

Your pension is under attack
join us in
defending it

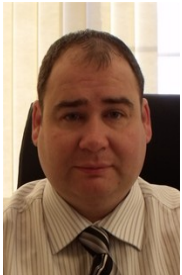
Special
Edition
Newsletter



UNISON

Renfrewshire Local Authority Branch

October 2011



VOTE YES IN THE PENSIONS BALLOT

A message from
Mark Ferguson,
Branch Secretary

Public service workers continue to suffer savage attacks to pay and conditions, redundancies, job insecurity and increased cost of living. The attack on our pensions is the final straw.

I urge all members to return their ballot paper in the UK pensions ballot voting YES for action. The proposed action on 30 November will be the biggest action this country has seen in generations. We must show strength in unity with colleagues in all trade unions across the public sector.

Whilst we recognise the significant contribution our Scottish negotiators have made in securing the announcement that the contribution increase would not be imposed on Scottish local government workers, we know that proposals contained in the Hutton review will have a detrimental effect on us.

The Branch has been preparing for action and a series of meetings have been arranged (details inside) to brief you and answer your questions.

It is important to achieve a significant turnout in this ballot to demonstrate our opposition and anger at the UK Government's sustained attacks on our members.

WHY SHOULD YOU STRIKE?

Your pension is under attack not because your scheme is unaffordable or even because people are living longer, it's to pay for an irresponsible banking system.

That's why we are asking you to vote for strike action to protect your pension.

The UK Government has already cut the value of your pension when you retire by around 15% by changing the way inflation is measured from RPI to CPI.

Following a strong campaign by UNISON members, the Scottish Government has said it will not impose the UK Government's plan to increase contributions by an average 50% - we welcome that.

However, they have not given us clear assurances that other changes, initiated by the UK Government, will not happen in the Local Government Pension Scheme in Scotland. These include:

- Working longer so that by 2020 you will need to be 66 to collect your pension - this is going to rise to 68 later.
- Changing the way pension benefits are calculated so you will get a smaller pension on retirement.

UNISON is concerned that the UK Government could use its budgetary powers and/or UK legislation to force changes to your pension in Scotland.

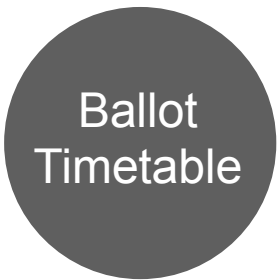
This affects council workers, SEPA and other non-departmental public bodies, Scottish Water, Police staff, school workers, members in the community and voluntary sector, people working in Higher and Further education and many more.

These are the very same public sector workers already suffering a pay freeze, redundancies, cuts in pay and conditions and cuts in the services they deliver.

This attack on your pension is the final straw. We need to take a stand across the UK to say **ENOUGH is ENOUGH.**

**VOTE
YES X
TO PROTECT
YOUR PENSION**

WORK LONGER FOR LESS? YOU DECIDE!



Tuesday 11 October

You will receive your ballot paper from this date onwards. Ensure you complete it and return it.

Monday 17 October

If you have not received your ballot paper by this date and you think you should be included in the ballot, you can contact our Ballot Helpline on **0845 355 0845**. You should do this before noon on Monday 31st October

Thursday 3 November

Ballot closes - result will be announced soon thereafter.

Wednesday 30 November

If members vote YES to industrial action, this will be the first day of action, starting at 00.01am and continuing for 24 hours but you should not take part in industrial action until called to do so by the union.

What are my rights if I go on strike?

Employees are protected from dismissal during the first 12 weeks of any lawful, balloted, official industrial action. During these 12 weeks the protection is absolute.

Any dismissal, regardless of how long the employee has worked, or their age, is automatically unfair unless a tribunal decides the dismissal was not to do with the industrial action.

If employers decide to deduct pay from those taking industrial action, the Branch will seek a local agreement that this is no more than one day's pay for one day's strike.

If you are absent on sick leave when a stoppage of work starts, you keep your statutory sick pay during the industrial action. If you report sick on the day action starts, the employer is likely to make their own judgement of whether you are on sick leave or strike.

UNISON does not regard anyone who takes annual leave on the strike day to be taking part in the strike.



← Branch members at the national march & rally London - March 2011

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RELATED ARTICLES VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.renfrewshireunison.org.uk

OR FOLLOW THE LINKS TO OUR SCOTTISH AND NATIONAL WEBSITES

Meetings of all members

Meetings have been arranged to brief members on the current dispute and to provide details of the ballot arrangements:

Johnstone

Tuesday 11 October 2011 at 12.15 pm

JOHNSTONE TOWN HALL

Paisley

Monday 10 October 2011 at 5.00pm

METHODIST HALLS, GAUZE STREET, PAISLEY

Tuesday 11 October 2011 at 12.15pm

**A Ballot "Surgery" will be also be held at the UNISON OFFICE
between 8.00am - 9.00am & 5.00pm-7.00pm
Monday 24th to Thursday 27th October 2011**

Pension Myths

MYTH - People are living longer which means they're claiming their pensions for longer - this needs to be addressed.

The schemes were revised to take account of this three years ago - so scheme benefits and costs are now 25% lower.

In addition, life expectancy has increased, but less so for manual workers and the low paid.

MYTH - Public services and public service pensions are causing the financial crisis.

It was the banking sector's reckless risk taking and excessive greed that caused this global recession.

MYTH - It's not fair, why should the public sector get good pensions when the private sector doesn't?

The average director of a FTSE 100 company has a final salary pension worth £3.6m or £174,963 a year, while the average occupational pension generally is £9,500 a year and the average public service pension is £7,800 a year. That's the real unfairness.

UNISON thinks everyone deserves an adequate pension, including workers in the private sector. We should improve bad schemes rather than make good ones bad.

Providing adequate pensions means that fewer people will be receiving welfare handouts after retirement, which would cost the taxpayer more money in the long run.



MYTH - Public sector workers have it too good with huge pensions.

The average public service pension is around £7,800 a year, for women working in local government the average is £2,800 a year, while the median for women working in the NHS is £3,500 a year: hardly huge pensions.

Saving towards an occupational pension in many cases means a person is receiving fewer welfare benefits during retirement, saving the taxpayer money.

MYTH - Taxpayers are paying for public service workers' pensions. That's not fair.

Everyone's taxes are used to pay for all public services - refuse collection, the salaries of classroom assistants, home carers and housing workers - to name a few - and part of these people's pay is their pension.

MYTH - Public service workers retire at 60.

The normal retirement age in many of the public service pension schemes is already 65.

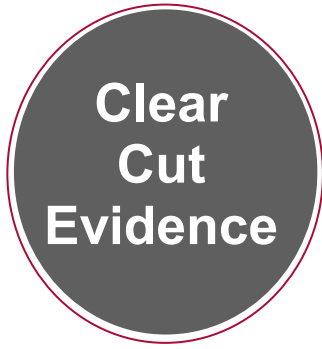
Raising the retirement age hurts some people more than others. In general we're living longer, but that doesn't mean everyone will have the same quality of life.

Many public service workers have jobs that are physically demanding or stressful, making it difficult or even impossible to continue working into old age. Similarly many low paid workers simply don't have the option of retiring early because they can't afford it.

CONTINUED ATTACKS ON WORKERS

- **Group Life Scheme Abolished**
- **Travel Pass agreement not being honoured**
- **Staff Car Parking Charges Introduced**
- **Increasing Levels of Workload and Stress**
- **Changes To Working Patterns**
- **What next?**

Any colleague who is not already a member of UNISON can join through our branch office or by downloading an application form at www.unison.org.uk



KNOW

Kids Need Our Ward

A campaign is under way to stop the proposed closure by Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board of the kids ward at the RAH in Paisley. UNISON and EIS have representatives on the Steering Group which is driving the campaign forward. Please sign the petition at <http://ignon.org/sign/save-rah-kids-ward> or contact us on kidsneedourward@hotmail.co.uk.

Our children in Renfrewshire should not have to suffer in what is a budget driven exercise.

CONTACT US:

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In Your Department

Politicians say no cuts are being made to front line services. In our departments, the impact on members and the public is clear:

Environmental Services

25% reduction in grounds maintenance, street cleaning. Waste collection, janitorial services rationalised. Cleaning staff reduction of 25%. Community safety reviewed with focus switch from community involvement to enforcement.

Education & Leisure

Increases in hall charges for leisure activities and events. After school care services affected. Classroom assistant numbers reduced.

Social Work

Serious reductions in service provision with some home care clients "tucked in" as early as 5.00pm! Charges applied for transport to day care establishments.

Reid Kerr College

Reduction in the number of evening courses offered. Vacancies remain unfilled and temporary staff are not having their contracts renewed.

Agency Workers and Consultants

There has been a marked increase in the use of agency workers. Members are asked to report any instances to the Branch to assist us in collating accurate information. We already have examples of agency staff not being disclosure checked, leaving premises unsecured, etc. UNISON's view is that the employment of agency workers demonstrates that in many services understaffing is a serious issue.

Consultants continue to be employed in an effort to reduce costs - in many instances the cost of employing these individuals could exceed the savings eventually made!



UNISONwelfare

Registered Charity No. 1023552

As the impact of the Con/Dem cuts continue to bite, UNISON Welfare is facing a huge rise in demand for help.

A recent fund established to help UNISON members who were having difficulty paying for new school uniforms for their children was met with unprecedented demand.

It is an outrage that UNISON members who are working hard to deliver quality public services are having to access help to provide for a basic living expense. What would happen if we as a Union were unable to offer this and many other forms of financial support to our members? The financial crisis was not of our making and our members should not be paying for it.

Child poverty in Scotland has risen dramatically and now stands at 1 in 4, a disgrace in a modern civilised society. We must do all we can to ensure that the gap between rich and poor does not further widen.

UNISON Welfare offers a full range of advice on financial matters, debt advice, wellbeing breaks and support.

OUR BRANCH WELFARE OFFICER, JEAN CHALMERS, CAN BE CONTACTED FOR ASSISTANCE AND CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE ON WELFARE MATTERS - Telephone Branch Office on 0141 847 1687