



18th June 2021

Cllr Matt Garrett
President
NILGA
Bradford Court
Upper Galwally
Castlereagh
BT8 6RB

Dear Councillor Garrett,

We are writing to ask you to join with the NJC local government trade unions and make a joint approach to the Westminster Government, for more resources for local government pay. This award also covers non-teaching staff in Education in Northern Ireland.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, local government and school support workers have kept the country going, working over and above the call of duty, putting themselves and their families at risk to support the effort against Covid-19. Like you, we have always known how indispensable local government staff are, but the pandemic has raised public awareness of the work your staff do. For many, that meant doing their normal jobs in more risky situations – for example refuse collectors cooped up in small cabs and staff redeployed to deliver community support and food parcels. For our members in schools: while it was often said that schools were closed during the winter lockdown, actually school support staff went in to school to provide education for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, while infection rates were extremely high.

As you will know, the negotiation process for the 2021 NJC pay settlement is ongoing. When the NJC Executive met on 9 June, the Employers' Side said that local authority finances are severely stretched. This is of course true, and the NILGA have been vocal in your calls for more funding for local government – and for a more stable long-term financial settlement. As unions we have also been campaigning for this, as we have seen the impact Covid has had on local authority budgets, and consequently on services and staff.

It is clear that we need a much stronger message from local government employers and their representative bodies, calling specifically for more funding for local government pay.

The Employers' offer of a 1.5% increase is not enough, and we expect them to come back with an improved offer. But the NJC trade unions do acknowledge the financial situation faced by councils and schools, and we propose a joint campaign with employers' bodies,

calling for additional resources from Westminster for local government pay.

We would be happy to discuss this further, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Rehana Azam, GMB

Denise Walker, GMB

Jon Richards, UNISON

Anne Speed, UNISON

Jim Kennedy, Unite

Gareth Scott, Unite