

Unison Inverclyde Branch Newsletter December 2019

# Bread & Roses

Solidarity is Our Strength

Old Library, 30 Bawhirley Road, Greenock, PA15 2BH



**Unison Scotland election manifesto, Page 2**

**Also in this issue, Letter to MSP, Page 3**

**Cinema Treat, Page 3**

**Be Reasonable Campaign, Page 4**

## Unison Scotland Election Manifesto

“The general election is hugely important for the future of UNISON members and the services they deliver. It’s vital that members use their vote and their influence to ensure that public services and the people who work in them are high on parties agendas” said UNISON Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby when he launched UNISON Scotland’s manifesto for the December 12th poll.

Almost all of UNISON Scotland’s members work in areas which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, this election still matters though. Westminster has a huge influence over the overall levels of public spending in Scotland. While the Conservatives want the election to be all about Brexit, there are many other reserved issues that matter including; most economic policy, much welfare spending and rights at work. So the results of this election will have a huge impact on UNISON members’ lives in and out of the workplace.

To highlight this and help push the issues that matter to our union, UNISON Scotland has published “For Our Public Services” UNISON Scotland’s manifesto. In this manifesto we set out the issues that UNISON will expect the political parties to address in the election.

Foremost among the concerns expressed is ‘undoing the damage’. This is a reference to the series of surveys and reports published by UNISON Scotland. What we see in these surveys are an overworked, underpaid and stressed workforce trying hard to deliver quality services without adequate funding. It is made clear that we need a government that will invest in services and give citizens the high quality services they deserve.

In order to do that the manifesto argues for a progressive tax system that raises enough money to pay for public services. Companies using aggressive tax avoidance measures should be excluded from all public procurement.

## Fairness at work

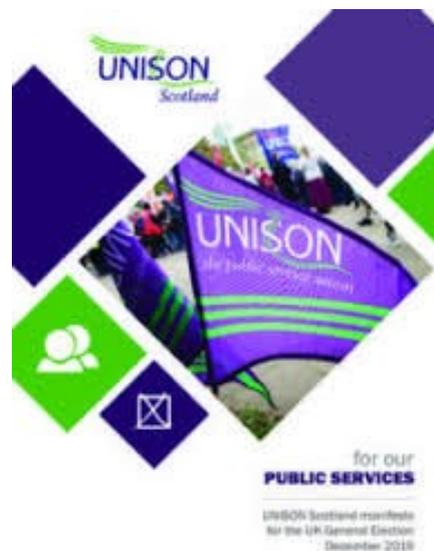
The manifesto also has a focus on a better deal for our members at work. For almost a decade workers in public services have been experiencing a real terms decline in the value of their wages. Cost of living rises this year do nothing to address that injustice – nor impact on the spiralling levels of personal debt many face.

The manifesto finishes with a series of questions members and branches can ask those seeking support. These questions challenge would-be MPs across parties about what they will do to: raise our wages; make corporations and the rich pay their fair share; improve our rights at work; get us a vote on any Brexit deal; and others. It’s the answers to these questions that will determine whether candidates are worth supporting.

As Mike Kirby puts it “Public services are central to the quality of life of our citizens. Not only are public services essential to those in need: they are the glue that holds our society together.”

We need to raise our voices about that in the days ahead – then go out on December 12th and make sure that message is heard. Your vote matters.

The manifesto is available on the Branch website.



## Letter to MSP

Last month Branch Officials Joe Pearce and Dougie Maclean handed in a letter to Stuart McMillan MSP asking for his views on the Local Government Settlement, Council Tax reform and use of the Calman taxation powers.



The letter highlighted the cuts that Local Government has faced over the last ten years as well as the effect this has had on our members and we look forward to receiving his reply.

A copy of the letter can be read on the Branch website.

## Cinema Treat Success



Branch Officials, Dougie Maclean, Roz Donnachie, Billy Matthews and Stuart Donnachie are pictured above after welcoming members into the Cinema.

The Annual Christmas Cinema Treat was a huge success with members and their families packing out the Waterfront Cinema once again to watch Frozen 2, Last Christmas and Charlies Angels.

Branch Official Veronica Rasmussen said ‘it was great to see our members taking advantage of the offer of a free trip to the Cinema with their families and being able to promote the work that Unison does to the local community’.

## Winter Fuel Grant 2019/20



Members living on a low income constantly struggle to make ends meet – and this can be particularly acute in the winter when the cost of heating homes rises as the outside temperature falls.

But it’s not all bad news – help is available. The union’s welfare charity There for You has once more set up a limited fund to help members on low incomes towards the cost of their winter fuel bill through a one-off payment of £40.

The process is very similar to previous years and an amount of money has been ring fenced to support this initiative. However, once it’s gone it’s gone!

So don’t miss out. Apply early and send your form and supporting paperwork in as soon as possible. All the information you need can be found online at [www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/there-for-you-winter-fuel-grants/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/there-for-you-winter-fuel-grants/).

Alternatively, contact the Branch office on 01475 715900 for further details.

## Be Reasonable Campaign

UNISON Scotland's Disabled Members' Committee has launched its new campaign which aims to challenge attitudes to disabled people in the workplace. The Be Reasonable campaign highlights the need for employers to adjust their thinking when it comes to reasonable adjustments for disabled workers. Alison Mitchell, UNISON's Disabled Members Committee, said: "UNISON is in a position to influence employers both nationally and locally, to affect policy and to affect attitudes to diminishing health (including disability) among decision makers, managers, staff, and members.



"Some of that will involve challenging and influencing deep-rooted attitudes. "Some of our members don't have a platform and are unable to articulate themselves and look to us. Our members have different experiences, experience different levels of ill health or disability, and have differing confidence to stand up, to be seen, and to be listened to. "Disabled workers want fairness not favours, and the

The Be Reasonable campaign aims to dispel some of the myths surrounding disabled workers. "Through UNISON we can influence employers, affect policy and change attitudes. Most importantly, we want to make sure disabled workers have a voice in the workplace." Branches and activists are encouraged to share the Be Reasonable campaign materials on the website with members through meetings, events, newsletters, websites and social media.

People with disabilities are entitled to reasonable adjustments at work. A reasonable adjustment is anything that helps the person to carry out their normal duties.

Often small things make the biggest difference. A reasonable adjustment can be as simple as changing a harsh light bulb for a soft one. In fact, 70% of reasonable adjustments cost nothing at all.

You can contact the Disabled Members Committee via their Facebook page or by contacting UNISON Scotland equalities officer on 0800 0 857 857.

## Retired? Stay in Unison



Did you know that you can qualify to become a retired member if you were a UNISON member continuously for at least two years on the day that you retired? A one off payment of £15 is all that is required.

The Branch Retired Members Officer is Billy Matthews. He has emphasised to the Branch Committee the link between the employed and retired and that solidarity between generations is so important to everyone.

Retired members have invaluable experience which can be used to help mentor new Branch Officials and reps. UNISON works with other pensioner organisations in the UK and across the world which gives plenty of opportunities to campaign on issues that are important to retired members.

For more details on how to become involved contact Billy Matthews at the Branch Office on 01475 715900.