

UNISON Briefing Note Management Team Trade Union Liaison, 10 June 2011.

NJC Car Allowances

First we would reiterate our position in relation to Car Allowances for employees, this being that the Council;

- 1. Comply with all paragraphs of the National Joint Council (NJC) Terms and Conditions Part 2.**
- 2. Comply with all paragraphs of the National Joint Council (NJC) Terms and Conditions Part 3, Section 6.**
- 3. Remove the suspension of the car loan scheme.**

Management Team will of course be aware that the NJC car allowances are normally up-rated in April each year using a formula, which is compiled by technical advisers. This reviews the allowances which cover standing charges (depreciation, tax and insurance) and running expenses (petrol, tyres and servicing/repairs). The technical advisers' report does reflect what has happened over the last year in relation to all these elements.

The petrol elements of the allowances are based on a price per litre for unleaded petrol (based on actual pump prices in the first two weeks of January [as surveyed by the Automobile Association on behalf of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders] in accordance with the jointly agreed formula for calculating the allowances each year.

In October 2010, the Local Government Employers (LGE) wrote to the NJC Joint Secretaries regarding the commissioning of the technical advisers' car allowance rate report for 2011/12.

The letter stated that previous advisers' reports had recommended that the formula needed development and additionally stated the NJC employers' desire to begin discussions with the trade unions on Green Book terms and conditions. In conclusion, they stated that their view was 'that the 2011 report should not be commissioned at this stage and that the 2010 mileage rates should continue to apply (if necessary beyond 1 April 2011) until such time as the NJC agrees an alternative method of recompense.'

At the NJC Executive on 10 December, the issue of car allowances was debated. However, the Employers' position remained that they are not prepared to commission the technical advisers' report at this stage.

This matter was further discussed at the recent Joint NJC Executive (21 March) and the trade unions informed the employers side that we will be registering a dispute on this matter.

We therefore ask that the Council await the outcome of the national discussions on this issue, before entering into a local dispute.

Savings Strategy

Whilst UNISON recognises the financial difficulties that the current Government is placing on Local Authorities, and we are happy to work with the Council to find solutions to problems with the minimum impact upon our members, it is not the role of UNISON to directly deliver savings.

Our members have made the following suggestions, without prejudice, which could be explored and negate the need for attacks on employee terms and conditions. UNISON does not necessarily endorse all of these suggestions and would expect meaningful consultation on any suggestions that directly impact on employees.

Advertising

Explore the potential for income generation from advertising revenue. The following are some examples of things other authorities are undertaking.

£6 Million revenue in Birmingham city council through advertising.

<http://www.birminghampost.net/news/west-midlands-news/2010/01/15/birmingham-city-council-plans-to-find-6m-by-selling-adverts-65233-25601870/>

Although we are much smaller and the contracts could never be worth as much but it should be investigated.

Revenue from Advertising on the website as used by Flyde Borough Council, this raises £3,000 a year.

http://static.googleusercontent.com/external/content/untrusted_dlcp/www.google.co.uk/en/uk/intl/en/landing/localgov/files/flyde.pdf

Sponsoring signs in council premises. Potential revenue £180,000.

http://www.sponsorasign.co.uk/virtual_case_studies.htm

Advertising in council publications, In this example in Tandridge council 5 pages of a 28 page council publication was devoted to advertising.

http://www.tandridge.gov.uk/yourcouncil/documents/document_display.htm?pk_document=2885

Advertising on council vehicles. <http://www.agripa.com/> . The website of a company that specializes in this.

General opportunities for advertising /sponsorship on council assets.
Covering – within council premises – atrium, contact centres, open space, street furniture, street lighting, council fleet, council uniforms, council stationary. Leisure facilities – squash courts???

<http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/index.php?cid=1268>

Perhaps Brentwood council could be contacted to see how much revenue they get.

Contact Centres (CCs)

CCs have been struggling for ages to achieve acceptable % figures for the number of tel. calls answered/ how many on time/etc. They are short staffed.

My solution: close down the outlying centres, bring the staff in to work at Sherwood Lodge, set up a dedicated call centre.

Advantages/Disadvantages

- Closing down the outlying offices will save on maintenance, upkeep, etc and may even realise monies from renting/selling the 3 sites.
- Cuts in the costs of staff travelling to and from the centres.
- Improve the quality of the service.
- Assign more staff to the call centre but in the knowledge, staff will reduce gradually by offering them voluntary redundancy/early retirement etc.
- There are so many more electronic solutions available that weren't even considered when the centres were set up.
- Put touch screens and telephones in supermarkets, etc to contact the Council.
- Put more resources into an initiative to further roll out Direct Debit.
- The council will lose the face-to-face contact from the centres but this must be viewed in efficiency terms, i.e. what % of the population enjoy the face-to-face contact? 1%? Less? Why do we have CCs if so few people take advantage of the counter service?

Members

Engage with Elected Members on the subject of paper usage; organise more effective IT access for Members so less paper is expended on committee meetings, etc.

Tackle Members on the subject of a freeze or reduction in their allowances.

I think it needs putting forward that sections have already reduced staff, any staff leaving are not being replaced so staff left pick up extra work for no extra money as its increased workload not increased responsibility so not reflected in job evaluation, we already have increased petrol/diesel prices that isn't

reflected in casual/essential car users, we have a pay freeze this year which doesn't help paying bills etc, pension contribution to be increased leaving less in the pay packet.

What else do management expect us to do, one suggestion is to look at members allowances - many of them work less hours at the office but earn more than our lowest paid workers. Surely once the senior management/head of service/directors roles are looked at these would help to contribute to the savings they are asking us for. What about the people who are 'consultants' these are paid, I'm sure, more money than recruiting our own personnel. Could we also reduce the number of 'casual' workers that aren't paid from government funding. Sections that aren't bringing in the expected revenue, what have they done about reducing their staff or putting them onto other duties.

Outside Lighting

An Officer recommended that we look at changing our outdoor lighting at council buildings, car parks and in parks after finding a new LED light bulb which offers a better quality of light, lasts longer than normal bulbs and requires very little maintenance. (This has been researched by Gedling Borough Council).

Elections

As a major saving it has been suggested to look at elections and how they are currently staffed.

At present every officer working on the elections is given free annual leave to work on the elections. Many Local Authorities these days do not give this. It is felt that if the money paid to the Returning Officer reflected the posts within the election that annual leave should be at the cost to each individual, i.e. a better rate of pay for Poll Clerks (Derbyshire Dales get £190) better rates for Presiding Officers and Count Clerks, Count Supervisors, Meet and Greet Staff, Returning Officer and Deputy, Runners etc then the staff should book their own leave for this.

Some staff working on the elections were very highly paid officers and it was felt that this was a waste of public monies and even though staff would lose this holiday it would contribute to saving jobs in the long term and be negated by better rates of pay.

FOR INFORMATION

TITLE: Assisted Car Purchase Scheme

DATE:

FILE NAME: Interest Rate May 2009

OPEN

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise about the interest rate for car loans provided under the Assisted Car Purchase Scheme with effect from 1st May 2009.

It was resolved at the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 29th July 1998 (minute 498) that the interest rate under the Assisted Car Purchase Scheme is reviewed annually and set at 1% below the official interest rate for the Revenue Support Grant as contained in the Local Government Finance Report. It was further resolved that the effective date of any change would be 1st May each year.

The Local Government Finance Report for 2008/2009 indicated that the interest rate for the Revenue Support Grant will be 5.5%. Therefore the interest rate for any Assisted Car Purchase Scheme loans made on or after 1st May 2009 will be 4.5%.

Issues for Consideration

The Inland Revenue Official Loan rate for the year 2009/2010 is 4.75%, therefore provided this rate stays above 4.5% there are no tax implications arising from this change. If this position changes during the year, the interest rate will be reviewed and members advised of the outcome.

Credit Licence: provided the council does not exceed 1% above the base rate it will not require a credit licence. The current base rate is 0.5%, therefore if the rate offered by the council is above 1.5% a credit licence is due. This is the case from May 2009.

Due to the Interest Rates meaning the Council would need a Credit Licence which would increase costs and administration the decision was taken to suspend Car Loans until the economic climate changed. Employees who currently have a loan are not effected.