The NJC Committee met on 27 April to consider the latest position on NJC pay. The Committee noted that several regions had now reported that they did not feel they could mobilise sufficient sustained industrial action.

In the light of the changed position, the Committee agreed to withdraw the request for a formal industrial action ballot previously submitted to UNISON’s Industrial Action Committee.

In doing so, the Committee recognised that the effect of this is to accept the Local Government Association (LGA’s) pay offer for 2016/19.

This is not the Leeds Branch position. The indicative ballot that Leeds branch carried out in February resulted in 69% of members voting to reject.

This was also reflected nationally when 64% of UNISON members voted to reject the LGA’s two-year pay offer.

It is disappointing that nationally, the decision has been taken to accept the pay offer without further consultation and balloting of the membership.

Branch Delegates to the Local Government Service Group will be raising concerns about the lack of member consultation on the decision that has been taken.

Living Wage

After continued pressure by Leeds UNISON for Leeds City Council to become a ‘Real Living Wage Employer’, Leeds City Council have taken a position to implement the ‘Leeds Minimum Wage’ of £8.01 from 1st April 2016 inclusive of any National Pay Offer. This will result in the National Pay Award being applied to your incremental salary point and if this takes your earnings above £8.01 it will be applied to you, if it doesn’t your salary will be at £8.01.

Leeds branch was not in agreement that if and when a National Pay Award was agreed it would not be applied to the £8.01 flat rate. We are continuing to apply pressure on LCC to become a ‘Real Living Wage’ Employer and so far have had a commitment that the £8.01 will raise to £8.25 within this financial year. The branch is clear that we will not accept that any further rises in this rate removes employees from the National Pay award applying, or results in other cuts to our Terms and Conditions.

For further information on the Real Living Wage please visit http://www.livingwage.org.uk/
UNISON Confidence Building Courses

Are you a new or inexperienced steward who feels that you would like a bit more confidence to deal with cases? Or are you interested in becoming more involved in UNISON but feel you need more confidence to do this? UNISON is running some confidence building courses.

Confidence Building (Power to be You)
- Monday 5 September 2016 (apply by 5 August 2016)
- Wednesday 19 October 2016 (apply by 19 September 2016)
- Friday 18 November 2016 (apply by 17 October 2016)

Confidence Building (Power to be You) Women Only
- Saturday 10 December 2016 (apply by 10 November 2016)

For more information, please ring the Branch Office on (0113) 245 8442.

PENSIONS: Parliamentary Petition on the LGPS Investment Funds

The Government wants to use the money in your pension funds to invest in their pet infrastructure projects. This potentially puts at risk the money that should be used to pay your pensions. There has been no debate in Parliament over this issue and we need to try and make sure it gets debated.

UNISON has established a Parliamentary petition which requires 100,000 signatures.

You can sign it by clicking here petition. The text in italics below describes the petition.

Please also pass the petition on to a colleague – they don’t have to be a UNISON member to sign!

Debate in the House the Local Government Pension Scheme Investment Regulations

5 million people rely on the LGPS to pay their pensions. Government wants powers over LGPS investment funds, but they could gamble away members’ money on infrastructure projects. This is not allowed in any other UK scheme, including the MPs’. The LGPS must be invested in members’ best interests.

Parliament must debate this issue and make the government accountable for these powers of intervention as any such direction may breach the law. Specifically Article 18 paragraph 3 of the EU Directive 41/2003 Institutions for Occupational Retire Provision: “Member States shall not require institutions located in their territory to invest in particular categories of assets.”

Leeds Against Forced Academies

On 3rd May, UNISON and Leeds teaching unions met with a lead Councillor and discussed the formation of a group that will be known as “Leeds Against Forced Academies”. Plans on how to publicise the campaign using social media and facebook and liaise with interested community groups who wish to campaign against academisation in Leeds were established. The next meeting will be taking place in a fortnight. Any UNISON members working in schools, school governors and parents are invited to contact the UNISON Branch Office to find out more about the campaign, Tel (0113) 245 8442.

Leeds Against Forced Academies is an offshoot from Hands off our Schools, a broad campaign involving parents, teaching and schools support staff unions who are united against forced academisation in Leeds. Their first meeting took place at the Rosebowl on 28 April and the consensus was that the campaign against forced academisation can be won, partly as a lot of schools that were forced to become academies are not making the progress that was required. To join the campaign against the Education White Paper go to www.teachers.org.uk.

Yorkshire and Humber Network Against TTIP

There are 2 events taking place on Saturday 7 May that may be of interest to members. The first is a meeting from 2pm-5pm at the West Yorkshire Playhouse campaigning against TTIP. See https://kirkleescampaignagainstclimatechange.wordpress.com/events

There is also a ‘Forward Not Backward On Climate Change’ demo in Leeds which sets off at 1pm from Leeds City Square, assemble at 12pm. Please wear red or green or both. Red = Red lines that we cannot cross, Stop using fossil fuels, danger. Green = Go forwards on the green economy. For full details see https://www.facebook.com/events/815462775254319/.