



## LANCASHIRE UNISON CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT OUR PENSIONS

# MEETING THE MINISTER AND EMPLOYERS

### Act now to save the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)!

THE Trade Union Side met the employers and ODPM civil servants on Friday, 7 October - the first meeting since 22 September, when they made their proposals to remove the 85 Rule, increase contributions and the benefit age on 1 April 2006 – all with no protection. On Monday, 10 October, we attended a meeting of the Tripartite Committee, chaired by Minister for Local Government, Phil Woolas MP, who wanted to establish the differences between us and the employers. Not surprisingly, this was not difficult!!

While the employers have shown no real signs of moving away from their proposals, the TU Side have been able to argue effectively that they have overestimated the 'cost' of re-instating the 85 Rule and failed to consult and involve the

employers other than local authorities covered by the scheme. That means the employers of 20% of LGPS members, including many UNISON members in higher and further education, schools, police, fire and rescue, probation, the Environment Agency, Passenger Transport Executives, the community and voluntary sector, housing associations, ALMO's and some private companies. We argued that it is unacceptable not to involve them, as has been confirmed by some of those employers.

We have also continued to argue very strongly that the principles and timetable for negotiating changes to the other public sector pension schemes being negotiated through the Public Services Forum should be applied to the LGPS. This

includes the pension age and protection arrangements. We have made it clear that we need to consult and ballot our members on any changes and that we want to negotiate the future of the LGPS overall, not just the negative changes being pursued by the employers and the LGA. The ODPM and the employers continue to claim that changes have to be made in time for the November local authority financial settlement. We say that we have had enough of being the poor pension relations.

We will be meeting the employers, civil servants and LGPS actuaries again on 14 October to discuss the additional information we need to be able to negotiate. A meeting with John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister will take place in early November.

## UNISON members of the Trade Union Side are:

**Heather Wakefield**, National Secretary, Local Government

**Jean Geldart**, Chair, Local Government Service Group Executive

**Jon Richards**, Senior National Officer, Education Services Section

**Stephen Mead**, NEC member, Higher Education member job sharing with

**Caryl Nobbs**, Chair, Police Staff Service Group Executive

**Glyn Jenkins**, Pensions Officer, acts as technical advisor to the Trade Union Side.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- There are many things you can do to build our campaign and help defeat the employers' ludicrous proposals. You can:
  - Ensure that all your workmates know what's going on by distributing the new UNISON leaflet available from your branch
  - Recruit non-members who work with you, using the new UNISON LGPS recruitment leaflet
  - Write to the press, your MP, ward councillors and council Leader using the model letter on the website – or write one of your own – pointing out that LGPS members are being treated with contempt
- Get in touch with your branch and join in branch activities
- Send us an e-mail to [i.patel@unison.co.uk](mailto:i.patel@unison.co.uk) telling us what the employers' proposals will mean for you – especially if the 85 Rule is removed with no protection and employee contributions rise. We need to hear your story
- Volunteer to be a case study for the local press and media
- Tell your family and friends what's going on. Get them involved in our campaign.

## YOUR VIEWS!

I find it interesting that at the last minute, prior to the general election, we had agreement to talk regarding pensions. Now that 'Tory' Blair is back in action in parliament, they will try again to control the work force through our pensions. They must think the workforce is thick if they believe we will take this. I will be voting to strike along with my comrades.

In other words, *'We're not going to election for a few years, so we don't care.'* I for one will vote for strike action to protect the only thing that makes Local Government service vaguely worth it in this day and age.

I voted for strike action in the original ballot and would do the same if balloted on these proposals, which I find totally unacceptable.

My personal view is one of shock and betrayal. I would unreservedly support industrial action, including all out strike, to support the negotiators in securing more acceptable arrangements.

**Please circulate to non-members and encourage them to join.  
For an application form contact the Branch Office on 01772 533072  
or email at [unison@unison.lancscc.gov.uk](mailto:unison@unison.lancscc.gov.uk)**