



GMB Southern Region meeting for all reps in Local Government, Schools and Academies

Thursday 29th June 2023 – 5pm – via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Asia Allison, Senior Organiser
Rob Carlson, Regional Head of Communications
Michelle Gordon, Regional Political and Equalities Officer
Lib Whitfield, Membership Development Officer

Overview – Why is this important?

We are the union for local government and schools and as such it is important that we ballot our members, as we believe that you're worth more than the present government pay offer.

The campaign tagline is - *We're Worth More* – this shows that you deserve more money, but also that it's your campaign and we need you as reps and members to drive it, with our support.

Even if you work in a workplace or school that does not honour NJC pay rises, we are running another campaign to run at the same time about funding and where this pay rise will come from, which is of concern to a lot of members.

This campaign gives us a unique opportunity to build membership, as the more members we have, the stronger our collective voice. Our sister unions are already balloting - Unison's ballot is due to close soon and Unite's is being done in waves, with the NEU only able to negotiate on teachers and not school support staff.

We have chosen a long lead in to the ballot so we can make sure we have the best chance to get the right vote in the right numbers to secure a mandate for action.

Timeline – 9 weeks to Ballot Notice

The ballot will consist of one question and this will be shared with all reps nearer the time.

We aim to follow this timescale for the ballot process:

- 4th September – Serve ballot notice to all employers
- 12th September – Ballot Opens
- 24th October – Ballot Closes
- 1st November – Earliest possible strike action

These dates have been set nationally, following consultation with local government reps from all over the country.

However, we still don't know who is and isn't in the ballot.

Data Cleanse and Comms

Even though it seems like there is a long time until the ballot opens, there is still a lot to be done, and we need your help!

Firstly, we are asking for all members to complete our online form to confirm their details with us.

This is to make sure of the following:

- That all our members within the relevant workplaces are included
- That no members are included who shouldn't be
- That we have the correct home address for anyone who will be receiving a ballot
- That we know your exact workplace and job title for the ballot notice to employers

We are operating this as a prize draw for two £50 High Street vouchers to try to maximise response. You go into the hat either by updating your details with us, or non-members can go in the hat by joining, if they are in one of the affected workplaces. You can therefore use the prize draw as a recruitment tool to pick up new members in advance of the ballot.

We will also be putting out a video message soon to encourage members to come forward as Ballot Champions. All reps are expected to act as champions anyway, but workplace contacts and members are asked to come forward to help deliver the ballot. The email to come will explain what is entailed and how you can help out.

Recruitment and Organising

As mentioned previously, this gives us a great opportunity to get out into workplaces and spread the word about the benefits of being in GMB. As well as giving members the chance to go out on strike for pay in the first time in almost a decade, as well as the prize draw, we can still offer all the other benefits that come with being a member of GMB.

The Regional Organising Team will be focusing on certain areas and local authorities from September to drive ballot turnout and look to organise and build stronger structures of activists and ballot champions. All Officers will be looking to do the same on their patches, and would welcome branches, convenors, reps and activists who want to join them on visits. All Ballot Champions, or any reps, contacts or members who are willing to assist us, will be offered training to come out and join us on workplace visits.

While GMB are balloting all employers and workplaces within Southern Region, this is not the case for all unions. It may be that in certain workplaces, their only chance of joining the action is to be a GMB member.

The ballot will be focused on pay but will make reference to funding issues. We will run a parallel campaign in schools regarding funding. It is not realistic to expect schools or any local authority to implement the pay award without central funding - schools and councils have very challenging budgets which are already being squeezed dry. This campaign will run in parallel to the pay ballot in schools. The appropriate ministers/secretaries of the state will be written to by GMB National Office.

Conclusion

This is about pay and funding. The message is very clear - enough is enough. You are worth more and worth better. Let's deliver a strong and loud message through the ballot for strike action!

Lastly, if anyone was not able to make this meeting but would like to hear the presentations from GMB's ballot team, please get in touch and we will look at organising another session, where you will be able to hear from us directly and ask us any questions you may have.