



UNISON
Scotland

Local
Government
Network

for people who care about local government

Issue 15 – May 2016

Local Government Reform

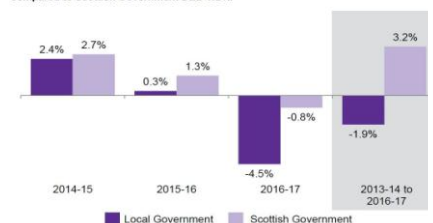
While we await the new Scottish Government's legislative programme, it seems clear that local government is in for a period of further reform. Reviews are promised of the structure of health boards and councils, together with new regional education bodies with more finance going directly to schools. There are also proposals to allow community councils to run some services and 1% of council budgets devoted to community budgeting. With education and social work going elsewhere; leisure and housing has already largely gone arms length - councils could be left running very little. You can read an analysis of the prospects for changing public services in Scotland [here](#).

It doesn't have to be this way. There are alternative [visions](#) for strengthening local democracy, but this requires the local government family to make a positive case for local accountability and develop new responses.

Financing Local Government

This year's budget allocation was the toughest for a long time and as this chart shows, it's councils that are bearing the brunt of austerity. 87% of public sector job losses since the crash have been in councils. The new Government's proposed changes to the Council Tax offers around £100m more from next year, with the ending of the freeze, albeit with a 3% cap, and changes to the bands. However, UK spending cuts continue next year, so the Scottish budget struggle again. Councils could also help themselves by reviewing their finances. We published some ideas on this last year and followed it up with a [toolkit](#), that includes questions and checklists.

Figure 2 – historic local government settlements since police and fire transfers, compared to Scottish Government DEL+NDRI



In Brief.....

The latest in our 'Damage' series, '[Growing Pains](#)', looks at youth work. Staff highlight the impact of cuts to the service. Research shows the preventative benefits of youth work delivers £7 of value for every £1 invested.

UNISON has published a [briefing](#) on the new statutory procurement guidance. This shows how councils can use procurement to support wage growth, help tackle climate change and support the local economy.

We commissioned IPPR to look at the impact of low wage growth. They [found](#) that below inflation pay rises cost the Scottish economy £11.6bn. They also showed that public sector pay, actually costs half the headline costings.

Congratulations to Kevin Stewart MSP the new Minister for Local Government and Housing. One of the more challenging ministerial portfolios, but he does at least know a lot about the sector.

For more information please contact UNISON's Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2811, or email [Dave Watson](#), Scottish Organiser.

bargaining &
Campaigns
team

Follow us on

