

Bread & Roses

Solidarity is our Strength!

Unison Inverclyde Branch Newsletter March 2017

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UNISON REJECTS PAY OFFER

VOTE ONLINE NOW :

www.UNISON.org.uk/lgscot17

See Pages 2 & 3



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**The Branch has had a website for many years but did you know
we are also on Facebook and Twitter?**

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To join phone 01475 715900 or join online at <http://www.unison-scotland.org/join-us/>

SJC Pay Claim Update

The Local Government Committee considered the final offer made by the employers in respect of SJC Pay and unanimously decided to recommend **REJECTION** of the offer. The committee also agreed to consult our members in a digital online ballot which commenced on 17th March and closing at 12 noon on 7th April.

A high participation in this ballot is absolutely crucial if we are to move towards a full industrial action ballot. New thresholds within the Trade Union legislation mean that a 50% participation rate in industrial action ballots is required and whilst this consultative ballot is not governed by this legislation it is imperative that we demonstrate that we can achieve a percentage return close to that level.

To seek to maximise participation it was agreed to run this consultation on the basis of a full digital consultative ballot. This means that access to the ballot will only be through a secure UNISON web page. Where we have members email addresses registered on the RMS these individuals will receive an email and a link to enable them to vote. Those members for whom we do not have email addresses for will be required to access a web page, answer two security questions and vote online. There is a significant job of work to do by branches to encourage participation and assist those members who may not have electronic access.

See page 3 for all the info you need to know.

Council Budget Update

Inverclyde Council has agreed it's budget for 2017/18 and as expected have decided not to make any further cuts to jobs and services. Instead they are using just over £3m of reserves to close the funding gap for this year.

Additional reserves have been allocated for use in the 2018/19 budget year which will delay the implementation of some cuts.

This is a position which UNISON both supported and encouraged during negotiations with the Council during the budget process. The Council also decided not to raise Council tax by up to 3% which they had the discretion

to do. This will potentially make closing the budget gap for next year and future years more problematic.

Quarriers, Robin Taggart

Quarriers introduced the Scottish living wage rate of £8.25 per hour for all staff earning below that level in October last year. They are expected to increase the hourly rate to £8.45 from the 1st April 2017. The one issue that remains is the arrangements for sleepover payments.

Quarriers currently pay an allowance for sleepovers. This allowance is then topped up if the "average pay for all hours worked" falls below the National Minimum Wage currently £7.20 (£7.50 from 1st April 2017)

Currently the Scottish Government is in talks with COSLA and UNISON (and others) to look at three payment options:

Continue to pay an allowance with a top up (This has been agreed as the interim position for 2017/2018)

Pay an hourly rate of £7.50 for all sleepover hours from 1st April 2018

Pay an Hourly rate of the Scottish Living Wage from 1st April 2018

The main issue is who would fund options 2 & 3 above and this will be the debated over the next six to twelve months. In addition to the above all sleepovers across Scotland in conjunction with the providers and Social work etc are being reviewed with a view to either ceasing the sleepover, changing it to a waking night. Leave as is or a move to the use of assisted technology. This work is ongoing and causing major upset in the sector.



VOTE FOR FAIR PAY!

Why am I being balloted?

Your pay is worth far less now than ten years ago after years of pay restraint and inflation. Local government workers are seeing their living standards squeezed as the prices of food, gas and electricity, travel, food and childcare continue to rise. But while inflation indexes show how costs are rising, the impact on individual households is often worse. This can not continue.

The employers have made their final offer in respect of pay for 2017/18:

- Employees earning less than £35,000 a £350* increase (*pro rata based on 37 hours)
- Employees earning more than £35,000 a 1 per cent increase.

Scottish Local Government Living Wage is the minimum pay for all pay and allowances including additional hours, contractual overtime and other allowances. It will be pensionable.

What was our claim for 2017/18?

Our claim was:

- 1) A settlement which runs for the period April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018;
- 2) A flat rate payment of £1000 for all employees;
- 3) The continued uprating of the Scottish Local Government Living Wage, and;
- 4) The development of a future pay strategy that seeks to identify and redress the imbalance caused by previous pay awards below the rate of inflation.

How do I vote?

This is an online consultative ballot. You can vote securely at: unison.org.uk/lgscot17. UNISON will also email the link to all members we have an email address for.

Am I being asked to take strike action?

NO. This is a consultative ballot to seek your views on the employers' final offer. This is a first step before a formal ballot is held. Even though this is a consultative ballot, it is very important you vote. Due to the Government's new Trade Union Act, it is now a requirement that 50% of members respond in a formal ballot before industrial action can be held. If this consultative ballot delivers a strong positive vote, we will then be in a position to move to a formal industrial action ballot.

Will there be a recommendation on how to vote?

Yes. UNISON Scotland is recommending that you vote to **REJECT** the offer and go to an industrial action ballot if the offer is not significantly improved.

What happens if I vote to reject?

If you reject the offer you should be prepared to take a programme of significant industrial action in a future industrial action ballot to try and force the employers to improve the offer.

How long will the ballot run for?

The ballot opens on 17th March and closes at 12 noon on 7th April.

Who is being balloted?

Only current members conditioned to the SJC Terms and Conditions of Employment are entitled to vote. If you have any doubts contact your branch steward. Retired members and student members are not included in the ballot.

Can new joiners vote?

Yes, if the member is covered by the ballot.

If members join online can they vote?

Yes, if the member is covered by the ballot.

Why is it important that I vote?

Every vote is vital. While this is a consultative ballot and not governed by the Trade Union Act, it is imperative we achieve a return close to 50% if we are to confidently pursue a formal industrial action ballot.

How do I find out more?

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How can I find out more?

Your branch will be consulting with you directly either through workplace meetings, stewards' meetings or newsletters and you will have the chance to raise your questions. The branch will also have full details of how to access the ballot. Other information will also be available on the UNISON Inverclyde website, Facebook and Twitter.

Unison Slam SSSC Fees Increase

UNISON has slammed plans for huge rises in fees for social care staff as a ‘tax on compassion’

UNISON, Scotland’s largest public service union, has hit out after an announcement by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to hike registration fees. These will see annual fees rise by 66% for social care support workers and 75% for supervisors, with rises of up to 166% for the most qualified staff.

The union says the decision will come as a blow to workers and add further negativity to a sector already blighted by low-pay; insecure employment; unsafe staffing levels; and poor career development.

The SSSC registers workers across social care services including: social workers; social service workers; those managing and working in children’s services; day care and residential care. The proposal for a rise in fees has been approved by the Scottish Government and will be applied in September.



Stephen Smellie, UNISON Scotland’s deputy convenor, said, “This is a slap in the face for hard-working social care staff who are already facing a real-terms pay cut. An increase in fees is nothing more than a tax on compassion and we urge the SSSC to review their decision as a matter of urgency.”

“Care could and should be a profession. We want a professional body with the standing and influence to recognise the value of care work and care workers – but this is not the case in Scotland.

Our members have raised many concerns over the role of the SSSC which is seen as a way to ‘police’ the industry rather than offer

any credible support and development. So why would workers choose to endure low pay, unfair working practices and job insecurity and then have to pay for the privilege of being policed by the SSSC?”

A fee hike increases the negativity surrounding the sector and is a direct contradiction to the wider policy goal of promoting social services as a rewarding place to work. We made it very clear when this was first proposed that any increase in fees would hit the lowest paid workers hardest and have a detrimental impact on recruiting and retaining social care staff. The SSSC also suggest this is the first increase of many, which will only add to the negativity that surrounds employment in regulated care.”



Joe Lynch, UNISON’s regional organiser, said, “Like all public service staff, these workers are currently suffering a real-terms pay cut and while a registration fee of £25 may not seem a lot to some, for workers on the poverty line it is a significant sum of money.

“A rise in fees is just the tip of the iceberg for an industry that is already severely overstretched and underfunded and the damage to the sector caused by yet another hit on the incomes of low-paid staff will far outweigh the minimal gain on SSSC running costs.

A better way forward would be to waive the fee entirely for low-paid registrants until such time as low pay, discrimination and unfair work that blights the sector has been eradicated.”

College Dispute, Albert Sorrie

As you may be aware UNISON won a huge battle in the FE sector last year in our dispute with national bargaining as Management tried to impose a 3 tier pay model in the college sector. In essence this would have meant different pay scales between lecturers and support staff and even different pay scales between support staff.

As a union we could not stand for this and we balloted for strike action. Our members unanimously supported us in this fight against this unfair pay deal.

We even had our best recruitment of new members because of this action. After 2 days of strike action by our UNISON members and along with the support of EIS / Fella members who stood with us on the picket lines and raised funds for our striking members.

It is worth remembering that Unite voted to accept this unfair deal but that their members have benefitted from our hard work and commitment.

Management finally relented after negotiations and agreed to pay all staff the same pay deal.

Branch AGM Review

The Branch held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 22nd February at Greenock Town Hall and was formally opened by Branch Chairperson Pat Clark.

The previous years Minutes were then approved with no matters arising and the election of Office Bearers for 2017/18 followed and the following Branch Officers elected.

Branch Chairperson : Pat Clark

Branch Vice-Chairperson : Janice Boyd

Branch Treasurer : Marian Taggart

Branch Health & Safety Officer : George Steele

Branch Lifelong Learning Officer : Callum McLellan

Branch Education Officer : Nissa Brown

Branch Equalities Officer : Janice Boyd

Branch Communication/Publicity Officer : Dougie Maclean

Branch Membership Officer : Diane Drysdale

Branch Secretary : Robin Taggart

Branch Assistant Service Conditions Officer : Brian Gallagher

Branch Welfare Officer : Carole Watt

Branch Retired Members Officer : Billy Matthews

The Branch Accounts for 2016 as audited by the external auditor were approved.



The Branch Secretary, Robin Taggart gave an outline of the Branch including our members in Quarriers, RCH, West College and Inverclyde Leisure among others and then provided an update on Inverclyde Council's Budget for 2018 onwards before Unison Regional Organiser Joe Lynch spoke about the Joint Branch Assessment

A.O.C.B followed and the meeting was brought to a close by Pat Clark who thanked everyone for their attendance.

