



NEWSLETTER 3

11 OCTOBER 2005

Dear Colleagues

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME CAMPAIGN

MEETING THE MINISTER AND EMPLOYERS

The Trade Union Side met the employers and ODPM civil servants on Friday, 7 October - the first meeting since 22 September, when they made their proposals to remove the 85 Rule, increase contributions and the benefit age on 1 April 2006 – all with no protection. On Monday, 10 October, we attended a meeting of the Tripartite Committee, chaired by Minister for Local Government, Phil Woolas MP, who wanted to establish the differences between us and the employers. Not surprisingly, this was not difficult!!

While the employers have shown no real signs of moving away from their proposals, the TU Side have been able to argue effectively that they have overestimated the 'cost' of re-instating the 85 Rule and failed to consult and involve the employers other than local authorities covered by the scheme. That means the employers of 20% of LGPS members, including many UNISON members in higher and further education, schools, police, fire and rescue, probation, the Environment Agency, Passenger Transport Executives, the community and voluntary sector, housing associations, ALMO's and some private companies. We argued that it is unacceptable not to involve them, as has been confirmed by some of those employers.

We have also continued to argue very strongly that the principles and timetable for negotiating changes to the other public sector pension schemes being negotiated through the Public Services Forum should be applied to the LGPS. This includes the pension age and protection arrangements. We have made it clear that we need to consult and ballot our members on any changes and that we want to negotiate the future of the LGPS overall, not just the negative changes being pursued by the employers and the LGA. The ODPM and the employers continue to claim that changes have to be made in time for the November local authority financial settlement. We say that we have had enough of being the poor pension relations.

We will be meeting the employers, civil servants and LGPS actuaries again on 14 October to discuss the additional information we need to be able to negotiate. A meeting with John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister will take place in early November.

UNISON members of the Trade Union Side are:

Heather Wakefield, National Secretary, Local Government
Jean Geldart, Chair, Local Government Service Group Executive
Jon Richards, Senior National Officer, Education Services Section
Stephen Mead, NEC member, Higher Education member job sharing with
Caryl Nobbs, Chair, Police Staff Service Group Executive

Glyn Jenkins, Pensions Officer, acts as technical advisor to the Trade Union Side.

PREPARE FOR ACTION!

Regions need to notify RMS by **13 October** of all the employers covered by the LGPS who would be involved in a ballot for industrial action. This means that branches should have acquired up-to-the-minute information about every employer with LGPS members in UNISON and passed it on to your region. If not, please ensure that you do so within the next 24 hours.

It is also vital that branches clean up membership data – adding new members and removing leavers.

It is also very important to ensure that all groups of members in local authority branches such as in FE colleges and schools are contacted about the proposals and involved in your campaigns and recruitment plans.

RECRUIT AND ORGANISE

Just as important is the need to use the employers' dire proposals to recruit and organise. Every employee in the LGPS – or eligible to join – should be made to see just how important it is to join UNISON and enjoy the protection, expertise and solidarity that we can offer. Membership is already rising, but the employers have provided us with the ideal chance to massively increase our density across the public sector. Let's make the most of it!

KEEP IN CONTACT

Just as important is keeping in contact with members. Stewards and branch pension contacts need to keep members up to date with what's happening and get them involved in our campaign. Branches without at least one pension contact should ensure they identify one and notify us (if you have **not** already done so) on the attached fax back form.

Regions have all nominated a Regional Pension Contact who will keep you informed of what's happening. Regional Pension Contacts are:

Eastern Region	Ann Vinden
East Midlands	Lilian Greenwood
Greater London	Chris Remington / Jackie Loudoun
Northern	Charlie Syme
Northern Ireland	Patricia McKeown
North West	Mike Booth
Scotland	Joe di Paola
South East	Brendan Nee
South West	Jon Gray
Cymru/Wales	Stan Rupa
West Midlands	Chris Rogers / Rachel Baker
Yorkshire & Humberside	Alan Hughes

Each region is now planning a regional pension event over the next few weeks to respond to negotiations over the LGPS and the NHS pension schemes.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are many things you can do to build our campaign and help defeat the employers' ludicrous proposals. You can:

- Ensure that all your workmates know what's going on by distributing the new UNISON leaflet available from your branch
- Recruit non-members who work with you, using the new UNISON LGPS recruitment leaflet
- Write to the press, your MP, ward councillors and council Leader using the model letter on the website – or write one of your own – pointing out that LGPS members are being treated with contempt
- Find out if your employer agrees with the employers' proposals. We know that some of them don't! We need details of them all
- Get in touch with your branch and join in branch activities
- Send us an e-mail to i.patel@unison.co.uk telling us what the employers' proposals will mean for you – especially if the 85 Rule is removed with no protection and employee contributions rise. We need to hear **your** story
- Volunteer to be a case study for the local press and media
- Tell your family and friends what's going on. Get them involved in our campaign
- Keep watching the web site for news and let us know how the campaign is going in your neck of the woods

PROTECT OUR PENSIONS

BRANCH PENSION CONTACTS

FAX BACK – 020 7551 1195

To be completed by Branch Secretary – giving details of person who will act as contact for pension issues. Please Note: preferred communications will be through e-mail.

Branch Name:

Service Group:

Region:

Pension Schemes covered:.....

Signature of Branch Secretary:

Pensions Contact

Name:

Telephone:.....Mobile:

E-mail:.....

Address:.....

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Please complete and fax back to: 020 7551 1195
Or alternatively e-mail to: i.patel@unison.co.uk