

Protect Our Pensions LGPS Campaign

January 2012: Issue 4

Website - www.lancashireunison.org and e-mail unison.enquiries@lancashire.go.uk



UNISON decides to proceed with negotiations over the Local Government Pension Scheme

The Branch Committee held on 12 January 2012, received a report on the decisions taken by the elected lay Service Group Executive earlier in the week and the Branch Committee agreed that they:

- Support moving to detailed negotiations on the LGPS with the Union reserving its position on the details until they emerge from negotiations.
- Support the decision that the final say will be through a full member ballot.
- Recognise the dispute is still live and that further industrial action can be called if negotiations fail.

On a National level, on 10 January each of the Service Groups covered by the LGPS met to take a decision over whether UNISON should proceed with negotiations over the LGPS on the basis of the principles and timetable agreed with the Local Government Association (LGA) on 21 December 2011.

At the meeting, **Dave Prentis, General Secretary**, highlighted the fact that UNISON remains in dispute with the Coalition over its attacks on our pensions and that the ballot is still 'live'. We will not have to re-ballot at

the end of negotiations if they fail. Any decision on final proposals in either the NHS or LGPS will be a decision for members, through an all-member ballot. If proposals are rejected, members will be asked whether they want to take further industrial action.

In a further meeting, **Heather Wakefield, Head of UNISON's Local Government**, made the following key points:

- The 30 November action had a major impact on the outcome of the talks with the government on the 'big ticket' issues and with the LGA on the principles and timetable for specific LGPS negotiations.
- UNISON's ballot results had led to the government coming forward with the 'Reference Scheme' which contained full protection for those within 10 years of retirement, plus a further 3.5 years tapered protection.
- This is additional to the protection of pension based on final salary at the date of retirement in existing schemes.
- It also confirmed a 1/60 accrual rate – which has since been improved on in negotiations on the NHS, Teachers and Civil Service schemes.

- The 30 November action had created consensus within the LGA that there should be no change in the LGPS until 2014.
- It also led to agreement by the government to the LGPS unions and employers negotiating a 'single solution' to savings and the new scheme from 2014.

The action also led to an agreement by Eric Pickles, Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), that the formal consultation on the £900 million 'savings' the Coalition wants to make will be suspended whilst negotiations take place.

If this had not been agreed, we would have had changes to the contribution and accrual rate from 1 April 2012 and an imposed framework for the new scheme from 2014.

If this had not happened, we would have entered negotiations on the new scheme going forward from 2014 on the basis of higher contributions and a worse accrual rate, which would have been difficult to reverse.

The principles are based on an agreement that there should be no contribution increases for all – or the majority of LGPS members.

PENSIONS LATEST

Service Group Executive Decisions

Each of the LGPS Service groups met after the briefing and considered the following motion from the Service Group Liaison Committee:

“This SGE applauds the action taken by UNISON members and other public service trade unions on 30 November 2011 to force the government into serious negotiations over public sector pensions. We also note that the results of UNISON’s ballot resulted in the improved Reference scheme/offer from the government.

This SGE notes that the action has given rise to the potential for detailed LGPS negotiations directly between the unions and the Local Government Association (LGA) which recognise the unique features of the LGPS and its membership.

We also note that those negotiations would take place on the basis of no change until 2014 and suspension of the formal DCLG consultation over employee contribution increases and accrual rates, the outcome of which will otherwise be implemented on 1 April 2012.

This SGE recognises that UNISON is still in dispute with the government and employers and that our ballot results are still ‘live’.

This SGE agrees:

1. To enter into detailed negotiations with the LGA to further pursue our campaign objectives

2. To reserve our position on the detail of the LGPS principles and timetable until firm proposals emerge from the negotiations

3. To ensure lay member involvement directly in those negotiations

4. To establish a cross-service group lay member liaison group to support the negotiations comprised of Chairs and Vice Chairs or their nominees

5. To ensure that regular consultation and communication take place throughout the negotiations with this SGE, other SGEs covered by the LGPS, Regions, branches and members

6. To continue and intensify our campaigning activity to strengthen our hand in the negotiations, including informed and widespread lobbying of MP’s and Councillors and activities to highlight the impact of any changes to the LGPS on the standard of living of our members

7. To hold an all-member ballot of our members on any final package of proposals on the ‘Big Ticket’ items that would make up the design of the new scheme

8. That industrial action remains an option if negotiations fail”

PENSIONS

What happens next?

Negotiations now start in earnest! There will be weekly talks with the Local Government Association (LGA) until April. Chris Tansley, Vice President and Chair of the Local Government SGE will be involved in the negotiations and there will be a lay member group comprised of representatives of each of the LGPS Service Groups to support and advise the negotiators.

The negotiations will follow an agreed plan and timetable. The documents outlining this framework will be public documents and will be posted on the Branch’s website members are encouraged to check regularly on the website for further information.

www.lancashireunison.org

Lancashire UNISON Branch Rules Amendments

The January Branch Committee has agreed proposed rule amendments that need to be endorsed at the AGM. The proposed rule amendments update existing Branch Rules.

Members are entitled to submit amendments and if you wish to do this, you can view them at www.lancashireunison.org

The Branch Rules should be read in conjunction with the UNISON Rule Book, decisions of the National Executive Council and the Code of Good Branch Practice. The current Branch Rules and the proposed amendments are on the Branch Website – www.lancashireunison.org

Reminder:

Lancashire UNISON

Annual General Meeting

**Council Chamber,
County Hall, Preston
Thursday 22nd March 2012
12.00pm – 2.00pm**

Find out what’s been happening in your branch in the last 12 months. Further detail will be available on the branch website www.lancashireunison.org