



GMB @ Durham County Council

Welcome
to your
August
2011
Newsletter!

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Durham Miners Gala 2011

This year's theme for the Miners Gala was saving public services.

Thanks to all members who marched behind the GMB banner at the Miners Gala. We had an excellent turnout. We hope to see you all next year.



Above
The GMB Branch Officers and Stewards
Durham County LA Branch



Above
The GMB Branch Banner

Equal Pay Update

The members who received offers eight weeks ago should now have their COT3.

A second batch of equal pay offers will be going to Thompson's Solicitors this week. We hope members will receive offers soon.

If you have any questions about equal pay please do not hesitate to contact the Branch on 0191 383 4417 or 0191 383 5515.

Section 188 Notices in August

In August Section 188 Notices have been issued as follows:

Adults, Wellbeing and Health

Day Care Services - Porter/Handymen

Neighbourhood Services:

Building Cleaning (as a result of building closures)

Building Services - Apprentices

Technical Services - Apprentices

Review of BFM management and operational support employees within R&M and Construction

Please remember that:

- ◆ The Council have told us that under the Freedom of Information Act they are no longer allowed to tell us the names of staff who are affected by the "188 notice"
- ◆ We need you to tell us your views on the proposals so that we can represent you during the Trade Union consultation.

Either email us at gmb@durham.gov.uk or ring the office on **0191 3834417**, or **0191 383 5515** as soon as you can.

Remember this is the start of the consultation process and these are only proposals at this stage, so any suggestions you may have could be important.

PENSION NEGOTIATIONS TO CONTINUE AS GOVERNMENT BEGINS TO CONSULT OVER CHANGES

- The negotiations between GMB and other TUC unions with government will now continue through to the end of October.
- The focus will shift to detailed negotiations in each of the separate public sector pension schemes.
- In the meantime government is only proceeding with a consultation on the first tranche of its proposal to raise contribution levels - the rest and any further reform is up to scheme negotiations.
- The LGPS is officially recognised as different and can determine how to achieve some or all of the savings government seeks.

GMB continues to prepare for industrial action should the further negotiations fail.

Since the government set out its plans last year to raise public sector pension contributions by 3.2 percentage points (equivalent to a 50% hike) and to reduce benefits and raise retirement ages, GMB has argued strongly against the unfairness of this and the damage that would be caused by people dropping out of pension schemes because government was making it too expensive. For their part government has tried to persuade unions to agree to detrimental changes which we were not prepared to do. As a result the negotiations have made only limited progress -

- It is agreed that any changes or reform must first be equality checked and must maximise participation in the pensions schemes.
- It is agreed that public sector pension schemes should be more transparent and have better governance including member representation.
- It is agreed that the funded nature of the LGPS means that it can be treated differently from the other public sector schemes.
- Government is not changing its view that pension schemes must make significant savings - the TUs disagree.
- Government is not at this stage carrying out a 3.2% increase in contributions or changing benefits or retirement ages.

Unions in each scheme will be involved in negotiations about these matters.

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PENSION NEGOTIATIONS TO CONTINUE AS GOVERNMENT BEGINS TO CONSULT OVER CHANGES

Continued from page 3

What government is going ahead with is to ask each public sector scheme (excluding LGPS) by the end of July to formally consult over a partial contribution increase - this is expected to be an average around 1.25%. However government has said that the lowest paid should be protected from this (with the obvious consequence that others will be asked to pay more). This consultation and the scheme negotiations referred to above will continue through to October.

The local government scheme (LGPS) will still be required to find savings although government is not laying down how this should be done.

What is the upshot of all this?

Firstly, government has backed off a bit - for now. There is no change in government's long term plans to eventually make people pay excessively more for reduced benefits.

Secondly, GMB and the other unions have more opportunity to negotiate on all of these matters and we will utilise that.

Thirdly, GMB has secured greater flexibility for the LGPS which is absolutely essential to ensure the funds - now worth £165bn - remain sustainable.

Fourthly, the crucial period will be October when the consultation and negotiations conclude. In my view it will still require a huge shift in the government's position to allow negotiations to be successful.

GMB's very clear position is therefore that we will negotiate hard and the outcome will be put to GMB members. If it proves to be unacceptable we will move to an industrial action ballot and we are preparing for that eventuality now as are all other unions. It is up to government whether it wants to negotiate sensibly or face a dispute with the whole of the public sector,

I will keep you informed.

Brian Strutton

National Secretary - Public Services Section

GMB Romania Appeal

Thanks to everyone who supported our raffle which was drawn on Miners Gala night. We raised £500.

Thanks also to everyone who has donated babies clothes. We are sure that they will be much appreciated when they arrive in Romania at the end of August.

GMB will always be at the forefront of negotiations seeking the best possible terms and conditions for its members.

GMB Bulletins

Please note: up-to-the minute information for members is posted onto the Durham County Council bulletin board

GMB Services and Benefits

GMB Legal Services

Free legal services for accidents at work or on the road, and free initial advice for a wide range of other legal issues.

Free Basic Will Writing Service

Offered through the legal helpline, this service can save you up to £70

Simpson and Millar—Monthly Solicitors Surgery

Simpson and Millar (GMB Solicitors) are holding a monthly surgery at County Hall.



Appointments can be made by contacting the Branch Office on 0191 383 4417.

Remember — You're better off in the GMB

How can I join the GMB

Telephone the GMB office on 0191 383 4417

OR

See your Shop Steward for a membership form