

Unison Inverclyde Branch Newsletter June 2021

Bread & Roses

Solidarity is Our Strength

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



LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY:

WE'RE WORTH MORE

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It's your pay, fight for it

Following the recent consultative ballot and the overwhelming rejection of COSLA's current pay offer for those members covered by the SJC (the Scottish Joint Council) UNISON's Local Government Committee met and have agreed to proceed with preparations for a formal industrial action ballot and to, as far as possible to try and co-ordinate with the other two SJC Trade Unions.

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It is currently proposed that this be a 'disaggregated ballot'. That means that we would look at balloting specific groups of members to achieve the maximum impact.

This is a national dispute and ALL MEMBERS will be called upon to support the campaign in one way or another.

It is vitally important that your membership details are up to date in advance of any ballot including your job title, home address and work location, full details of how to ensure that your details are correct can be found of page 5 of this newsletter.

Further information will be issued in due course on the Branch Facebook and Twitter pages and also on the Branch website.



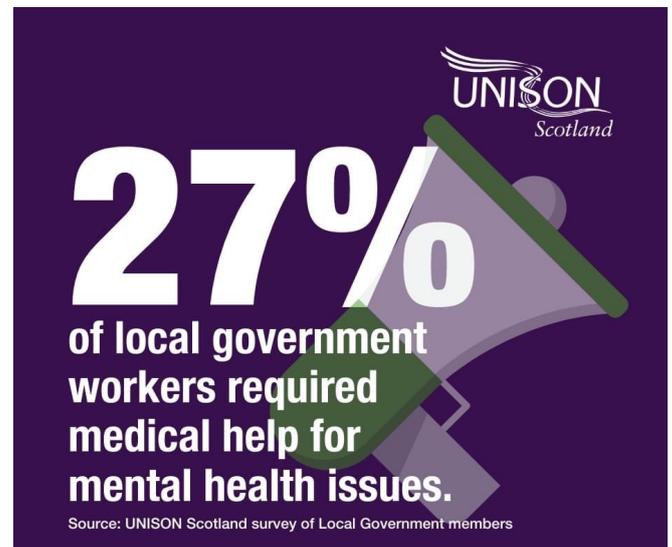
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to get the Branch news as it happens!

Facebook : [unisoninverclydebranch](#)

Twitter : [@unisoninver](#)

Stress at work

Stress is a major pre-cursor to worsening mental health, and after years of austerity, the Covid pandemic and being asked to more with less, our Local Government members are at crisis point.



Please contact the branch or your workplace steward if you are feeling stressed at work. We can help!

Remember to log incidents

Have you suffered physical or verbal abuse at work?

Did you know that you should ALWAYS fill out an incident form?

If it's not logged, it didn't happen!

Other forms or processes don't replace the requirement for an incident form

If you are unsure contact your UNISON Steward for advice

It is vital that any incidents are recorded officially not only for yourself but for the protection of your other colleagues.

If you are in any doubt contact your workplace steward or Branch office for advice.

One Year of Covid Survey

UNISON Scotland members working in Local Government in Scotland were asked to complete a survey conducted between 26th March 2021 and 13th April 2021.



The headline results from the UNISON Inverclyde members who responded are detailed below.

96% have been working throughout with 36% working mostly from home.

Our concerns about increasing workloads of members locally has been borne out by results to this survey, 58% of respondents reported an increase in workload with 22% indicating that their workload had increased substantially.

We know that the pandemic has been incredibly difficult for many and we wanted to evaluate how much stress our members had experienced over the past year compared to before the pandemic.

Whilst many will be unsurprised that people have found the last year stressful we are very concerned to see the extent of it - 85% of respondents reported an increase in stress, with 38% reporting that the increase in their stress was substantial.

We wanted to know if there had been a wider impact on members' mental health such that they have had to seek medical assistance for it.

25% of respondents stated that the past year had a wider negative impact on their mental health such that they have had to seek medical assistance for it.

The Council should be deeply concerned by this because it goes beyond people feeling 'a bit more pressure' and indicates a significant

number of employees who are suffering from ill health.

This is a ticking time bomb which requires immediate action.

We asked members to compare the level of support provided by the Council over the last year, compared to before the pandemic.

Surprisingly, given we have been operating in the middle of a global pandemic 44% of respondents reported no change in the support provided by the Council and 21% actually reported a reduction in the level of support provided!

Given the number of members who have been working from home during the past year we wanted to understand how they felt about that experience and what their thoughts were about this continuing in the future.

Unsurprisingly views were mixed – 22% of respondents indicated they really liked working from home and would prefer to continue doing so in the future, 28% indicated they have struggled and would prefer a blend of home and office working going forward, 15% indicated they had coped ok but were looking forward to getting back to the office and 16% reported that they have not liked working from home at all and would prefer not to do so in the future.

Of those who stated that they had not liked working from home, 34% highlighted the impact on their work life balance as the main reason with 23% stating isolation.

9% have contracted Covid and 14% of those who contracted Covid were diagnosed with Long Covid.

20% have experienced bereavement as a result of Covid. Of those who had to take time off work due to this with only 37% receiving support from management.

If members have any concerns about any of the issues raised in the survey please contact the Branch so that we can discuss your concerns with you.

What your Job Description means

Council members continue to ask this very important question especially as more start to return to the office after working from home, so we are taking the opportunity to give our guidance on this matter again.



Members often ask questions or raise concerns about being asked to undertake duties which they believe sit outside their role. This has always been an issue. More so over the years when jobs are lost due to budget cuts and duties are invariably redistributed. Despite the council claiming that redundant jobs mean redundant duties, the reality is somewhat different.

When a dispute arises the first step is to look at the job description for the post. If the disputed duties are not included in the post holder's job description then, in most cases the, the advice will be to refuse to undertake the duties. It is a fact that some job descriptions are either out dated or badly written or both. That doesn't alter the position or the advice since it is management's responsibility to ensure that job descriptions are relevant and fit for purpose.

A difficulty can arise when disputed duties are captured in a job description but where the job description is vague or overly generic. Descriptions such as "To administer medication.....: or "To deal with the public...." or "To provide support and assistance in the day to day operations of the team....".

These are broadly unhelpful ways to describe a job but unfortunately many job descriptions are set out in this way. So much so that we need to make a judgement by comparing the

relative demands and complexities of the disputed duties with the member's grade. In our experience as a trade union we tend to always apply the correct interpretation.

Another source of contention in job description disputes is the final clause which states "To carry out any other relevant duties as required by management." – Or similar words to that effect. Some managers wrongly and confusingly apply this aspect of the job description literally.

The obvious point to make is that if the literal definition was the correct one then there would be no point in having a job description in the first place.

The reason all job descriptions have this line is that from time to time members may be asked to do something which strays slightly from their normal duties. Unforeseen or unexpected events or one-off or occasional situations may reasonably trigger that clause. The clause is not designed to deal with routine tasks or duties as these should be incorporated into the main body of the job description.

It is important that you contact UNISON if you are in any way concerned about what duties you are being asked to undertake. In a climate of budget cuts and job losses especially we have to maintain a strong position on this.

Become a Health & Safety Rep



Protect your colleagues, build UNISON's strength and make sure that you and your colleagues are kept safe by becoming a UNISON safety rep.

Contact the Branch office on 01475 715900 for more information.

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.