



GMB @ Durham County Council

Welcome to your March 2014 Newsletter!

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GMB Members on the Road to Wembley

GMB Members travelled to Wembley on 2nd March to see the Capital One Cup Final (Manchester City v Sunderland).

Despite the result everyone had a good time.

The picture on the right shows the group outside Wembley.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME UPDATE - NEW SCHEME IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

The product of years of intense negotiations, member activity and the successful strike in November 2011, will arrive on 1 April when the Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 takes effect in England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland look set to follow with new schemes in 2015. GMB members overwhelmingly supported the introduction of this new scheme as the fairest and most sustainable way of continuing a LGPS that will support them in retirement.

Colleagues should be aware of the main features of this new scheme, including the career average nature, the flexibility around retirement age and the protection of the pensions built up prior to April 2014. Anyone looking to explore the detail of the new scheme is encouraged to visit the scheme's excellent website at www.lgps2014.org which has videos and plenty of useful information for old and new members.

There are a number of specific issues to bring to members attention relating to immediate changes and issues around the introduction of LGPS 2014.

DEFINITION OF PENSIONABLE PAY

From 1 April 2014, the definition of pensionable pay will change to include non-contractual (as well as contractual) overtime and any additional hours worked in excess of your contractual hours. This will greatly improve the pensions position for many LGPS members, but as contributions are based on pensionable pay, it may mean that your contributions change.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME UPDATE CONTINUED

CONTRIBUTIONS

As in the current scheme, contributions will be tiered meaning that the highest paid will pay the highest rates. The rates that will be paid are shown in the table below.

Pay Bands (based on actual pensionable pay)	Contribution Rates
Up to £13,500	5.5%
£13,501 - £21,000	5.8%
£21,001 - £34,000	6.5%
£34,001 - £43,000	6.8%
£43,001 - £60,000	8.5%
£60,001 - £85,000	9.9%
£85,001 - £100,000	10.5%
£100,001 - £150,000	11.4%
More than £150,000	12.5%

Also, the way of working out which pay band you are in will change from 1 April. Currently your pay band is based on your full time equivalent level of pay, whereas from April, your pay band will be based on the actual level of pensionable pay you receive. If your pay changes during the year, your employer may decide to review your contribution rate. If this results in a change to your contribution rate, they will let you know.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME UPDATE CONTINUED

INTRODUCTION OF 50/50 OPTION

The new LGPS 2014 will have a low cost option, called the 50/50 option. In exchange for paying half of the normal contribution due, you would build up half of the normal benefit entitlement.

This option has been designed in recognition that one quarter of eligible staff do not join the LGPS, so is meant as an option to enable people to build up a pension when times are financially tough and to give members an alternative to opting out of the scheme. Members choosing the 50/50 option would be automatically put back into the "full" LGPS every three years as it is not intended as a long term replacement for a full pension.

50/50 members would get a full death in service lump sum, but other pension benefits would be adjusted to reflect any periods for which they enrolled in the 50/50 option.

Members interested in exploring 50/50 should contact their employer in the first instance.

Remember for full information on the new scheme, visit www.lgps2014.org

This milestone in securing the long term sustainability of the LGPS and the changes it entails are important. GMB will continue to update members on significant issues regarding pensions.

Brian Strutton

National Secretary - Public Services Section

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY IS NOT ENOUGH AND IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION

While pleading poverty, Councils have squirrelled away £2.6 billion in reserves in the last year alone!

Did you know that -

- Local government is the lowest paid in the whole public sector
- Since 2010 local government pay has fallen 18% behind the cost of living
- Over 500,000 local government staff earn less than the Living Wage
- The local government pay bill has fallen by 23% in the last two years
- There have been 440,000 job losses and the people left have had to pick up more work as a result.

The facts speak for themselves. Everyone working in schools and local authorities have a clear, justified case for a decent pay rise and the trade union claim for £1 an hour increase is fair and affordable.

But the employers have said they will only put a 1% pot on the table and they want to take some of that to meet their statutory obligation to pay the National Minimum Wage - incidentally, isn't it appalling that councils have let pay slip so badly that we have public servants on the minimum wage? The net result would be that the pay offer for 2014 would be less than 1%.

Unless we do something about it.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY IS NOT ENOUGH AND IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION - CONTINUED

First, we have to say loud and clear that this is totally unacceptable.

Then, we have to show that we are prepared to take action.

This is a difficult course. Nobody wants to take action that will put their service users or the children they support to any inconvenience. But if we don't act we will be consigning hundreds of thousands of school and council staff to low pay for years to come. And unless staff are treated fairly the long term consequences for those very services will be worse.

There are two simple things you can do to help and they will only take a few minutes of your time. One is to complete our short survey to say what you think about the pay situation. You can do this online at

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GMBLocalGovPay2014>

or by using the form attached to this bulletin. The other is to talk to your work colleagues who may not be union members and explain why pay is an issue that everyone should be working together on. If you want to have more information about helping other colleagues join GMB please let me know using localgovpay@gmb.org.uk

These simple steps will make a big difference. Please take them to support GMBs campaign to get you a fair pay settlement for 2014.

Brian Strutton

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National Secretary - Public Services Section



GMB PAY SURVEY

The trade union claim for local government pay 2014 is for a £1 an hour pay rise. The employers have told us that they will offer 1% minus their costs of paying the National Minimum Wage.

Do you think the employers' position is unacceptable? YES

NO

Would you be prepared to support industrial action? YES

NO

Would you be willing to share GMB information with other work colleagues? If so please give your email address or telephone number below -

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Please return this form to -

GMB Office, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UY



Forthcoming Social Events for 2014

APRIL:

GMB Easter Egg Raffle (Lucky winners will be drawn from membership numbers only Durham Local Authority Members are eligible)

JULY:

Durham Miners Gala (Big Meeting) & Social Evening.

Why not join fellow GMB members and march behind your union banner stopping outside of the County hotel before ending up at the race course all whilst listening to the Leyburn Brass Band. Limited tickets will be available for the evening including food, drink and the opportunity to show your skills off on the dance floor.

Newcastle United & Sunderland Season Tickets.

Your chance of obtaining a pair of tickets for 1 match, all you need to do as a Durham L.A. Branch Member is either phone or email with which team you would prefer to go and see play, and be put into the raffle and wait to see if your name is drawn out.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER:

Day Trip to Whitby.

Enjoy a day out shopping and try out the fish & chips. Price for tickets to be confirmed closer to the time.

NOVEMBER:

Christmas shopping Trip Leeds or York

(Location, date and price to confirmed)

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Remember — You're better off in the GMB

188 - Restructures

Section 188 notices for February are:

CAS - Roseberry Sports and Community College
School Counselling Services

Neighbourhood Services - Cleaning Services

RED - North Pennine - AONB

Restructures for February are:

Killhope Museum

DLI Museum

GMB will be attending all meetings. Any affected members who would like an individual meeting with GMB should contact the branch on 03000 268 135.

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

GMB Bulletins

Please note: up-to-the minute information for members is posted onto the bulletin board on the intranet under the heading Trade Unions.

For the GMB website go to Intranet A-Z, click on T, and select Trades Unions.

Remember — You're better off in the GMB

How can I join the GMB

Telephone the GMB office on 03000 268 135 or 03000 268 136

OR

See your Shop Steward for a membership form

Watch out for our recruitment stalls coming to your place of work