

# Council signals major attack on conditions

To all UNISON members, City of Edinburgh Council

**O**n Friday 25 August 2006 at five past four - after the office was closed for the weekend - UNISON received a shock fax from the Council's Head of Human Resources.

It outlined a wide range of unprecedented changes the Council wants to make to our contracts of employment. UNISON has made it clear that it will fight these changes all the way.

We have been negotiating hard to get a fair Job Evaluation Scheme, fairness for all staff in that process and an end to structures that cause equal pay problems.

We have done that in good faith. Now it appears the council wants staff to pay for their failure to meet the requirements of equal pay legislation.

*The wording of the fax is quite blunt and states failure to agree could lead to dismissal and re-engagement to bring about the changes.*

The key plans in the fax were:-

### Working hours to change

The Council wants a 36 hour working week for all staff other than Chief Officials and Teachers.

### Open all hours

The Council wants to have as many facilities as possible open between 7am and 8pm, seven days a week. Their chart shows overtime, unsocial hours payments and other enhancements would be axed.

### Overtime rates to be cut

Outwith the terms of the fax, the Council has said it wants to reduce the current levels of payment for overtime.

### Public holidays to go on to annual leave

The only public holidays would be Christmas and New Year. All other public

holidays would be added to annual leave. This would mean pay cuts for a huge number of staff, many low paid, who provide a seven day service and get paid enhancements for public holidays.

### Monthly pay for all

All staff to move to monthly pay.

### Standby Allowances

The Council wants a single scheme for standby. Given the rest of this, what makes us think it won't mean a cut?

### Bonus schemes to go

All bonus schemes will CEASE. Staff on bonus will have their current total earnings frozen for three years, (no wage increase for three years) when they will be placed on a basic rate for the job. This will mean many workers will see their pay cut.

UNISON is well aware that there can be and are legal claims under equal pay legislation when bonus is applied unfairly. But it should not be impossible to ensure equal pay by bringing standards up, not by bringing down to the lowest common denominator.

### More information

This is an up-to-date position and we will report to you on progress as and when we have further information.

It is unclear whether local councillors are fully aware of the impact of these changes and, as constituents, you may wish to attend their surgery and give them the facts.

If you would like more information contact your steward in the first instance. Keep an eye on the website for updates (address below)

Yours sincerely



GEORGE LEE, Branch Secretary

## Job Evaluation - what's happening

In 1999 members voted in a ballot for a new deal with councils across Scotland called 'Single Status'.

Every job in local government was to be evaluated through a recommended national job evaluation scheme.

The scheme would assess jobs equally and fairly on agreed and transparent criteria. You know why your grade is what it is.

After years of delay, talks eventually started in Edinburgh and UNISON members voted to negotiate on a scheme.

We are still in talks with management on all matters relating to Job Evaluation and Single Status.

So far 85 groups of jobs have been looked at. The Council wants all posts with five or less people in them to be 'allocated'. This would affect over 2,000 staff. UNISON is challenging this. We think a fair scheme must evaluate all jobs.

The Council has outlined a two-stage appeal process. We must stress this has not been agreed with UNISON.

Although the Council is linking its conditions plans to Job Evaluation, they have NOT been discussed or agreed with UNISON.

**We and the other trade unions in the Council will continue to engage with your employers on Job Evaluation whilst resisting these changes.**