

Surrey County UNISON on the case

The UNISON logo features the word "UNISON" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic of three curved, overlapping lines that resemble a ribbon or a wave, also in white.

Surrey Pay: You Decide

The Surrey Pay Team (UNISON and the GMB) have reached a point in our negotiations with Surrey County Council (SCC) where we are prepared to put an offer to our members.

Whilst this deal will not make up for the drop in living standards as a result of the imposed pay settlements of the past two years, we believe this is the best that can be achieved by negotiation - given the government's 2% limit on public sector pay and SCC's own financial situation.

In short, this is a two-year deal and includes:

- 2.75% across-the-board for all employees on Surrey Pay – in 2008 and again in 2009.
- An extra 0.5% for all employees who are currently at the top of their scale – in 2008 and again in 2009 (so 3.25% each year).
- A minimum wage for all Surrey employees of £6.50 in 2008.
- A minimum wage of £6.90 for all employees in 2009.
- An increase in the top threshold for the required user mileage rate (currently 40p per mile) from 8,000 to 10,000 miles per year.
- An increase in the rate for required users above this threshold from 22.5p to 25p per mile.
- An increase in the permitted user rate from 22.5p to 25p per mile.
- An increase in lease car mileage rates (diesel from 8.7p to 10p per mile) (petrol from 11p to 12p per mile).

- An agreement to review the 2009 increase should inflation rise or fall by 2% above or below the agreed rise.

- A re-alignment of incremental points on existing pay scales SY1-D for new starters.

- A reduction in pay protection from four years to two years at 'cash-mark-time'.

Initially SCC were not willing to implement any minimum wage agreement. This was achieved through negotiation and will benefit around 1000 members of staff. Part of this offer are the 'strings' of reducing the pay protection period. The pay team do not want to see a reduction in pay protection, but SCC are clear that this is part of the overall deal.

The Pay Team are very aware that the current required user mileage rate is unacceptable and hasn't increased for many years. SCC refuse to budge on this issue, saying that they will not pay any increase above the national tax threshold. This threatened to scupper the negotiations until we received an assurance that the actual figure (40p) will be taken out of the agreement. This leaves us free to continue to negotiate or to go into dispute over the actual mileage rate.

During negotiations, SCC introduced the idea of 'Contribution-Based Pay (CBP)' for all new starters in the middle grades. This would take away the automatic yearly increment and replace it with the same system use for Surrey J.

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There will be an annual assessment for each employee and an award of 0, 1, 3 or 6% will be granted. This is in effect performance related pay. The Pay Team oppose this in principle and on the basis of all available research. It was agreed to take it out of the pay agreement – though SCC have already begun to implement it. We will be monitoring this issue closely and are prepared to go into dispute over CBP if our members so wish.

Overall, this is not the deal we would have hoped for and does not come close to our initial claim – however, the latest national offer is only 2.2%, the government wants to keep pay deals under 2% and the minimum wage will be a historic breakthrough for the County. We are disappointed that we could not achieve a higher required user mileage rate (though we can still push for this) and that a drop in the protection arrangements for staff has become a required part of this overall agreement.

Surrey County UNISON branch has had a difficult couple of years and we are just getting back on our feet with a range of new reps and officers. We believe that the two days of strike action over the last imposed pay settlement – whilst not achieving the result we wished at the time – showed the County that we are prepared to fight and this is reflected in the better-than-might-have-been-expected offer this time around.

We believe this is the best that can be achieved by

negotiation and that it would take effective and sustained industrial action to achieve any improvement to this deal. Whilst we would be prepared to lead such a dispute, we believe the most important issue for UNISON at this time is to build – in numbers and in organisation – to place us in a better position for future pay and conditions negotiations and to represent our members.

If you believe we should sign up to this two-year deal, please vote yes in the ballot.

If you disagree with UNISON signing this deal and you are prepared to take industrial action, please vote no.

We are also consulting on the issue of Contribution Based Pay. We are not signing up to this but please vote on this issue as well – even if it does not directly affect you at present. We will use this in future negotiations.

If you also recruit at least one more member to UNISON this will add to our strength in the future.

The offer is enclosed in its entirety.

If you have any questions or need more information before voting, please email the branch office at unison@surreycc.gov.uk or telephone us on 020 8541 9091.

Change of Details

If you have received this newsletter/ ballot by mistake or if your contact details (work or home) have changed in the last few months, please let us know.

Name

Workplace

Home Address

Phone

Email

When complete, please return to the UNISON Office at County Hall, or email to unison@surreycc.gov.uk