

# Up 2 Date with UNISON



## CUTS SPECIAL - AUTUMN 2010

### A message from Mark Ferguson, Renfrewshire Branch Secretary



Colleagues, we are facing unprecedented cuts in jobs and services as part of the Council Budget for 2010/ 2011 with further cuts predicted.

The political decisions being taken will impact not only on our members but our communities. The branch is preparing to work alongside local organisations and community groups to prevent our services from being decimated.

The STUC are holding a **March & Rally on Saturday 23rd October 2010 in Edinburgh** to coincide with the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement.

I would encourage all members to participate and take up places on our free transport for the event.

Members must ensure that they highlight the many consequences of the cuts that are being announced.

The Employers' position to impose pay for the next 3 years is irresponsible and unnecessary and will not help maintain good industrial relations through these difficult times.

UNISON continues to raise concerns about the local Job Evaluation process and we have engaged an independent expert to provide comment/advice on some of the outcomes. We are hoping to reach a conclusion for outstanding cases and a referral to the Joint Secretaries may be required should we be unable to deal with the matter locally.

**STAND UP FOR OUR COMMUNITIES!**



Throughout the summer members were consulted on an offer from the Employers of 1% for 2010, 0% for 2011 and 0.5% 2012.

This offer was rejected by 80% of those voting and the other unions delivered similar outcomes from their consultations.

We tried to re-open negotiations around the offer but the Employers refused and decided to impose 0.65% this year with no award for the next two years!

UNISON's Scottish Local Government Conference agreed the following steps:

- **Lodge a formal dispute with CoSLA to enable the matter of the imposition and the award to be referred to ACAS for arbitration.**
- **Consult with branches during September regarding an industrial action strategy that would consider all options up to and including strike action - this could include targeting selected Chief Executives/Council Leaders on a name and shame basis.**
- **Encourage branches to target key local events**

**BRANCH CONSULTATIONS RUNS TO THE END OF SEPTEMBER WITH COMMENTS BEING REPORTED BACK TO A RECALL LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE ON 5TH OCTOBER 2010 - ADVISE YOUR LOCAL STEWARD OF YOUR VIEWS E-MAIL US AT THE BRANCH OFFICE**

**REMEMBER - 0.65% = £65 OVER 3 YEARS FOR SOMEONE EARNING £10,000!**



The UNISON grievance lodged in February still hasn't been heard despite the Council Leader making reference to it twice in the chamber.

A decision has been taken, following legal advice, to pursue the matter to Employment Tribunal to establish that the group life scheme is a contractual right and therefore hasn't been removed as appropriate notice wasn't served.

At the Branch Development Event we will ask Councillor Derek MacKay, Leader of the Council, to receive our petition and take questions on this and other matters.

Members will be kept up to date with developments.

DEEP, SAVAGE AND  
IMMEDIATE  
**CUTS**  
ARE NOT  
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THEY ARE IDEOLOGICAL  
THEIR CUTS WILL  
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**CUTS IN**  
PUBLIC SPENDING  
WILL THREATEN  
**RECOVERY,**  
**FORCE UP**  
UNEMPLOYMENT  
**AND WRECK**  
**OUR ECONOMY**  
**AND OUR SERVICES**

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**The library service has been hit with massive cuts to its staffing levels following a service review which was passed by the Community and Family Care Policy Board on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010.**

There was no meaningful consultation prior to the review. Many jobs are being lost including librarians with many years of experience. A policy of "lone working" is also being imposed in some libraries.

The current establishment of 15 librarians is being cut to 8. A post of library outreach officer who organises computer based learning programmes has also been deleted. Librarians and assistant librarians have all obtained a degree in librarianship/information studies and bring skills and knowledge to the job.

Librarians' specialist roles include promoting literacy, preserving local history materials, offering life long learning opportunities and working within schools and local communities. We want to ensure our libraries remain a vibrant and welcoming part of your community.

The UNISON report "Taking stock: the future of our public library service" says that "Skills possessed by qualified librarians should be valued and deployed effectively, rather than regarded as an unfortunate overhead". It is hard to see how the review will "provide a more focused, integrated and efficient service delivery" to the public, as the board report says.

The imposition of lone working in libraries will mean cutting 8 library assistant posts. There are serious concerns about the wellbeing of library staff and members of the public with the introduction of this new policy. Recently an armed thief held up the staff in the mobile library at knife-point while he stole a computer. Library staff have reported many incidents of violence and aggression including sexual harassment and racist abuse. This policy also contradicts "A safe place for children – guidelines to promote a safe environment in Renfrewshire Libraries" which require at least 2 members of staff present when children are using the library.

The cuts announced this year also include posts being lost within the arts and museum service and amount to a staggering £299,000. The library service has been seen as an easy target for savings and has already suffered from lack of investment and staff cuts for many years. Only two years ago four community libraries were shut in Bargarran, Elderslie, Gallowhill and Todholm despite community campaigns to keep these libraries open. The service is being torn apart.

UNISON strongly opposes the library review and will do all it can to protect the interests of the staff directly affected by the proposals, and continue to speak up for our libraries and the valuable service they provide.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES** staff have been briefed about possible target areas for cuts.

Although the department has engaged a firm of consultants, Turner & Townsend, to look at service delivery in many strands of the service, it remains unclear what changes will emerge. Many staff within the Department have applied for VR/VER, but remain uncertain of their future. UNISON is urging all departments to provide detailed information to allow members to make an informed decision. The Department have also undertaken a long awaited review of the Janitorial Service in schools. UNISON is still unclear as to how the current proposals would operate. Our major concern is that Janitors have not yet been notified of their Job Evaluation Appeal outcome - the only group of employees in the Council in this position!



## Outsourcing

Some Council Departments, in line with a decision taken at the budget 2010/11 meeting in January, have been testing the market to ensure value for money. UNISON has had some discussions with both the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council who have advised that it is not their wish for services to be externalised, however they may need to consider this option in some instances.

At UNISON's request it has been agreed that, in every case where this is being considered, an in-house bid will be put together with our involvement.

In recent weeks we have already seen the collapse of Connaught, contractor to many public service providers including Renfrewshire Council - this proves that privatisation is not always the best or cheapest option.

**Strategy Conference** UNISON organised a hugely successful conference on 4 September 2010 attended by over 270 delegates from trade unions, community groups, and other campaigning groups.

The conference heard from Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary and Stephen Boyd, Assist. Secretary of the STUC. Dave Prentis focused on the need for investment in public services for stability in the economy and job creation. UNISON has also published an 'Alternative Budget' to counter the current Government's position. The STUC campaign maintains that there is an alternative to the cuts strategy as outlined in their website [thereisabetterway.org](http://thereisabetterway.org)

The Government Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on 20 October 2010 has the potential to lead to more cuts, job losses and massive reduction in services which we should resist at every opportunity.

The Conference gathered information and ideas in an attempt to create a cohesive strategy in our fight against the cuts. Public sectors workers have a responsibility to raise awareness of the severe impact of the cuts in our communities.

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**Finance & IT** As part of the cut backs, the department has now merged with Corporate Services.

UNISON stewards and officials attended the inaugural liaison meeting with the Director and other senior management in August and will continue to do so at regular intervals on behalf of our members.

A number of restructures are underway in what was the Finance & IT Department, including the now complete "Centralisation of IT" project affecting all Departments.

Proposals to extend support hours for 3 business units – to coincide with operating hours in other sections (8am – 6pm)- are being finalised. These proposal affect 104 members of staff and negotiations continue.

[www.renfrewshireunison.org.uk](http://www.renfrewshireunison.org.uk)

**Home Care in Renfrewshire is facing major changes in response to the financial crisis, which may see front line services to clients reduced.**

Staffing at present levels cannot be maintained on current budgets and managers are reviewing the status of those on temporary contracts and the numbers that may be allowed to leave on voluntary redundancy and retirement packages. Remaining staff face an uncertain future as the level of care bought in from the private sector is considered.

A board report in August 2010 decided to reduce the number of elderly and vulnerable people eligible for community care services. Only those assessed to be in the 'Critical' and 'Substantial' categories of risk will now automatically receive support. Those who previously received care under the category of 'moderate' risk will now only qualify 'as resources allow' which in the current climate may be less and less frequently.

Home Care, which was under review long before the financial crisis, may also be subject to significant structural change. A 'Re-ablement Service' will be set up which will provide service in shorter, more intense periods designed to rehabilitate clients and prevent the need for long term care. The mainstream, longer term services provided by the rest of homecare will be under review and the proportion that is provided by the council and bought in from the private sector may well change.

UNISON continues to negotiate on behalf of staff whose work patterns are expected to change.

## RLL Update

The branch continues to work with RLL on developing a process for Job Evaluation which includes ensuring that any scheme is equal pay proof and fair.

We have prepared a response to the proposed appeals procedure and nominated individuals who will work alongside RLL management to ensure that the entire evaluation process is fairly applied.

UNISON has been contacted by RLL Management requesting a meeting to further discuss Terms & Conditions. Members will be kept up to date with any developments.

I would remind members that no agreement will be reached until you have been fully consulted and prior approval is received from UNISON's National Office.

## Branch Development 2010

The annual Branch Development Event will take place in late October bringing together all our local activists to prepare for the year ahead.

The agenda will be heavily dominated by the cuts in local government and our response to this unacceptable situation. A number of activities will include political engagement, cross service group working with health colleagues and engaging our communities in protecting their services.

The event will also have various speakers: Rodney Bickerstaffe – Former General Secretary of UNISON, Councillor Derek Mackay – Leader of Renfrewshire Council, Katy Clark – MP and Renfrewshire Chief Executive, David Martin, will address a separate meeting of branch officers about the proposed cuts.

### Matt Smith, Regional Secretary

Following a long and distinguished career as UNISON Scottish Secretary, Matt will be retiring at the end of this year. The Branch wish him a long and happy retirement and thank him for his support and advice over the years. Also retiring are Barbara Fulton (East Renfrewshire) and Bob Revie (Aberdeenshire) long time members of the Scottish LG Committee.

**There is a Better Way  
MARCH & RALLY**

**SATURDAY 23 OCTOBER  
EDINBURGH**

**FREE  
TRANSPORT  
CALL US TO  
BOOK**

- 9.00am: Buses Depart Paisley Town Hall**  
**11.00am: Assemble East Market St.**  
**11.30am: March off**  
**12.30pm: Rally Ross Bandstand**

## UNISON SCOTLAND & NATIONAL NEWS

The branch has representation at both National and Regional Level within UNISON. Mark Ferguson, Branch Secretary, was re-elected to the Scottish Local Government Committee (SLGC), Scottish Committee and National Local Government Service Group Executive. Mark was also elected vice-chair of the (SLGC).

Jean Chalmers – Branch Welfare Officer was re-elected to the Scottish Welfare Committee.

## Classroom Assistants

**The recent re-grading of the SEN Post has raised a number of unresolved issues.**

UNISON met with the Department in 2004 to discuss the roles of both CASEN and SEN with a view to establishing a generic profile which would eliminate a number of anomalies. We again met with the Employer in 2007 around the time of the publication of the Equality & Human Rights Commission Report "Valuable Assets" containing 10 key areas of concern, mainly around lack of career prospects and low pay. Renfrewshire Council's decision to re-grade only the SEN role without considering all the key areas is of concern to us and has resulted in confusion, anxiety and discontent amongst our members.

Mark Ferguson, Branch Secretary, has written to the Director requesting an urgent meeting and we may consider referring the matter back to the EHRC should these concerns remain unaddressed.

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