

UNISON NEWS



Staff Conference special edition newsletter – Tuesday 25th September 2018

ESSENTIAL CAR USER FIGHTBACK!

UNISON members effected by Blackpool Council's decision to withdraw the Essential Car User (ECU) allowance are demanding to fight back against this substantial cut to their pay.

The loss of the allowance is around £1,000 per year and will be effective from December 2018.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION IS THE ONLY CHOICE

The UNISON branch officers have tried every means possible to persuade the Council that its decision to save £244,000 through the withdrawal of the allowance will result in other costs. We have said that members are prepared to withdraw the use of their car for Council business. The only way we can demonstrate this is for staff to take industrial action.

WHAT WOULD INDUSTRIAL ACTION INVOLVE?

- UNISON members would withdraw the use of their car for Council business.
- Management would have to provide alternative means of transport e.g. taxis, buses, trains.
- Travel costs would have to be paid in advance by departments.
- UNISON members are advised to not use their own money and then wait to be reimbursed.

FALSE ECONOMY

Members withdrawing the use of their car for Council business will involve additional expenditure to the Council because of the significant increase in alternative travel

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costs. The use of taxis, buses and trains isn't just an increased financial burden but it will impact on the delivery of services.

Members need to be 100% clear that all additional costs are the responsibility of the Council.

COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY

If the Council wants to maintain the present level of efficiency and safety in delivering Council services, it will be reminded that it is its responsibility. It is the Council which has decided to withdraw the ECU allowance and no UNISON member should be blamed or subject to any pressure to use their car. UNISON Members will be:

- Given specific advice how to request alternative transport to efficiently carry out their role
- Given specific advice if they are put under pressure to use their car
- Advised to inform UNISON immediately if managers suggest they are not fulfilling their role

VOTE FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION!

The only way UNISON members can show the Council that they have made a mistake in withdrawing the ECU allowance is to take industrial action. The time for talking and negotiating has passed. UNISON will be requesting specific information on the additional costs for transport costs to demonstrate that their decision is costing Council Tax payers more than if they had retained the allowance.

Getting it right (eventually!)

Unison able to make a difference in terms of sorting out office temperatures at Bickerstaffe Stewards were made aware of problems, particularly on one side of the building, where the air conditioning seemed to be making the working environment incredibly cold for some staff. This was particularly evident during the warm summer weather when the difference indoors was even more obvious. Initial discussions with management weren't very fruitful, with there being a reluctance to acknowledge the problem, and it was only as a result of some really persistent complaining on behalf of members that we got the temperatures sorted out. So hopefully no more woolly hats, blankets and hot water bottles required in the office (yes it was that bad . . .)

Keep up-to-date with Unison

Visit our website at <https://blackpoolunison.co.uk/> or the branch Facebook page, which is for members only.

ESSENTIAL CAR USER - UPDATE ON INDUSTRIAL ACTION

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT

UNISON is balloting for industrial action against Blackpool Council's decision to withdraw the Essential Car User (ECU) allowance from all employees.

In the most recent communique to members, we had said we were to imminently initiate a campaign to ask each UNISON member effected by this change to withdraw the use their vehicle. This was because the Council had offered a buy-out of £625 gross to ECU staff.

Since a large majority of ECU staff had signed up to the buy-out, we could have started the campaign in mid-September without an industrial action ballot. This was because staff would then be casual car users with no obligation to use their cars for Council business.

CHANGING THE GOALPOSTS

Now, the Council has said that it will continue to pay ECU allowance until:

Either everyone has signed up to the buy-out OR those who refuse to be bought off allow themselves to be dismissed and re-engaged' on the new terms.

The earliest this can happen is December 11th. This means that everyone who has signed up to the buy-out is still an ECU and will be expected to continue to use their car for Council business. The only way UNISON members can now withdraw the use of their car is if they are covered by an industrial action ballot.

Next steps: We will have to inform the Council that we are carrying out a ballot and then ballot papers will be delivered to members.

We urge everyone to vote and to support the industrial action. If the ballot delivers a legal vote for industrial action then we strongly urge members to support every aspect of the campaign (see elsewhere in this issue.)

We need as many staff as possible to join UNISON to support with the action.

JOIN UNISON TODAY!

New notice boards

The more observant amongst you may have noticed some handsome new notice boards appearing in council offices. These have been provided for Unison to communicate with members and we'll be doing our best to keep them updated and interesting and worth checking out on a regular basis.

We'd love to hear from anyone who can help keep these up-to-date in your workplace – they are lockable and you'll get your own set of keys – if you can assist please give Jim Green (branch communications officer) a call on 476359.

Is ‘Journey of the Child’ A Restriction On *Your* Family Life?

As the review of Children’s Social Care progresses under the banner of “Journey of the Child” (JoC), UNISON is supporting our members with the impact this is having on them and their own families. Issues include: Changes to working patterns, including evening and weekend working; staff being moved to departments and told that their family-friendly flexible working arrangement do not fit with their new role; proposed multi-week rotas where some weeks are over 48 hrs long; and inadequate payment for unsocial hours.

Such changes will have a negative impact on our members’ own family lives and work-life balance, whilst they work to bring positive changes to the families of those they support. Add to this the imposition of two increments on some for out-of-hours and weekend working that do not adequately compensate for the premium payments they should receive.

UNISON has concerns about how staff were selected to move to other sections with Children’s Services and that this wasn’t open and transparent. The criteria for selection itself would usually be agreed with the trade unions, but the scoring matrix, for example, were not initially shared. We do not believe that the work-life balance of individuals was adequately taken into consideration for all.

The Proposed Rotas

The rota has proved to be another contentious issue. The working time regulations state there should be an 11-hour break between shifts, but the rota only provided 10. The initial rota also proposed 7-day stretches without an uninterrupted 24 hr break, and one of the three weeks was 53 hrs long! UNISON cannot support such a rota in its proposed form due to the negative impact to our members’ lives.

No Change To Increments

The Green Book, which is part of your NJC terms and conditions, sets out premiums for unsociable hours and weekend working. However, these payments can be replaced by additional increments but only through a local agreement. We understand that no local agreement was ever negotiated for these increments.

The new rota contains a significant increase in hours worked at weekends or evenings after 8pm i.e. when premium rates would apply. The Council does not want to increase the number of increments accordingly. As a general rule of thumb, two increments would be roughly equal to 10% of premium payments. Any increase in that percentage would see members lose out. The proposed rotas far exceed this at around 18%.

UNISON is continuing to represent the views of our members and aim to negotiate a better outcome.