Economy

Unions call for substantial pay rise for council and school workers

Workers who put themselves in harm's way to protect the public must be recognised

Our members put themselves in harm's way to protect the public, their dedication must be recognised, says GMB Union

Three local government unions have today (Monday) submitted a pay claim, which they say begins to redress a decade of cuts and recognises the key role played in the pandemic by school and council

staff.

They want to see a ‘substantial’ pay increase from this April with a wage rise of at least 10% for all council and school support employees in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The pay of the lowest paid workers would go above £10 per hour – lifting them above the real living wage of £9.50 per hour (outside London).

GMB, Unison and Unite – which between them represent 1.4 million council and school employees – say only a significant pay award can begin to tackle ten years of savage local authority cuts and pay restraint. Staff working in local government have seen up to 25% wiped from the value of their pay, the unions say.

Council employees include refuse collectors, library staff, teaching assistants and care employees – key workers who help communities to function, say the three unions.

The covid crisis has been a reminder that local authorities are vital to the communities they serve especially during the past hugely challenging year. Staff deserve better pay and working conditions, the unions say.

Rehana Azam, GMB National Secretary, said:

“Our members put themselves in harm’s way to protect the public. They stepped up during a public health crisis, now employers and ministers must step up and address the pay crisis in local government and schools.

"Low-paid support staff kept schools open, often covering for teachers without increases in wages. This pandemic has shown the best of our public service workers.

“Their dedication must be recognised through a substantial settlement that begins to deliver pay justice."

Jon Richards, Unison head of local government, said:

“Local government workers have kept the country going during the Covid-19 crisis.

“Many face daily risks to do their vital work and keep communities safe. But slipping wages and job insecurity have hit morale.

“Paying staff properly and investing in the workforce would recognise those at the sharp end who’ve given everything. It will benefit local economies and give workers a boost as they keep delivering important services into the future.”

Jim Kennedy, Unite national officer for local government, said:

“We are sick of the employers’ crocodile tears, refusing to recognise the contribution our members make in caring for the elderly and vulnerable. They are on the frontline, endangering their lives every day, but the response has been pay freezes, cuts to services and jobs.

“Ministers pledged to support local government, but words are cheap. The employers should show courage and demand the proper level of funding that is desperately needed, including a fair pay increase.”

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Member requiring help?

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