

Unison Inverclyde Branch Newsletter December 2020

Bread & Roses

Solidarity is Our Strength

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



Thanks to all our members who have provided the vital services and were on the frontline during Covid 19 in 2020

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**Standing up
for public
services**

Inverclyde Council Budget update

Branch Secretary Robin Taggart gives Council members an update on the upcoming Budget.



On the 3rd December Inverclyde council agreed their budget strategy for the period 2021/2023. It is anticipated that the budget gap for this period will be in the region of £10.5m. Although the budget will not be formally agreed until next February/March, including the level of council tax increases, the report approved on the 3rd will mean that the budget for 2021/22 will have a very limited impact on jobs and services – much the same as last year.

This is something which the branch have been campaigning for as we believe that we need a budget which aims to protect jobs and services, especially in the current climate. What has been agreed is that a small number of employees will be released on voluntary severance – these have been taken from the pool of employees who were made conditional offers of VER last year – it amounts to 5 or 6 employees in total. There will also be a number of vacancies removed which have been vacant for more than a year. This means that those members who have been used to this cyclical process of being invited to meetings to be advised that their jobs may be at risk can be reassured that their jobs are safe for next year. The budget for 2022/23 will not be finalised until later next year but the signs are positive that reserves may be used to bridge any funding gap for this period.

The council also will agree to spend a significant amount of money – £5.6m – on a local jobs recovery programme. The funding for this programme will probably come from re-profiling the council's PPP payments for

schools. This has been made possible following the Scottish Government's decision to grant councils fiscal flexibilities. These allow councils to generate one of sums to meet budget pressures linked to Covid.

Whilst this reflects a positive position at the moment, it doesn't fully mitigate other challenges moving forward such as the UK Government's public sector pay freeze. This will require a huge effort by UNISON and members to resist this position and campaign for a properly funded pay award for council workers next year.

STUC Congress 2020



UNISON Scottish secretary, and general council member, Mike Kirby called for massive investment to support the country out of Covid. "Investment in public services is the quickest way to put money into the pockets of ordinary people," said Mike. "Putting money into essential services creates long-term economic benefits and promotes community resilience." He slammed "the systemic deficiencies in social care" exposed by the pandemic and demanded an end to "for profit" companies in its delivery. "Time to prioritise social value ahead of price," urged Mike.

Depute convener, Stephen Smellie told Congress that UNISON supports the right of the Scottish people for self-determination. "That isn't the same as saying we are in favour of independence," he said. However he called for the unions to be directly engaged in trying to shape what independence (or greater devolution) would look like if that's what the Scottish people vote for. "We want the options to be at least more in tune with what our vision of a Just and fair and Green Scotland should be."

WHAT WOULD A £1 BILLION FUNDING GAP MEAN FOR SCOTTISH COUNCILS?

A: JOBS LOSSES

B: CUTS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

C: BROKEN COMMUNITIES

D: ALL OF THE ABOVE



#PLUGTHEGAP



ASK YOUR MSP TO PLUG THE FUNDING GAP

#PLUGTHEGAP

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



I love the UNISON Inverclyde Christmas cinema treat. It has been a highlight for my family for the past few years both as a sign that Christmas is on its way as well as a chance to join together in a shared activity. I love seeing lots of us UNISON members bundling into the Waterfront Cinema with our families to settle down for a film and a feast. It is just one more thing we are all missing out on during this unusual year.

But while we can all live without a trip to the pictures, there are essential items that too many people will be going without this Christmas. It was hard to argue with the £500 payment recently announced for NHS and social care workers but this tokenistic ‘bonus’ has, according to some of my health and social care contacts, caused a significant amount of discomfort and division among those who will be in receipt of the money and across the public sector workforce as a whole. As it stands, the payment will not go to cleaners and caterers in schools and care

homes, or to refuse collectors or those administering benefits to some of the poorest people in Scotland. As Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard said, this payment is “no substitute at all for the significant increase in salary that all Scotland’s health and care workers deserve”. If Nicola Sturgeon wanted to grab headlines with this £500 payment, then the exercise has been a success. If she wanted to make a real change by addressing inequality of pay in the vital services we all continue to rely on so heavily, then there is still a huge amount of work to be done.

At the local Labour Party, like lots of community organisations, we have collected a number of items for the foodbank. It is great to be able to support the i58 Project in Inverclyde but the need for the foodbank is nothing to be celebrated. That is why I am delighted that Inverclyde is doing so much work to achieve food justice for our communities and we can look forward to a Christmas in the future when our families will be back together at the cinema for our film treat and, more importantly, fewer families will need to use the foodbank.



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Twitter : [@unisoninver](https://twitter.com/unisoninver)

Covid Responders Campaign

UNISON Scotland will mount a strong campaign to win the £500 payment announced by the Scottish Government for ALL local government and other public service staff who have kept services going throughout the Covid pandemic.



Delegates at UNISON Scottish Council backed an emergency motion from Renfrewshire branch which welcomed the payments but pointed out that it has missed tens of thousands of Public Sector Workers in Local Government, who have been working throughout the pandemic and left wondering why their heroic efforts are not worth rewarding.

Moving the motion, Brenda Aitchison, in a nod to the panto season, said that council workers are “pure scunnered at playing Cinderella yet again,” and would be telling the Scottish Government, “Oh no you won’t!”

A number of speakers supported the motion, pointing out the wider groups of members who have been unrecognised in this payment.

UNISON Scotland will lobby the Scottish Government to demand all COVID-19 responders across Public Services are rewarded equally; issue an immediate press release highlighting the failure of the Scottish Government to recognise all workers who have put their lives at risk whilst responding to the pandemic; work alongside the STUC in

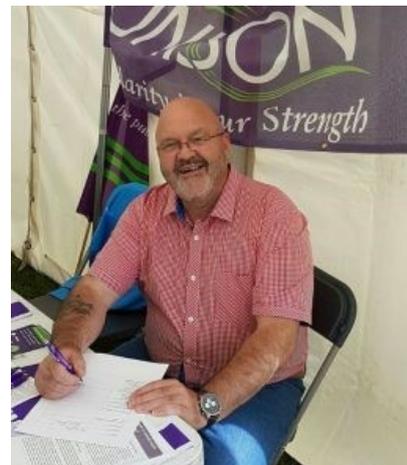
their condemnation of the position taken by the Scottish Government; refer the matter to the Scottish Labour Link Committee and ask them to liaise with Labour MSP’s to raise the matter in the Scottish Parliament; and will establish an immediate online petition to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament.

Please watch out for the petition and make sure you sign and share it, and ask colleagues, friends and family to sign it too.

Full details regarding the petition will be on the Branch website once available.

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 at the Branch Office on 01475 715900.

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.