

B.C.C. TRADE UNION GROUP

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Councillors,

The Trade Union Group in Belfast City Council would remind Council that employees are now in their third year without any general pay increase and consequently have seen the value of their earnings fall by more than 10% over the period. Council will realise that this puts greatest financial stress on those who earn least. Indeed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, imposing a general public sector pay freeze, mandated public sector employers to raise the pay of employees earning under £21,000 a year by £250. This minimal concession has not been implemented generally in local government (despite the imposition of a pay freeze a year earlier than in the rest of the public sector) at least partly because of the scale of budget cuts and job losses at English local authorities.

While local councils in Northern Ireland do face difficult economic circumstances we believe the differences here, particularly in funding arrangements, do allow scope for this measure. We draw your attention to the decision of Lisburn City Council to make this £250 payment to the appropriate employees, without prejudice to future changes to NJC agreed payscales. We believe Belfast City Council should act likewise.

We also note that changes to the Working Tax Credit system disadvantage certain part-time employees working fewer than 24 hours a week. We urge Council to examine these cases and attempt to facilitate any such employees who wish to increase their hours to that level.

Tom Wilkinson

Stephanie McCaig

For Belfast City Council Trade Union Group

