



FIGHTBACK

The campaign bulletin for Newcastle Council Staff against Cuts

Bulletin number 2

Consultation on the Proposals

Lead by UNISON, the joint trade unions have notified the council that our members affected by the council's attack on terms and conditions have instructed us to refuse to negotiate on any attempt to cut terms and conditions.

A joint press release was published:

The joint trade unions in Newcastle City Council have served notice on the employer that they refuse to negotiate on any attack on staff terms and conditions.

This position reflects the will of our members affected by the council's proposal to stop paying shift allowance; weekend enhancements and changing the time night rate is paid from 8.00 pm until 10.00pm.

The trade unions have met twice with the employer, once to receive the proposals and once to report back on their rejection by trade union members. The council have made no attempt to change their approach.

Trade union members have instructed their trade union leaders that no negotiation that leads to a reduction in terms and conditions is acceptable.

Paul Gilroy, Branch Secretary of UNISON Newcastle said "Our members have made their dismay and anger clear, a Labour council placing the burden of Tory austerity on to hard working council staff by cutting their pay is the final straw".

He went on to say that "industrial action seems inevitable unless the council withdraws this proposal immediately".

In tandem with UNISON, Colin Burr from the GMB, Dave Eglon from UNITE and Steve Conwell from UCATT have met with their affected members since the council released its proposals and all have reported a level of anger not seen in Newcastle Council staff for some time.

The joint trade unions call on Newcastle Labour Group to reject council officers' advice, and challenge them to find more creative solutions to the council's budget situation; that both preserves existing terms and conditions and jobs. The unions believe this is the only way that council services will be delivered successfully in the future, to the benefit of Newcastle residents.

Petition

The online petition has more than 1000 signatures as I write this edition of the campaign bulletin. We've also distributed a paper version for use in workplaces, please sign the petition as we intend to hand it in at the next council meeting on 11th January. If we get 2,500 signatures then the relevant Cabinet member

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Newcastle City Branch

responds and proposes a motion as to what action the Council will take. This will need to be seconded then 2 opposition members speak, then there's a vote on what is proposed.

We need to take every opportunity to have this issue debated and to expose the unacceptable reasons for making these changes.

[Paul Gilroy: Hands off Newcastle Staff's Terms and Conditions](#)

Newcastle City Council is proposing to remove shift allowance and unsocial hour's payments for weekends, and delay the payment of night rate from 8pm to 10pm.

These changes will have a significantly detrimental financial impact on up to a third of the workforce, some 1800 staff, by reducing their pay by up to a third. Staff will be forced to leave and there will be a consequent impact on council services.

We support Newcastle Council staff and demand the Council withdraws these proposals immediately.

Letters to Nick Forbes (Council Leader)

UNISON distributed a pro forma letter for staff affected by the proposals to sign and return to the branch office. On Friday 25th November, UNISON handed 448 letters and a covering letter demanding the withdrawal of the proposals to Nick Forbes.



BBC Newcastle

The BBC are monitoring the campaign and are very interested in interviewing staff who are directly affected by the proposals. This is just the coverage we need as there is nothing more powerful than staff explaining the impact of losing money on them and their family's lives. [Please contact the UNISON branch office 211 6980 if you're willing to share your story.](#)

In addition, if you're happy for the Branch to feature your story in this campaign bulletin, please get in touch with us too.

Lobby of Labour Group Meeting – Monday 5th December

Come along to the lobby on Ceremonial Way, Civic Centre, and let the Labour Group know that we reject their attack on our wages. Add your name and message to our "alternative Christmas card" which we'll be presenting to Labour Group on the night.

Visiting and Writing to Councillors & MP's

We know this is having an effect on the councillors, and we're starting to get support from MPs such as Nick Brown (Newcastle East) and Ian Lavery (Wansbeck). They share UNISON's dismay that a Labour Council is slashing the wages of its staff.

And in case any UNISON member thinks the Branch shouldn't criticise a Labour Council, I suggest that you all read the recently published 'Labour Local Government Trade Union Principles' principles agreed between the Labour LGA Group and the Labour Shadow Cabinet around relationships with trade unions and the handling of key workforce issues at Local Government level (UNISON has not had the chance to agree the text) – copies are available from the branch office.

I draw your attention to the following sections:

Section 1. General Principles - *This agreement outlines how Labour councils in England and the local government trade unions will work together to safeguard and deliver quality public services. It outlines the principles we will follow to foster good relationships with each other workforces.*

Trade Unions and the Labour councillors are part of the same Labour movement and share the same values of equality, social justice and solidarity.

Section 4. Exemplary Employment - *The Local Authority should function as a beacon within the local economy as an exemplar of good employment practice.*

There can't be any member of council or TWAM staff who believe the council's proposal is an example of "exemplary employment"!

Council Scrutiny Meeting

On 17th November, the UNISON Branch Secretary addressed the council's scrutiny panel (a panel of 9 Labour Councillors and 2 Lib Dem Councillors), at a meeting devoted to the council's budget. UNISON were able to raise the issues our members have with the proposed budget, in particular the terms and conditions proposal.

Once UNISON had addressed the panel members, council officers were invited in and faced questions from the panel. UNISON was also allowed to comment on the answers provided by the council officers.



Actions

1. Sign the petition
2. "Like" the Facebook page, and post comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/unisonfightback/>



Please keep the comments reasonable and refrain from bad language as it is a public site.

3. Follow the campaign twitter feed @unisonfightback
4. Attend the lobby on 5th December



UNISON is taking up every opportunity at all levels within the council to campaign against these proposals, join us and **FIGHTBACK**.