

# National Employers for local government services

**Jon Richards, Rehana Azam, Jim Kennedy**  
**Trade Union Side Secretaries**  
**NJC for Local Government Services**  
**c/o UNISON Centre**  
**130 Euston Road**  
**London NW1 2AY**

17 April 2020

Dear Jon, Rehana and Jim

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY 2020**

Thank you for your exceptionally prompt letter of 16 April in response to the National Employers' final pay offer.

I will respond to each element of your letter in turn but must make very clear from the outset, for the benefit of our respective audiences, that the National Employers' offer, as set out in our letter to you of 16 April, should be regarded as final and will not be revisited. If there is any clarity you need on the final offer, we are of course happy to assist. We welcome the fact that you have not formally rejected our final offer and hope that you will move to consult your members positively as soon as possible in order that local government staff can receive the pay award without undue delay.

As you state, the National Employers have recommended that representations are made to government in order to seek funding for an additional, but separate, amount to be awarded to employees in recognition of their exceptional hard work in the COVID-19 response. The Employers' recommendation was made to the three LGAs from which national employer members are drawn, and it is for these bodies to consider the process and timing of any approach. Therefore, the National Employers are neither in a position to determine the timetable nor impose a deadline as you suggest.

However, your request for a joint employer / union approach is being relayed to the relevant organisations and will be considered by them accordingly.

You will be aware from recent discussions that the National Employers believe that the forecast levels of the National Living Wage over the next few years are likely to dominate our negotiations from 2021 onwards, therefore the Employers are keen to begin informal, without prejudice, joint discussions in order to take forward this agenda. However, such discussions can only commence once agreement has been reached on this year's pay round. We therefore urge you to accept our final offer as soon as practicable.

Yours sincerely,

*Naomi Cooke*

**Naomi Cooke**  
**Employers' Secretary**

20 April 2020

Naomi Cooke  
Employers' Side Secretary  
NJC for Local Government Services  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London, SW1P 3HZ

Dear Naomi,

Thank you for your letter of 17 April.

Like you, we also wish to begin discussions about issues that will become increasingly prominent from 2021 – these will include the National Living Wage but also consideration of the longer term impacts of Covid-19 on the local government workforce. However, first of all we must make sure we deliver a settlement for 2020 that delivers for the local government workforce.

While you state the offer should be considered final, there are clearly two outstanding issues:

**1) Annual leave and working hours.** The offer on annual leave relies on a curious interpretation of our claim, which we believe was clear and fully understood by the employers. The response to the claim could risk inflaming already considerable concern among local government and school staff and could very well lead to them rejecting the offer and to a further declining of morale on the ground. Once again we urge the employers to reconsider this and add one day's leave to the minima for all staff, however long their service, particularly as we are all very familiar with the fact that the current minimum of 21 days coverage is quite low and in only a handful of LA's.

You also failed to respond to the element of the joint union claim for a shorter working week – either with an offer, or any rationale for rejection or omission.

**2) Joint approach to government.** In your own response to us you indicated that you would speak to the Employers about a possible joint employer/union representation for a key workers' allowance or a boost to the current 2.75% offer. We feel we need to explore this in full before we start any pay consultation and ballot on the offer. We are keen to understand if the Employers are agreeable to a joint approach as we would like to get this under way as soon as possible. We would also welcome a discussion about what value is being explored above the current 2.75% offer, should extra money from government be

forthcoming – and what initial thoughts the Employers have had about how any extra money secured would be used.

In conclusion, whilst you may feel the offer is final, we don't share this view. There are two sides to this bargaining process and we don't think it helpful for one side to close down the bargaining process when issues are outstanding.

We look forward to your response.

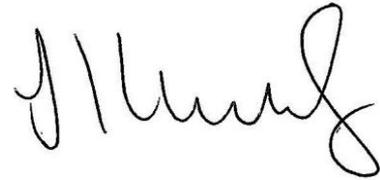
Yours sincerely



Rehana Azam GMB



Jon Richards UNISON



Jim Kennedy UNITE

Trade Unions Side Secretaries

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**Trade Union Side Secretaries**  
**NJC for Local Government Services**  
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**130 Euston Road**  
**London NW1 2AY**

24 April 2020

Dear Jon, Rehana and Jim

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY 2020**

Thank you for your letter of 20 April.

I am able to clarify the Employers' position on the issues you raise, however, I should be clear that the National Employers' offer, as set out in our letter to you of 16 April will not be revisited.

### **Annual leave and working hours**

Your claim very clearly sought, "*A one day increase to the minimum paid annual leave entitlement set out in the Green Book*", which as you know is currently 21 days, and it was on that basis that we consulted councils. Our final offer reflects their views and is part of the Employers' overall offer with the 2.75 per cent increase on all pay points. Any alternative offer relating to annual leave would have been to the detriment of the pay percentage figure offered.

There was no support from councils for a reduction in the working week to form part of this year's pay settlement, hence it was not included in the Employers' final offer. However, in proposing joint discussions to consider how the NJC can meet the challenge of the government's target for the National Living Wage in the coming years, the National Employers would be content for the working week to be considered alongside any other issues that either Side wishes to propose, on a without prejudice basis.

### **Joint approach to government**

The National Employers' final pay offer of 2.75 per cent on all NJC pay points 1 and above is not conditional on the response from government to any request for an additional amount to be awarded to employees in recognition of their response to the COVID-19 emergency. The National Employers have recommended this be considered by the LGA, WLGA and NILGA and that discussion has now moved to those organisations. Your request to make a joint submission with the national LGA bodies has been passed on and is being considered and it will be for them to decide the process, format and timing of any approach and I shall keep you informed of developments.

The National Employers again urge you to move to consult on, and hopefully accept, the final offer as soon as practicable so that employees can receive their pay award as soon as possible while appreciating the challenges the current situation poses for consultation processes.

You will be aware that the task facing local government in the months and years following the current pandemic will be hugely challenging and the National Employers would like to ensure the maximum time for engagement with NJC unions to ensure the best possible approach.

Yours sincerely,

*Naomi Cooke*

**Naomi Cooke**  
**Employers' Secretary**

Our Ref: **LG/19/2020**

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To: Secretaries of Local Government Branches in England, Wales  
and Northern Ireland (Scotland for information)  
Regional Heads of Local Government

28 April 2020

## **NJC Pay - UPDATE**

**This circular updates branches on communication between the NJC Trade Unions and the Employers' side since the improved pay offer of 2.75% was made.**

As you know, the NJC Employers have made a pay offer of 2.75%, along with one extra day of annual leave on the minimum, and a promise that they would approach government to ask for more money for local government pay. See the UNISON local government branch circular dated 17 April for the Employers' letter along with the Trade Unions' response.

Later on 17 April, the Employers wrote to the unions again. This new letter made it clear that in their view, this was a final pay offer, and they encouraged us to begin consulting on it. They also stated that they wanted to begin discussions about the impact of the increased National Living Wage from 2021, but said they could not do this until 2020-21 pay is settled.

Your NJC Executive members met and agreed to respond jointly with the other unions. The unions' response, dated 20 April, is attached. We made clear that we did not consider the negotiations to be complete. The Employers' Side were still planning to write to the government asking for more money for local government pay. But they had not decided whether to agree to a joint process with the unions to take this forward, and they had not told us what they would be seeking from government.

On 24 April, the Employers wrote to the unions again, and again stated that this was a final pay offer.

It has been agreed to hold a 'virtual meeting' of the UNISON NJC Committee, so that it can discuss the negotiations and decide what course of action it wishes to take with regard to responding to the Employers and consulting members. This meeting will take place on Friday, 1 May, and we will update branches further after that.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Richards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Jon Richards  
National Secretary  
Local Government, Police and Justice Section