

## **Why is this offer being put to us at this time when we are experiencing a global pandemic?**

- The NITC and INTO are also acutely aware that the timing, given the very difficult circumstances we all face, is most unfortunate and fraught with difficulty. For example, had NITC refused the offer and sought to continue to negotiate further we would have laid the profession open to charges of being uncaring, greedy and grossly insensitive given that other workers are currently being laid off and furloughed as a result of Covid-19.
- The only option, as agreed by the NITC (as INTO did not and cannot negotiate alone on pay and conditions) was, despite the circumstances, to make the offer available to members and let them decide via an online poll.
- The NITC and INTO was bound, once an offer was made, to put that before the membership for consultation and a decision. Not to do so would have left us open to failing to properly consult and represent our members views and possibly to a more serious charge of taking money out of our own members' pockets.
- INTO has sought to do what is possible and we urge all members to avail of the opportunity to study the detail of the offer sent to you and available on the INTO web site and the social media platforms. Please access the additional explanatory material posted at these locations to assist you in making a decision to accept, as the INTO Northern Committee advise you, or reject, the offer.
- INTO and indeed the NITC had no control over the timing of the offer which has come about following the Executive passing a budget as was outlined on March 31<sup>st</sup> by the Finance Minister. The Minister made the decision to make the offer at this time in line with the commitment he gave to the Assembly, on his appointment, upon the restoration of the Stormont Executive, that the resolution of this dispute was a top priority for him.
- The Department of Education and the Employers had reached an agreement in principle with the NITC at the end of May 2019 on an offer to be put to teachers, following a negotiation which had begun in February of 2017. The Minister made it abundantly clear at our Northern Conference in March 2020 that he would bring an offer once the finance to support it had become available. Again, the offer is in line with both his commitment to the Assembly and to our members at Northern Conference, 2020.
- The Department of Education and the Employers are anxious to see the long running dispute settled as are the teacher unions. The NITC as a whole, and the INTO's Northern Committee are in favor of the offer and both take the view that this is the best offer achievable following a very complex and detailed negotiation. The offer before the membership goes way beyond the parameters which determined our original industrial action. This offer addresses not only pay but workload also, with immediate changes to this area and paves the way, through its reviews, for a further series of agreements to be achieved in the time ahead.

- The view of the NITC and INTO's Northern Committee is that teachers had waited long enough to see what was included in the offer, and to receive the pay uplift they were entitled to as well as having the workload issues of great concern to teachers addressed.
- The timeframe agreed, prior to the pandemic taking hold, would have meant we would have been consulting and balloting, using the postal service, at this time. The Department of Education and the Employers have decided to proceed with the original timeframe, the reasoning underpinning this is:
  - [a] the Minister was in a position to honor the commitments he gave to the Assembly and to our members and he was determined to do so;
  - [a] they have the money now, however, there is no guarantee it may be available in a number of months from now;
  - [b] they want to be in a position, when the school's re-open again, (whenever that may be) to begin implementing the terms contained in the offer should it be accepted, thereby returning the schools to normality quicker in the post-pandemic period

\* INTO and the other members of the NITC remain very concerned that the additional £70 million to finance the terms of the offer, being provided by DE directly and not coming out of school budgets, if not drawn down swiftly will be re-directed to other cost centers.
- There is no conspiracy here, INTO is simply attempting to honor the commitments we promised our members, in very difficult circumstances and to do so in a manner which is as sensitive and practical as possible, at this time, to everyone. INTO was fully prepared and ready to consult with members by post and public meeting, but the lockdown restrictions in place to stop the further spread of Covid-19 simply make that impossible.