

# City Council and Trades Unions meet

Although no agreement was reached at the final day of Modernising Pay negotiations between the Council and trades unions, it is recognised that both sides made a determined effort to reach agreement when they met on 20 May 2010.

The Council has recognised the position of the unions, which notes the retention of all the improvements negotiated in the final package and pledges a continued balanced approach to the sign-up process.

The final package to be revealed to staff next week represents an extra £11.5 million on the pay bill, an increase of £1 million following the latest phase of the negotiations, according to the Council.

Detailed discussions with the unions have sought to:

- \* provide a fairer pay system for staff from October 2010
- \* fully satisfy equalities legislation
- \* reduce the financial risk to taxpayers of millions of pounds of equal pay claims
- \* improve services to the people of Edinburgh by recognising and rewarding excellent staff performance
- \* increase the availability and flexibility of some front line services.

After five years of negotiations and more than 100 meetings with the unions, a statutory consultation period began in January. It has now formally concluded although individual consultation with staff will continue as required.

The package tabled represents the Council's final position after it extended talks with Unison, Unite and GMB well beyond the statutory 90 day consultation period.

Staff will now be given the opportunity to sign up voluntarily

to the new terms and conditions to take effect from the beginning of October 2010.

It is anticipated that the new arrangements will add over £11.5m to the Council's pay bill in the first year but will avoid future equal pay settlements. The Council has already had to pay over £33 million compensation to those women in roles which are comparable to the bonus paid male roles.

Cllr Jenny Dawe, Leader of the Council, said:-"I'm pleased that we can now move forward to the benefit of all.

"We must provide a fair, appropriate, flexible and affordable pay system for all staff. This will help to attract and retain good staff which will benefit taxpayers while also avoiding expensive and unnecessary future legal action.

"We want to be a top-performing, modern organisation – delivering quality services, on time and to budget. Skilled, experienced and productive staff are the backbone to this. We face many challenges ahead and we want to do all we can to support staff and recognise their contribution. But we must do this in an equal and consistent way."

Cllr Phil Wheeler, Finance and Resources Convener, added: "More than 100 meetings have been held with the trade unions which helped shape the final package. The only alternative to agreed changes to terms and conditions is imposing these through a legal process, as many other councils have done. There is nothing unusual about this and the consequences of not doing it are very serious, as can be seen from the recent case involving Birmingham City Council."

Philip Barr, Head of HR with the Council led the negotiations. He said: "I'm pleased that we have reached an understanding that allows us to continue with a balanced approach. It is vital that employees sign the new contracts and that the unions recognise this."

Pay protection for three years is part of the nationally agreed Modernising Pay deal for those who would have otherwise experienced a reduction in pay after the three year period.

During the three year pay protection period, a range of measures and initiatives will be examined – aimed at improving services, productivity and efficiency and creating a better skilled and rewarded work force. These measures will at times improve earning opportunities and significantly reduce loss of pay or bonus.