Indicative ballot: Vote Yes for Strike Action

Our campaign for the London living wage for Caterlink workers continues to go from strength to strength. We have won agreement on the implementation of the living wage in April 2016, but both Camden Council and Caterlink are refusing to budge on paying you the living wage now (or back to April 2014 when we submitted the pay claim).

Negotiations and lobbying have achieved a promise of the living wage next year, and a tiny pay increase for the lowest paid to £6.60 per hour (although this will soon again be overtaken when the national minimum wage rises to £6.70 per hour in October). Our 2 March lobby of the Council also gained great press coverage in the Camden New Journal.

So if, like Unison, you think you deserve the living wage now then members need to be prepared to take action. In order to put pressure on the council and Caterlink we need a big ‘YES’ vote for action. We also need to keep increasing Unison’s growing membership amongst Caterlink workers in Camden.

Please note that this is an indicative ballot, it is not yet an official ballot. If we receive a strong ‘YES’ vote, then we will request an official strike ballot from the Unison region. This will be a secret ballot to your home addresses. It is only after this ballot that you would actually be asked to go on strike. So if you have moved recently or don’t get Unison materials posted to your home address, please give us your new address as soon as possible. Please contact John or Hugo to let us know.

Over the next few weeks, if you are a Unison member already you will receive an indicative ballot paper asking if you are prepared to take strike action in support of our pay claim, including the living wage and pay increases to all other grades. We are asking all members to vote YES.

If you are not yet a Unison member, please join. Then you can vote in the indicative ballot as well and make your voice heard. You can join with a paper form (call the branch office to get one), returning it to the Unison branch office (address overleaf) or you can join over the phone on freephone 0800 0 857 857, or you can do so online at camdenunison.org.uk/join.

Once you have done this let John know so we can send you a ballot paper.
8 reasons you should vote Yes to strike for the living wage

1. **Because you’re worth it:** whether you’re on £6.60 per hour or higher, you deserve more, especially living in one of the most expensive cities on earth.

2. **Because it is Council policy:** Camden Council proudly declares that it pays the living wage to all its own employees and workers on outsourced contracts, so they should live up to their word.

3. **Because it is already paid for!** Because of our campaign, Camden Council has already budgeted to pay you the living wage from April 2016. So paying you properly now won’t carry any ongoing cost.

4. **Because Caterlink can afford it:** increasing the pay for all Caterlink workers and bringing the lowest paid up to the living wage would only cost them £468,000 per year. Caterlink’s parent company, Westbury Street Holdings (WSH) has a turnover of over £500 million a year, and an operating profit of over £24 million. And they recently splashed out an estimated £25-£30 million on buying Searcys that operates champagne bars: selling bottles of champagne which would cost most of you 4 months’ wages each! Their sister company, BaxterStorey, also owned by WSH, made a profit of nearly £21 million and paid £47 million in dividends to its shareholders.

5. **Because even if Caterlink won’t pay up, the Council could:** our department alone, Children, Schools and Families, has had an underspend of over £4 million since 2010. This is in addition to millions more unspent across the Council and in individual school budgets.

6. **Because words can only achieve so much:** negotiating and demonstrating have achieved some concessions, but both the Council and Caterlink are refusing to budge on paying you the living wage now. So it will take industrial action to push them.

7. **Because your union is behind you:** the Camden Unison branch committee voted unanimously to make hardship payments from the first day of any strike, and the branch AGM voted to support your campaign.

8. **Because you can win:** if we fight and stick together we can win. Lots of other groups of workers have taken or threatened strike action and won the living wage or big pay increases recently in London, like outsourced traffic wardens in Camden, Ritzy Cinema workers in Brixton, and cleaners at the Royal Opera House, John Lewis, the Barbican Centre, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and more.

What can you do now?

- Look out for an upcoming Unison meeting for Caterlink workers in your school, then come to it and vote!
- We need a union contact in every school to pass information to their colleagues. If you would like to do this please contact Hugo or John to let them know.
- We need more Caterlink workers to join Unison. Please encourage your co-workers not yet in the union to join and fight for the living wage (they can join using the information on the front page of this newsletter or get joining forms from John, Hugo or the branch office).
- Keep in touch: if you haven’t received any of our text messages, emails or home mailings it means we don’t have your up-to-date contact details. So if this is the case please contact John to let us know your up-to-date information.
- Like our Facebook campaign page at facebook.com/camdenschoolmealsworkers

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**Your UNISON representatives**

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