

Unison Inverclyde Branch Newsletter October 2020

Bread & Roses

Solidarity is Our Strength

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



We don't want to go back to the 'normal' that doesn't appreciate or value public service workers properly – that's why UNISON has launched this major campaign, Page 2

Also inside this issue:

Unison Labour link, Page 3

Branch continues Morton sponsorship, Page 4

Council members Covid update, page 4

#Don'tStayonMute, Page 4

Plug the Council Funding gap, Page 5

Remember to update your details, page 6



**Standing up
for public
services**

No Going back to Normal

We don't want to go back to the 'normal' that doesn't appreciate or value public service workers properly – that's why UNISON has launched this major campaign.



OUR KEY WORKERS DESERVE BETTER

Thousands of key workers died during the pandemic looking after us.

In the public services nurses, care workers, cleaners and more made the ultimate sacrifice to help others.

This was all the more heart-breaking because for years before COVID-19, these public service workers have been undervalued, underpaid and mainly invisible.

Years of neglect made the effect of the pandemic so much worse. One example of that neglect was the PPE shortage that emerged when the pandemic hit.

Another is the fragmented nature of care services for the elderly and vulnerable – where staff frequently experience low pay, insecure employment and impossible workloads to manage.

In our NHS a shortage of nurses and other key staff means there are fewer people to look after patients.

This is the result of more than 10 years of spending cuts and austerity. The damage to all the vital services that make our communities strong and resilient, including schools, policing and local government, is plain to see.

Despite all this, key workers in our public services pulled through for all of us.

As we begin to return to normal, it's crucial for all of us that the same mistakes aren't made again and we don't return to undervaluing our public services and the people who provide them.

This autumn, politicians in Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff and Stormont will be making important decisions about the future funding of our public services

Early signs suggest the UK government wants to pitch the public sector against private sector and will ignore long term structural problems that got us to where we are now.

That's why we're calling for measures now to:

REBUILD...

Rebuild all our public services, by securing long term investment and making money available to employ and train the number of staff that are needed to ensure our services are there when you need them.

CREATE...

Create fairer and safer work places with proper risk assessments. Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect. Disabled workers and other vulnerable groups need to have the right to work from home whilst the risk of COVID-19 persists.

PAY...

Give public sector workers a decent pay rise because the pandemic has shown how important they are. This would also help the lowest paid out of in-work poverty.

BUILD...

Build a fairer and greener post COVID-19 society, in which the inequalities that have become so evident during the crisis are addressed as a matter of urgency.

For more information about the campaign please go the Unison Scotland website

Labour Link Officer Update

UNISON has always given its members the choice of opting in to its affiliated political fund, that gives them a say in the democratic processes of the Labour Party, or of opting into the General Political Fund, independent of any political party. For those members that choose to opt into the affiliated political fund the following will be of interest.

Branch Labour Link Officer, Francesca Brennan gives her thoughts



UNISON Inverclyde members know what it means to raise our voices together against poverty. Many of us aim to tackle the effects of poverty in our working lives and beyond. We all want to live in a Scotland where Inverclyde's citizens don't have to struggle to pay bills, put food on the table or take part in society.



Challenge Poverty Week 2020 took place from 5-11 October and I wrote to the Greenock Telegraph and spoke out on social media to recognise the dynamic work taking place here in Inverclyde to combat food poverty.

Our area is known for its strong beliefs in justice and compassion and never have those beliefs been more evident than in our community's response to safeguarding that most basic of human rights: the right to food.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNISON members were part of a diverse coalition of community groups and third sector organisations working in partnership with Inverclyde Council to develop an impressive, committed and innovative food justice response. Inverclyde now boasts a comprehensive system of food delivery services, community growing facilities, community fridges and outdoor larders with sophisticated logistical credentials.

But while we can celebrate Inverclyde's excellent work towards achieving food justice, we can also share a deep sense of sadness that too many of our neighbours, family members and friends are living with the constant pressures of living in poverty. The responsibility to make sure that everyone has a decent standard of living sits with all of us but particularly with elected representatives in the Scottish and UK governments.

Challenge Poverty Week presented an opportunity to call on the SNP government to challenge themselves to properly address poverty here in Inverclyde. When too many people are being swept up by the rising tide of poverty and in need of new and different levels of support from the public services we all rely on day to day, we need to see a deeper commitment from Scottish Government to invest in public services and support justice for all.



Branch Morton Sponsorship

UNISON Inverclyde are delighted to continue their sponsorship of Greenock Morton for the 2020/21 Championship season with a trackside advertising board at Cappielow.



Morton players Kyle Jacobs and Sean McGinty are pictured above with the Unison Inverclyde advertising board at the Sinclair Street end.

Branch Communications Officer, Dougie Maclean said “We are delighted to continue our sponsorship with Morton in what will hopefully be a successful season and also being able to spread Unison’s message in the wider local community”

Morton’s Commercial Manager, Lesley Ann Webb added “Many thanks to our friends at Unison Inverclyde for their long standing and continuous support. It is especially appreciated throughout recent times and the pandemic”.

Coronavirus Info for Council Members

Branch Secretary Robin Taggart gives a Coronavirus update for Council members



Further to recent announcements, the council are reviewing existing home working arrangements.

This is likely to only affect those members who are or can work from home. The aim will be to increase home working beyond existing levels. This review is taking place with changes coming into effect just now.

UNISON’s position is very clear. Any member who can work from home should do so and should only report to their normal workplace if the duties they require to undertake cannot be done at home. This is very much in the spirit of the Scottish Government guidance. In practice this means that it is no longer acceptable for members to be told to attend their place of work because it is preferable, desirable or ‘more effective’.

This will mean that the balance of working at home/in the workplace may shift back to predominantly home working where this is practical – this will bring problems of its own which UNISON are addressing at a national level in terms of the increasing costs of home working coming into the winter.

Don’t stay on Mute



UNISON has joined COSLA to launch mental health awareness video.

#Don’tStayonMute campaign aims to reassure people who are suffering from anxiety or uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is to remind them they are not alone and that there is support available.

These are difficult times and it’s OK not to be Ok about that. UNISON reps know how you feel as they are going through it too.

Full details are available on the Branch and Unison Scotland websites.

Plug Councils Funding Gap

UNISON Scotland has highlighted how vital it is that the Governments plug the funding gap to protect vital council services.



Local government workers up and down the country have gone above and beyond in their response to the Covid pandemic, keeping essential services going in the most difficult of circumstances.

The willingness of workers in local authorities to adapt and shift priorities and roles to ensure vital functions for their communities have been maintained has been an exemplary response by an under resourced and under-valued workforce.

Local government has borne the brunt of austerity over the last 10 years – overall revenue funding fell 7% since 2013/14 resulting in over £2bn of ‘efficiencies’ in the last decade and the proportion of funding ‘ring-fenced’ for central government priorities rose to 61%, meaning cuts have fallen disproportionately on the remaining service areas.

In difficulty before Covid, local government is now in a crisis. The financial impact of the pandemic has of course been huge. Local authorities have been faced with a perfect storm of increased demands and collapsing revenues.

The extent of this cannot be stated with any certainty yet as the crisis is not yet over and the pace and extent of any return to something resembling normal functioning is still uncertain.

But internal CoSLA estimates in June put the projected net cost, ie including additional Scottish government support to date, of Covid to councils as being £739m.

These figures don’t include the difficulties faced by the leisure trust ALEOs which the Culture and Leisure Trust UK estimates to be in the region of £120m. As with other areas this is far from being a final cost.

Combined with a budget deficit of £149m at the start of the financial year these additional costs take the projected budget deficit to Scottish councils to circa £1bn.

Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland head of local government, said: “This is a crisis of unprecedented scale. A deficit of £1bn would mean a cut to social work budgets across Scotland amounting to the wages of 13,400 care assistants or 6,300 occupational therapists.

“Education budgets would go down by a sum which would be the wage equivalent of 30,000 support for learning workers. “Culture and leisure budgets would go down by a sum which would pay 3,500 library assistants.

“Both Westminster and Holyrood governments need to act now to prevent the collapse of local services and rising unemployment.”



Mark Ferguson, Chair of Local Government Committee, added: “To protect these jobs we all need to get behind the campaign to persuade both Westminster and Holyrood governments to ‘Plug The Gap’.

“Write to your MPs, MSPs and local councillors, contact your branch for advice on how to do this.

Moved house, changed your name or started a new job?



Remember to update your membership details

You can update your details online at:
unison.org.uk/my-unison



Now more than ever, is the time to ensure that we hold the correct and up to date details for you, particularly your email address.

The Branch is always looking to improve communication to our members and we're asking all members to register with myUNISON. This is a fairly easy process and only takes a few minutes.

All you need to do is visit <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison> and follow the steps for registration. You will require your UNISON membership number.

Once you register you can update your personal details, including adding an e-mail address if there isn't one already on your membership file. Alternatively you can contact the Branch Office on 715900.

Branch members who have an up to date email address on their membership file will receive emails with links to future editions of the Branch newsletter and also any important information which is emailed to members which is especially important given the current circumstances.