning less than £30,000 to 10% in the first year and 20% in the second year. Those earning over £30,000 will have their losses limited to 15% in year one and 20% in year two.

Our calculation of the effects for the lowest paid bonus earners, chauffeur drivers and street cleaners is that the package helps somewhat in the first year but offers no relief in year two. A chauffeur driver has basic pay of £12,700 plus bonus of around £4,600, making a total pay of around £17,300. Hardly a high wage. They will be moved to the bottom of Grade 2 on £14,200, a loss of £3,100 or 21%. Under the 'mitigation' package, their year one loss will be 10% of total pay, or £1,730. But in year two, they will receive one increment which will reduce their loss in pay to just below the 20% mitigation limit. So in year two, the package offers no additional support.

Weekly Action Supporters Meetings

The Branch is inviting all members, stewards and activists who wish to help us win the dispute to a weekly meeting at the branch office. The group will help us to steer the campaign and to share out the work of organising, communicating and pushing the dispute forward.

5.00pm Thursdays 31 January, 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th February.

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Membership forms available from the branch office, or UNISON Direct 0845 355 0845.