

### Cuts to Local Government are Unsustainable

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Public expenditure in Scotland faces year-on-year real term reductions. By 2020 it will be 12.5% lower in real terms than when the Conservatives came to power in 2010. This is the equivalent of one pound in every eight being cut by 2020. There are also further commitments on Scotland's public services including around £250m in payroll costs due to the UK government increase in National Insurance contributions.

The decisions made by the Scottish Government mean that Local government is bearing the brunt of the cuts to public sector budgets. Of the 50,000 jobs cut in the public sector 40,000 have been in local Government. The next round of cuts will be worse for local government with at least another 15,000 jobs under threat. While redundancy has been voluntary work doesn't disappear and the remaining staff have had to take on extra work while services are salami sliced. These reports [detail the impact on services](#). This is no longer sustainable.

The Christie Commission highlighted the need for public sector reform to be both bottom up and to focus on prevention rather than cure. "Preventative spend" means that people avoid problems rather than treating them down road. This is how we will make savings on budgets like health, police, criminal justice and social work. Local government is the key delivery body for preventative services. Services like refuse collection, street cleaning, and environmental health directly ensure that we avoid ill health by removing the sources of disease from our communities

Sports centres, parks, and allotments offer free or inexpensive routes for people to keep fit, active and healthy no matter their age or ability. Local government also delivers direct health and care services: Housing is also a key health service. A decent safe secure affordable home is vital to both mental and physical health. Education one of the highest profile local government services: As well as teaching the subjects children need to pass exams and get jobs, schools deliver a range of health and relationships education. Schools are also the gateway to a range of other agencies which can support families like educational psychologists and social workers. More information on the importance of local government is available [here](#)

The council tax freeze will soon be in its ninth year. It is still in place because the Scottish Government's planned replacement for the Council Tax, a Local Income Tax, was abandoned. There has been a lot of confusion around funding of the freeze and the impact on local government budgets. This [briefing](#) clarifies the situation. Local authorities need to be able to make their own decisions about council tax rates without the threat of losing more money. Moving forward we need agreement on a new tax. The options are set out in the recent [report](#) of the Local taxation Commission. UNISON's position is set out in our [evidence](#) and in [this briefing](#) .

Local Government provides vital services and the Scottish Government needs to use all its powers to provide funding for those services.

#### Useful links

- [UNISON Scotland website](#)
- [UNISON Scotland Campaign for Public Services](#)

For further information contact [Kay Sillars](#) Bargaining and Campaigns Team on 0141 342 2819.

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