



16th March 2018

Open Letter to:

Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive, Argyll & Bute Council
Christina West, Chief Officer, Argyll & Bute HSCP
Elaine Mead, Chief Executive, NHS Highland
Councillor Aileen Morton, Leader, Argyll & Bute Council
David Alston, Chair NHS Highland
Robin Creelman, Chair, Integrated Joint Board
Councillor Kieron Green, Vice Chair, Integrated Joint Board

C.c. to:

Argyll & Bute Council Elected Members
Mike Russell MSP
Jackie Baillie MSP
Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister
Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport
UNISON Members in Argyll & Bute

Dear Public Sector Leader

UNISON OPPOSITION TO 400 REDUNDANCIES AND SLASH & BURN APPROACH TO SERVICES

On the 28th of March the Argyll & Bute Integrated Joint Board is due to meet and discuss the Quality & Finance Plan for 2018/19 and beyond i.e. determine the budget. It is our understanding consideration is being given to a massive range of cuts and privatisation. We therefore want to be clear in advance that this will be met with outright opposition by UNISON. We also understand that some of the deliberation on this is to be conducted in private so as the public are prevented from scrutinising deliberations about their services.

UNISON knows only too well the impact of austerity on our public services and has been at the forefront of campaigning for a change in economic approach at Westminster and Holyrood. Thirty thousand jobs have gone in Scottish local government alone since the crash. Our members are dealing day in and day out with the effects of the cuts – keeping overstretched services going as demand rises and the workforce declines. All whilst their own standard of living has been reduced by year on year pay cuts. UNISON has never known so many applications to our own welfare from members struggling to make ends meet.

So we recognise the financial pressure on the IJB and the budget shortfall but we will not stand by and let this be paid for by jobs and services.

In the last year and a half we have seen failings in the voluntary and private sector in Argyll & Bute:

- CrossReach pulling out of Auchinlee after very significant failure of care to elderly residents;
- MandJ Care going bust;
- Mears handing back contracts;
- A crisis in private and voluntary sector home care in Oban;
- The closure of the Craigard private care home on Bute over safety fears;

On every occasion it has been the public sector that has stepped in to pick up the pieces and resolve these issues. As the collapse of Carillion shows the public sector is the ultimate guarantor of public services. In such a climate what is needed in Argyll and Bute is more of a mixed economy; far more care at home services should be delivered by staff directly employed by the IJB. Instead the IJB is to be asked to privatise all remaining in-house home care services. Resulting in decent public sector jobs being lost in vulnerable rural communities, storing up problems for years to come as workers will be left in retirement poverty through lack of access to secure public sector pension schemes.

We know terms and conditions of employment for care workers are less in the private and voluntary sector than those in the public sector. UNISON through our [Ethical Care Charter](#), which sets out minimum standards for care and base level employment rights for workers, have been trying to address this. So far NHS Highland and Argyll & Bute Council have failed to join the many other public sector organisations that have signed up to the charter.

Cutting care homes, learning disability day centres and closing wards to relocate workers from the collapsing Aros building in to a PFI ward, to mention just some of the cuts, is not the actions of a credible public service and is crisis management. We call on you as senior figures to stop these devastating cuts – 400 jobs and huge service withdrawals. We need to lobby for more funding for our public services and look at further creative ways of being more efficient/doing things better. UNISON has shown repeatedly in the past that we will engage constructively with the public sector to achieve changes; we did through the council's Service Choices exercise and helped in the establishment of the IJB itself. We stand ready to work with you and our communities to find a way forward.

We would far rather work together but we must be clear we will not stand by and see our members made redundant or privatised and the services they deliver and rely on slashed. There is another way, let's work together to achieve it.

Yours sincerely

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