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Scotland *in* UNISON

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Standing up for local services

by John Stevenson

SiU editor

UNISON branches across Scotland stood up to challenge another round of cuts to local services as councils set their budgets in February.

Some last minute Scottish government money reduced the cuts a bit and led to many councils boasting of improvements to services but UNISON members who deliver those services know the truth of cuts behind the spin.

And they made sure the effects of those cuts were heard.

Councils across Scotland saw a funding cut of £153m effectively reduced to £80m but that is only part of the story.

It has been billed as a standstill budget but COSLA calculates that that councils actually need another £543m to stand still taking into account inflation and unavoidable commitments like the growing need for care (see detailed briefings on our website).

With some council budget meetings falling around St Valentine's Day, many branches capitalised on that theme in their campaigns.

Call to value our work

In Aberdeenshire - where the council faces up to £20m in cuts - UNISON called on the Scottish government to "Be our Valentine" and love their council staff and services as they delivered a Valentine's Day card to Gillian Martin, MSP.

It called on all local SNP MSPs to support an increase in funding for council services and to give council staff a decent pay rise.

The card had been signed by UNISON members in the council and members of the public.

Branch vice-chair Steve Gray said: "We have been told by the Scottish government that public service workers will get a 3% pay



West Lothian



Dundee



Aberdeenshire



Edinburgh



Moray

rise but they have not given councils the money to fund this.

"Even with the additional funding there is a shortfall of £80 million across Scotland. This is not good enough!

"We are asking the SNP government to value our council services and the workers who deliver them and to recognise the importance of the work we do for all our citizens, but especially the most vulnerable."

We will hold to account

Moray faces £7m in cuts and UNISON held a 'Show Your Love for Public Services' lobby of the council meeting on 14 February after a public event on 10 February where people signed the branch's Valentine's Day Card.

Branch secretary Suzanne Wright said: "I'm so proud of all the Moray UNISON members who turned out to demonstrate

today and who have campaigned tirelessly over the last few weeks, not only to protect their own jobs, but because they care passionately about what they do and the services they deliver. They have been inspiring.

She promised that Moray UNISON "will be holding this administration to account."

In West Lothian, where cuts could reach £65m in the next five years, UNISON treasurer Catrina Warren told a lobby of the council: "These services and jobs are crucial for the delivery of education, social care, home care, cleansing, community safety and the many other vital services provided by the council. Enough is enough.

"These services are at the heart of our community. And the community cannot function without its heart."

Dundee members turned out on 22 February to protest against

£25m in cuts to jobs and services.

Branch chair Margaret McGuire told the council's budget meeting there had been a lack of detail and consultation on the effects on workforce when more cuts are voted through.

Thank unions for beating privatisation

Edinburgh UNISON members joined other unions and community groups on 22 February to lobby against an expected £150million in cuts over the next five years.

Branch president John Stevenson told STV news this was a 'silent slaughter' of local services.

Branch secretary Tom Connolly won applause from some councillors when he told the council meeting: "The council should thank the unions for Our City's Not For Sale campaign



Assemble Holland St Glasgow at 11.30 17 March then march to George Square rally.

Glasgow will join cities around the world to mark UN Anti-Racism Day on 17 March. The Stand Up To Racism event is backed by UNISON, EIS and the STUC.

If we are to defeat the rise of racism, we need a united movement of everyone who opposes it.

The #MarchAgainstRacism is a chance for us to stand together and show we will not be silent. Let's make Glasgow's 2018 march the biggest yet.

beating privatisation or we'd be sitting here today with somebody like Carillion."

Glasgow UNISON members lobbied for a 'no cuts' budget.

The union was angry at not being briefed on the budget beforehand which was 'unique and unacceptable.'

On Facebook, the branch welcomed some longer term plans like bringing arms-length operations back in-house but slammed the immediate cuts:

"UNISON's initial assessment is that this is another cuts budget with £10m being cut from social work and further cuts though the usual management speak of LEAN, service reform and efficiency plans.

"Year on year increases in charges for nurseries, car parking, funerals and leisure continue. So in that respect it's....new boss, same as the old boss."

Call for Israel to stop imprisoning children

UNISON's Scottish Council of branches has called on the Scottish Committee, Labour Link and every branch to take action to press the government of Israel to end the widespread and systemic human rights violations suffered by Palestinian children in Israeli military custody.



Ann Gray

Moving the motion, Aberdeenshire's Ann Gray told delegates: "Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts – between 500 and 700 each year and since 2012, Israel has held an average of 204 Palestinian children in custody each month, according to data provided by the Israel Prison Service."

To a hushed and attentive hall, clearly moved by her measured speech, Anne said: "Can you imagine our 12 year olds being treated like that? Our children and grandchildren taken away by soldiers and held in prison, without us having any access to them?"

"We would be incensed and distraught and we should be no less enraged that this is happening day in and day out to the children of Palestine.

"And why? Most face the charge of throwing stones – yes throwing stones – which carries a maximum sentence of 10 or 20 years depending upon the circumstances."

Ann spoke about the situation of Ahd Tamimi, held in detention since December for slapping a soldier who came into her garden. "Expressing her anger at the shooting of her cousin. And for that she faces years of imprisonment," said Ann.

"Yet so far the response from our government has been woeful.

"Well that's just not good enough," slammed Ann. "We need to spur them into action. We need to insist that the rights we expect for our children, the rights that are accorded to Israeli children are also given to Palestinian children like Ahd Tamimi and all the other Palestinian child prisoners."

You can add your voice to the call to free Ahd Tamimi and other Palestinian child prisoners at https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/free_ahed_global_loc/

Cuts failing pupils with additional needs

In a submission to the Scottish government on children with additional support needs, UNISON says schools are struggling to meet those needs because of budget cuts.

"Our members are clear that currently we are not getting it right for children with additional support needs," says the submission.

"Visions and principles are easy to publish. Delivering the change we all support needs appropriate funding for both the day to day delivery of those services and for training and professional development for all the staff working with those children."

International appeal for Sao Paulo union resource centre

Following the success of UNISON's Scottish International Committee delegation to Brazil in 2017, it has launched an appeal to raise £5,000 for a trade union resource centre there.

The local women from the FERAESP union (Federation of Rural Workers of the State of Sao Paulo) told the delegation that support for building and

resourcing a union centre in Descalvado settlement would be incredibly helpful.

In June 2017 Kaila McCulloch and Louise Giblin, both members of the International Committee living in Shetland, went on a delegation to the State of Sao Paulo in Brazil.

Both have strong environmental backgrounds, Louise as an environment

protection officer, for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Kaila has studied sustainable rural development.

The delegation came about via contact between UNISON Scotland and the Human Resource Management Department of the University of Strathclyde.

Dr Brian Garvey and colleagues at the university have built up links with the

University of Sao Paulo and, through them, FERAESP.

UNISON branches are invited to make a donation of £100 (more if you can). If all branches do so, we would easily reach the target.

See more details and donate via the link at www.unison-scotland.org/international/ and see the delegation's blog at www.unison-scotland.org/brazil-blog/

Glasgow women lead 'long march for equality'



Original photo: Peter Hunter

by Brian Smith
Glasgow City Branch

Six hundred union members and supporters marched in Glasgow on Saturday 10 February, continuing their demand for equal pay.

The march was led by 30 UNISON women dressed as suffragettes - with a nod to the 100th anniversary of women (over 30) getting the vote.

The women are part of UNISON's equal pay campaign.

Having won their legal case they are now demanding a fair and transparent pay and

grading scheme and full compensation for the pay they have been denied.

UNISON recently won their legal case and Glasgow City Council agreed not to appeal against a court decision last year over their grading system. Glasgow City Council has agreed to "negotiation not litigation" and to discuss a settlement with UNISON and other trade unions.

UNISON Glasgow City branch chairperson Carol Ball said: "This is not about robbing Peter to pay Pauline. It's about equality and justice.

"We must focus on

delivering equal pay now and in the future.

"The council did not want to pay the cost of equality in 2006 and ordinary working people of Glasgow should not have to pay the price of inequality with loss of jobs and services."

"This will be one of the largest re-distributions of wealth in the history of Glasgow.

"We are rightly putting money in the pockets of Glasgow's low paid women. But our fight for equality is far from over.

"There is plenty of money in society, it's just in the wrong hands and the people of Glasgow shouldn't have to pay

twice for this injustice. The long march for equality will continue."

• The members penned a number of chants for the march including this gem to the tune of 'I Belong to Glasgow':

*I belong to Glasgow
Dear old Glasgow toon
I'm only looking for equal pay
So please don't bring us down
We're only the common old working class
Who want the best for our weans
Come on Glasgow City Council
Free us from these chains*

Planning: Resources needed, not reorganisation

In its evidence to the Scottish government's proposed Planning Bill, UNISON Scotland has warned that it is resources that are needed, not reorganisation.

The government states that: "The planning system supports the Scottish government's purpose of creating a more successful country with

opportunities for all to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth."

UNISON warns: "This suggests that planning must focus on economic development rather than community development.

"While the two are linked it should be made clearer that planning is about making lives better for people not

businesses."

"It has been clear from the beginning that the regulatory reform programme was aiming for less regulation in response to complaints from businesses.

"There is no evidence that regulation is harming businesses", says the submission.

Despite this the Scottish government is undertaking a

second radical reform of the planning system despite doing so as recently as 2009.

"Delays in the system are caused by severe cuts to planning budgets and staff shortages. It is resources they need not reorganisation", says UNISON.

See the full submission on this and many other issues on the website.

Survey and action to build on pay campaign

Local government members are being urged to complete an online survey on pay before 16 March.

A response from the employers is expected at the end of March to the claim for a £1,500 flat rate increase to all spinal column points, or 6.5%, whichever is greater (based on a 37 hour working week). This includes an above inflation increase plus an element of

restoration of our pay lost over the past 10 years of pay freezes and rises below inflation.

The rise should be applied after the Scottish Local Government Living Wage increase has taken effect.

Members are also being urged to:-

- circulate the online briefing to fellow members and colleagues so they know what the union is doing to fight for better pay
- recruit a friend to the union -



our strength is our members and the more of them we have the stronger our position in negotiations.

- write to their local MSP about local government funding.
- speak to your local UNISON branch and let them know

you are willing to help - many hands make light work!

Remember, rumours of a 3% pay rise for Scottish council workers are not true. The agreement between the SNP and Greens only applies to workers in areas like the civil service and NHS. So council workers need to be campaigning now.

Full details about the claim and updates are on the website at www.unison-scotland.org.

Public delivery best for child care

UNISON has responded to a joint report by the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission which warns of "significant risks" to delivering early learning and childcare plans by 2020.

Carol Ball convener of UNISON's education issues group said: "UNISON members who deliver early learning and childcare have been saying promises of free expansion must be accompanied by commitments for investment in better buildings, more staff and quality staff training.

"Currently Scotland's childcare provision is patchy, complex and expensive.

"We need a radical overhaul of childcare provision to ensure that we provide high quality, affordable, safe and nurturing environment for children.

"Public delivery is the most cost effective way forward. It is where we are best able to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive service.

"It also makes it easier to ensure that the workforce is properly paid and well qualified."

Mobile advice centre is first in the UK

UNISON has launched a new face-to-face advice service for employees working in care homes, GP practices or out in the community.

The mobile advice unit – a custom-made vehicle with an office and internet access – is the brainchild of Lothian Health branch and will cover workplaces in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

The mobile unit is expected to help thousands of workers who don't have a physical union presence at work.

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis launched the initiative, the first of its kind in the UK, at UNISON Lothian Health's AGM on 23 February.

Dave said: "This mobile advice unit is good news for workers, whether they're in a union or thinking of joining one. It means someone will be available to advise them whenever they need it.

"Workers in the community can often feel left out and isolated so we're hoping to reconnect with them and ensure they receive the help they need in these challenging times."

Chair of UNISON Scotland's health committee Tam Waterson said: "Too many workers in the community are currently missing out on union advice, partly because of the hours they work and the nature of their jobs. We're



UNISON President Margaret McKee, Lothian Health's Tam Waterson, general secretary Dave Prentis and assistant general secretary Christina McAnea launch the van. Inset: The mobile centre with Lothian Health's Derek Durkin.

addressing this issue by bringing advice straight to them.

"Having a visible presence means workers will feel supported and reassured that their best interests are being looked after by their union."

Dave Prentis added: "Lothian Health branch – ably led by Jane (Anderson) and Tam - are a credit to our union."

On his visit to Edinburgh, Dave visited three hospitals covered by the branch.

He said: "Each had a well-placed, visible and thriving UNISON resource centre at its heart. Each had someone for members to go to receive support from their union. And every single one helped make our union a part of the lives of

our members and their workplaces."

Dave also seemed impressed with the launch as a UNISON pipe band led out the ribboned UNISON van to present it to members at the AGM.

He tweeted: "UNISON Lothian Health branch know how to make an appearance - and an announcement!"

Ambition needed to end fuel poverty

Around one third of households in Scotland suffer from fuel poverty. A shocking statistic for a wealthy country that has an abundance of energy resources. A warm, dry home should be a basic right.

That is why UNISON's response to a Scottish government consultation makes the case for a more ambitious plan that eliminates fuel poverty as quickly as possible.

UNISON Scotland is also working with the Keeping Scotland Warm campaign, Energy Action Scotland and National Grid, to take practical action to reduce the impact of fuel poverty. More details on the website.

BIELD home closures UNISON backs families

UNISON, the largest union in Bield Housing, is taking the campaign against closures a step forward by supporting the families' campaign to keep this closure programme in public eye.

After a public meeting in January, it aims to continue the debate about elderly care provision, the role of the integrated joint boards and commissioning to the third and not-for-profit sector.

Young members aim to organise

by Wendy Hudson

Area organiser

UNISON Scotland Young Members gathered for their annual development weekend at Stirling University.

Representing 10 different branches, from Orkney to the Borders, they undertook a number of workshops.

Topics included the Role of the Young Members' Officer, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Photography, and Delivering a Speech with Confidence.

Campaign objectives for the next year were discussed, with the focus

being turned to activating current young members.

The committee also held their AGM where Danielle Graham from Gas Branch Scotland was elected the new chair of the committee, with Ryan McLaughlin from Orkney Health elected vice chair.

The committee will next meet in Milton Keynes in June, at the National Young Members Weekend.

If you are under 27 and would like to apply to attend, please contact Wendy Hudson on w.hudson@unison.co.uk



Communications awards celebrate campaigns, action and creativity

UNISON Scotland celebrated the great work done in newsheets, online presence, campaigns and recruitment at the annual Communications Awards presented at Scottish Council in February.

Announcing the awards, Communications and Campaigns Committee (CCC) vice-chair Jane Aitchison said: "How all branches and committees have managed to pack in so much, and such good communications work in the last year, I don't know."

Jane urged delegates to go to the exhibition of competition entries and see "the fantastic standard of work – loads of activists – and not just communications activists – out there involving, enthusing members, fighting for jobs, combating outsourcing threats, calling for better pay, protecting terms and conditions, and ensuring members' safety and wellbeing at work."

It was evident that activists were taking the anti-austerity arguments forward to a greater extent than before and using that message to support their local campaigns to save jobs, protect their terms and conditions, and indeed to take forward national and Scottish campaigns.

Jane said: "Websites, twitter, facebook, mobile apps, instagram, yammer, videos, emails, newsletters, bulletins, notice boards, letters to politicians, Christmas cards and Christmas crackers, leaflets, press releases, pictures, surveys and research work – you name it we saw it."

"Activists informing and involving members, never forgetting the importance of speaking to members face to face."

Jane thanked our sponsors Liverpool Victoria, UIA, Thompsons Solicitors, Lighthouse Financial Advice, and TC Branding Group.

Best Printed Publication Category

The UIA Gold Award went to NHS Glasgow and Clyde and CVS Branch for a very well designed, and well written magazine with fantastic front pages that really grab you.

An excellent mix of local negotiations and success stories. And of course the national Scrap the Cap campaign.

The CCC Silver Award went to West Lothian branch for a well laid out and well written magazine, with lots of information for members, not only highlighting the branch's local campaigns against the cuts, but also its involvement in campaigning for workers' rights

in the community.

The TC Branding Bronze Award went to Inverclyde for a well written magazine, jam packed with information on local and national campaigns, including Pay Up Now, Save Care Now, and Roads Shared Services.

Best Online Presence

The Thompsons Solicitors Gold went to Aberdeen City Branch for a well designed revamped website informing and involving members in local and national campaigns. Linking in to social media with some great pictures. An impressive formal communications plan maximising their campaigning efforts.



UNISON Scotland depute convener Stephen Smellie presents Aberdeen City's Deirdre Macdonald with the gold award for Best Online Presence.

NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS Branch were up again winning the CCC Silver Award for a website with great use of branch pictures, linking in to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram – showing a high level of member interaction and involvement.

The Lighthouse Financial Bronze Award went to Highland Health Care Branch for a comprehensive and informative website, linking into lively and up-to-date Facebook and Twitter.

Best Campaign

The CCC Gold Award went to East Renfrewshire for a very well planned and ongoing anti-cuts campaign, using Facebook and newsletters taking the campaign out to the members, the public and the politicians – including an MSP postcard campaign and a demonstration.

The CCC Silver Award went to West Lothian's 'Budget that Broke the Browns' anti-cuts campaign involving members and the community. A very impressive personalisation of the effects of cuts on one family as essential services are eroded.

The CCC Bronze Award went to Gas Branch Scotland who secured a whopping turnout in two consultative ballots on pay.



Wattie Gaffney accepts the new Chris Barter Award for Creativity in Communications on behalf of NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS branch. Wattie posted on social media: "Very proud to accept the first Chris Barter Award for the branch today, in memory of an amazing man, a true leader in communications, and one of the nicest and most dedicated trade unionists we have known." The branch also won in the Best Printed category.



Stephen presents East Renfrewshire's Karen Catlow with the Best Campaign award.

Cleverly designed posters, and frequent well written newsletters throughout the campaign.

Recruitment Award

The Liverpool Victoria special recruitment prize went to NHS24 branch for a fun summer themed recruitment campaign – they visited their three main sites with blow up palm trees, parrots and iced drinks and held a £500 prize draw.

Chris Barter Award

This year saw an additional and very special award in memory of the original Scottish communications officer – that is the Chris Barter Award for Creative use of Communication – sponsored by CCC chair John Stevenson who was a long time friend of Chris.

Introducing the award, John said: "Many of you will remember UNISON Scotland's previous communications officer Chris Bartter who sadly died in

October.

"This award is in his memory for creativity in communications.

"It is meant to recognise that bit of flair, imagination or innovation that activists have come up with, whether or not their overall entry wins. It was something he was good at.

"Chris was a huge figure on Scotland's cultural, labour and trade union scene. He was immensely creative.

"Chris didn't just work communications, he created the communications culture in the union, engaging, enthusing and training activists and always finding the time to gladly support them.

"Communications was not just publicity, it was organising. To Chris it was at the very root of organising in the arts and the labour and trade union movement.



Stephen accepted the Recruitment award for NHS24 branch from Martin Edgerton of sponsor Liverpool Victoria.

"That's what this award has been set up to recognise."

The award was won by NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS for a cracker of an idea – a five foot Christmas cracker in UNISON colours purple and green that pulls apart to reveal the NHS pay claim.

A great visual and amusing prop to get the Pay Up Now message out there.

This year the judges were CCC members Jane Aitchison and David Stainthorpe. Jane said: "Again a very difficult task and if we did have enough prizes then everyone would be a winner."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact John Stevenson (Editor) john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk
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