

Another Challenging Year Looms—Get Ready—Get Organised!

**No More Groundhog days—
Fight for our jobs and services**

Cut through the nonsense and it seems it's business as usual from a now unfettered Tory Government and predictably unimaginative SNP Scottish Government.

Despite the, frankly, lies that “Austerity Is Over”, the Tories have continued their assault on real terms public spending with talk of 5% cuts across most government departments. The SNP Scottish Government has yet again spun real terms cuts in what Councils will be given to spend as some sort of giveaway. **The reality in Dundee is roughly a £16-17 million shortfall in the money needed to continue with services at the same level.**

This will mean more jobs going, at least voluntarily, and more pressure on exhausted overstretched members to do more with even less. **This simply cannot continue and figures for absence due to stress and anxiety are hitting the roof as a result.**

Simply rearranging the deckchairs is now laughable. We must be ready to fight for an end to austerity and for decently funded vital public services. If councillors cannot lead that fight they should step aside. We have enough rubber stamps.

AGM Time—Have Your Say

The union must be its members. It can only function with your participation. Come to your nearest AGM and be part of the discussion on what we've done and what we should do in the coming year:

- Mon Mar 2: The Crescent (Room A) - 12:30**
- Tue Mar 3: East Housing Office - 11:45**
- Wed Mar 4: Claverhouse (Conf Rm 2) - 12:30**
- Thu Mar 5: West Housing Office - 12noon**
- Fri Mar 6: Dundee House (Rm 1.1) - 12:30**
- Fri Mar 6: 14 City Square (Ctte Rm 4) - 5:30pm**

A buffet will be available at each meeting and papers should be available soon on the branch website.

It's your Pension Service— Don't be left in ignorance

As our membership ages, understanding your options for working longer or retiring early become increasingly important. It is unfortunate that cuts to the pensions and payroll sections mean members often having long delays waiting on quotes, even where they have started formal retirement procedures, let alone those who simply want to know what their options are.



The council does, of course, meet its general requirements for providing regular statements etc. but members need help to fully understand their options and there simply aren't the resources to deliver the kind service in that area our members would once have expected.

It is hardly surprising therefore that members are being persuaded—often against their best interests—to make risky decisions over their pension by financial advisors who are not always properly qualified and will of course make money out of that decision.

This shortfall in member knowledge needs to be addressed. We are aware that the council (as administrators of the Tayside LGPS) is working on a personalised website, where members can hopefully get some more detailed info for their specific circumstances. We doubt this can replace the reasonable expectation for members to be able to sit down with an expert and learn to truly understand their pension options.

If anyone does have a problem with finances, don't let things pile up. Our “There For You” service can offer help and advice to members. We also provide expert financial advice through our partners “Lighthouse Financial Advice” who can offer a **Free Financial Review** to any Unison member:



<https://tinyurl.com/unv2jar>

See also the Tayside LGPS: <https://www.taysidepensionfund.org/>

And the SPPA: <https://pensions.gov.scot/local-government>

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“Managing Workforce Change” and all that

Since the reconsideration in the face of looming industrial action last year, we have been in talks with employers around the central issues that were involved in that and their wider context.

While this has been **generally constructive** and a lot of details on redeployment, permanency, fixed-term contracts etc. have been worked out, we are still **not at a position where we can recommend a whole package to our members**. Nor are we going to agree anything without first consulting the membership.

Talks continue, in good faith but, with another annual round of cuts looming, there will doubtless be pressure to get something agreed. Watch this space. Come to the AGM to get more details on this and other ongoing issues.

When is a Disability Leave Policy not a Disability Leave Policy?

Over a year ago, Unison approached the DCC employer with proposals for a Disability Leave Policy that Unison had seen adopted in other Councils.

This included the ability to take leave specifically in relation to “flare-ups” of your disability condition. The employer said they were happy to consider this and took it away to “look at how similar policies have been implemented elsewhere”.

Without further proper consultation they are now presenting a Disability Leave policy that only covers time off for treatments etc. **but not for simple absence due to your condition.**

While this is an improvement that is long overdue, we do not see it as a solution to the stressful regime of triggers and reviews that come to dominate the working experience of many of our members trying to manage conditions that are registered disabilities.

We will continue to push for a proper policy that shows a better duty of care and really does make Dundee City Council an “Employer of Choice” for people with disabilities.

There’s No Planet B - Why Climate Change is an issue for us all

Last year saw the birth of new movements to highlight the urgency of climate change as a threat to our very existence.

Politicians and business people have been forced by this publicity and the stark evidence of impending climate disaster to at least pay lip service to the issue.

It’s clear however, that the timescales they are working to are just too slow to avoid significant and lasting damage.

The free market system of commodity production is inherently wasteful and has no thought of what the impact may have for the future.

Only direct government investment in moving away from fossil fuels, improving public transport and home and business energy efficiency plus regulation to force companies to clean up their act on carbon emissions can bring the kind of change necessary.

Hostile Environments, Brexit and fake Buffoonery

As public servants, we often witness some of the worst consequences of government policy .

The fallout of a Boris Johnson “hard” Brexit and the types of trade deals that he will likely make will open up our public services to yet more privatisation and the resulting cuts and chaos that will cause.

It is wrong to see him simply as some sort of harmless bungler who imagines bridges from Scotland to Ireland when he couldn’t build one from London to London. The buffoonery is largely fake. This is a government seriously committed to implementing ruthless neoliberal economics that will feed fat-cat privateers at the expense of decent public services and employment rights.

The whipping up of fears over immigration and mistrust of foreigners as a diversion from the real danger this government’s policies pose to us all must be resisted.

Dundee City Unison is affiliated to Stand Up To Racism and has agreed to encourage members to support the UN Antiracism Day march and rally in Glasgow on 21 March.

**** Independence Is Scotland’s Right to Determine ****

Against the clear threat of a hostile government that can claim no real mandate in Scotland, it is hardly surprising that there is a growing movement for Scotland’s people to decide their own future.

At the recent Unison Scottish Regional Conference a motion was comfortably passed, calling for Unison to support the call for a further referendum on Scottish Independence. Two delegates of Dundee City branch spoke in favour of that motion, which mirrored a similar motion passed at our own branch exec a few weeks ago.

This is not about the union taking a position in favour of independence but simply **recognising the Scottish People’s right to make that decision**—especially given the changing situation.

The COP26 Climate conference will be in Glasgow this November.

Our branch has now affiliated to the **Campaign Against Climate Change** and has committed to working with other unions to support the Climate Movements to put pressure on politicians and companies for action now.

Support Friday’s Schools strike/protest:

Fri 14th Feb—City Square—11am to 1pm

Make the Climate Crisis a Trades Union cause.