**NJC Offer: Say ‘no’ to pay erosion – say ‘yes’ to action**

The Local Government Association, the council employers’ negotiating body that takes part in the National Joint Council (NJC),tabled a supposedly final offer on pay for 2016-18 in December. UNISON, along with the other two recognised trade unions, is now consulting on the offer with a clear recommendation from both our NJC committee and from Camden’s branch officers to ***reject*** it and to prepare for industrial action.

Here are some of the reasons why:

* The real value of pay, taking account of inflation, has fallen by as much as 20% for the majority of local government workers since 2009
* Years of harsh pay restraint have not saved jobs – Camden’s workforce has already shrunk by over 15% since 2010 and hundreds of thousands of council jobs have gone nationally
* For most Camden UNISON members the employers’ offer amounts to 1% this year and next. This is roughly the current rate of inflation according to the Retail Price Index, but doesn’t reflect the acute cost of living pressures faced by workers in Greater London
* For those in the Local Government Pension Scheme – and that’s most of us – the historic National Insurance rebate ends from 6 April. This change means that whole of the increase will be wiped out this year for a majority of the workforce
* The current proposal does offer higher increases to the lowest paid, but this largely reflects the need to boost pay for tens of thousands above the grossly inadequate level of George Osborne’s National Living Wage of £7.20 an hour.

Of course, saying ‘no’ to a lousy offer is not enough and so branch officers are also urging you to vote ‘yes’ to all three questions on the consultative ballot about industrial action. If we are to win meaningful concessions from the council employers and ultimately the Tory government strike action will be necessary. The alternative is simply more erosion of our real wages as well as still more job losses.

Some members will be doubtful about the prospects for action after the unsuccessful 2014 campaign, but for all its arrogance the current government has a slender majority and the junior doctors currently have substantial public support in the current fight over new contracts. In addition and in sharp contrast to the past, there is a Labour Party leadership in Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell that is actually sympathetic to public sector workers and their unions.

Finally, please use your vote in this consultation. Poor turnouts in union ballots undermine our credibility and serve only to encourage the Tories.