

Single Status Action News #9



All out strike action

**Wed 23rd and Thurs
24th April**

Birmingham City Council Joint Trade Unions suspended strike action planned for the 26th of February as the Council agreed to meaningful talks on a list of agreed issues at the heart of the dispute. Unfortunately, during those intensive talks it became clear that what the council was prepared to offer was unlikely to meet the aspirations of our members.

The Council has offered a mixed package with some immediate gains for many of our members. However over the last 3 weeks the Council have been saying that the trade union

negotiators agreed with the councils revised proposals.

To set the record straight, the Joint Trade Union negotiators made it crystal clear that we **did not agree** with the Councils revised offer. We did say however, as we had said to them throughout the 2 weeks of talks that we would put the offer to members in the jointly agreed members meetings held immediately after the talks. Management agreed time off with pay for all members so that the offer could be put to them.

This was confirmed in our [joint statement](#) at the top of the Councils offer document & reads:-

'The two weeks of intensive discussions between the joint trade unions and Birmingham City Council have reached a conclusion resulting in an improved offer which will be relayed to the joint trade unions membership at meetings scheduled for 13 March at the Holte Suite, Aston Villa Football Ground and 13 and 14 March at Cocks Moor Woods Leisure Centre'.

This statement was signed by both sides and management at no time raised the issue of us carrying out a full ballot of the membership. We had made it clear from the start of the talks that a ballot would only take place if the offer was acceptable to the union side. We said that the paperwork would have to go to the National union committees for approval as do all final single status offers. They are now saying they want us to ballot because they didn't like the result of the vote at the meetings. They are also hoping that it will cause confusion and delay any strikes taking place before the local elections.



As agreed we held 9 meetings over 2 days attended by over 2,500 trade union members, many of whom reported that managers had restricted the numbers of staff allowed to attend. At every meeting the same presentation of the councils' detailed offer was explained in a neutral & balanced way. Members were then invited to ask questions from the floor. As a result of the presentation, subsequent tone of questions & contributions from the floor the joint trade union side asked the members to vote on the following resolution:-

'Are you willing to continue industrial action in the Single Status/Pay & Grading Dispute?'

Members voted by over 95% in favour of continuing industrial action.

So what exactly is in the Councils offer?

- Deletion of SCP4 (This effectively means that BCC Minimum Wage is £6.18ph, however nationally the LGA are offering a starting wage of £6.80 as part of the pay offer))
- 2 extra increments for mainly female groups in the lowest 3 grades whose jobs have been valued close to the top of the grade but were to be paid at the bottom. This means an extra £554pa for General Assistants etc. in Grade 1, £640pa for Cooks, Care Assistants & Home Carers etc. in Grade 2 and an extra £1033 in Grade 3. However these job groups have been valued at £13,357 (Grade 1), £17,154 (Grade 2) & £22,845 (Grade 3) respectively. So these members are still not getting the equal pay they are entitled to.
- 1 years additional pay protection for people losing pay – but this does not reduce the overall number of losers.
- Imposed monthly pay for over 18,000 staff and a repayable loan to “cushion the blow”.
- A performance related pay policy the type of which even the CBI say is disastrous, especially for equality as it quickly wipes out the link between pay and the measured value of the job.
- A two tier workforce where new starters go to the bottom of the grade meaning that 2 cooks in the same kitchen, doing exactly the same job where one is earning £3,231 more than the other.
- An extension of the Stepped Hardship Scheme for bonus Earners for a further 12months.

What was the point of spending millions of pounds, and taking several years, to implement a process of evaluating and scoring every job in the Council if future pay will have no relation to it? If the council get away with this imposition then our pay will be linked to “performance” not what our jobs are worth.

How much money will the Council save by recruiting new people and paying them far below the value of the job for many years? What will the consequences be of a two tier workforce for the future of our services and the security of our jobs?

The Council, with help from their strategic partner Capita, has a vision of a glossy business like city and the council is investing millions into Capitas' ideas for the future. We have to make sure that this isn't at the expense of jobs and services. In a private Cabinet report in March Councillors voted through a paper on “business transformation” that stated that savings of £110 million could be made by the introduction of the performance related policy the council wants to impose on us. They can only make such savings by making sure that the majority of staff are prevented from moving up the scales in the future.

The Council over the last 3 weeks have produced a power point presentation, a 9 minute video, they have made managers hold briefings in every workplace and they have written to all of you at home. All of this to stop us taking strike action as they know that we can win. They are calling for a ballot as they want to hold things up and get past the local elections.

This has been a long dispute and we have all stood together united in a way we've never been before. The council are scared of this unity and are trying to break it but if we stay strong and united we can win this dispute.