

Unison Inverclyde Branch Newsletter May 2022

# Bread & Roses

Solidarity is Our Strength

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

## Recognise, Respect Reward

### Fair Pay Campaign for Local Government Workers

It's inconceivable that the lowest paid workers are expected to shoulder the burden of increased fuel costs without assistance.

John Mooney  
Head of Social Care  
UNISON Scotland



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## Local Government Pay

UNISON members working in local government have indicated their willingness to take some form of industrial action, up to and including strike action, in a dispute with COSLA over pay.

89.8% of UNISON members voted that they would be prepared to take industrial action in a consultative ballot. The ballot comes after COSLA's only pay offer was rejected outright by all three local government trade unions in March.

Whilst a formal, statutory, ballot would need to take place before any action could happen the union state that the result of this consultative ballot demonstrates the strength of feeling on the issue and is calling on council leaders to improve their offer to avert industrial unrest.



Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland's head of local government, said: "We simply cannot go on like this – local government workers deserve better. Whilst COSLA and the Scottish Government will blame each other for this paltry pay offer it is our members that suffer – they have already endured a decade of austerity, the stress of working on the frontline of the pandemic and now face a cost of living crises like no other.

These results make clear they are no longer prepared to put up with being treated like the poor relations of the public sector.

Low pay is endemic across the sector with over half of local government workers earning below £25k per year. The only offer put forward by COSLA to date was below that recommended by the Scottish Public Sector Pay Policy and did not even bring those on the lowest wages up to £10 per hour.

COSLA Leaders met on the 29th April and UNISON understands that, despite assurances to the contrary, pay had not even been put on the agenda for Leaders to discuss. We understand it was only added to the agenda after Councillors questioned its absence.

We understand that the advice from COSLA Officers was that Councillors delay any decision on pay until after the elections and that the Labour group on COSLA put forward a motion calling for a revised and improved pay offer to be made but that the SNP and the Tories voted that down.

All those now elected last week have a duty to stand up for these workers and will have to come back to the negotiating table with something substantial to avoid industrial action.

## Access to Work



UNISON Scotland Disabled Members have an online event on 17th May 2022 between 11am and 12.30pm to hear the DWP's Access to Work Service talk about the range of adjustments possible to help people with health problems stay in work and to hear about their new mental health service too.

Places are still available, details are on the Branch Facebook and UNISON Scotland Disabled Members Facebook pages.



## Compensate Social Care Workers



UNISON is urging Humza Yousaf, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, to increase mileage allowances for social care workers in the third and private sector. UNISON is the largest union representing social care workers.

Social care workers often drive from client to client using their own cars and then have to claim a mileage allowance to recover their costs. However, fuel prices in Scotland have reached record highs, March 2022 saw the largest ever increases in fuel prices, with the average price of petrol hitting £167.30 per litre on 22 March 2022.

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John Mooney, UNISON Scotland head of social care said: "It's inconceivable that the

lowest paid workers are expected to shoulder the burden of increased fuel costs without assistance. Once again social care workers in the third and private sector are being treated as the poor relations in Scottish public services. UNISON is urging Humza Yousaf and Kevin Stewart, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, to sit down with us to discuss how we can support these low paid essential workers.

There are more than 1,200 social care employers in Scotland. The Scottish Government must put mechanisms in place to ensure that challenges faced by social care staff are adequately addressed to allow the continued delivery of essential services to the most vulnerable in society."

## Branch Officer Elected to Council



UNISON Inverclyde congratulates the Branch Labour Link Officer, Francesca Brennan on her successful result in the Council elections last week.

Francesca was elected at the first voting stage with the highest number of first preference votes of the nine candidates standing in Ward 4, Inverclyde North.

We wish Francesca the best of luck in her new role as an Inverclyde Councillor in the years ahead.

## International Workers Memorial Day

A memorial service was held on 28th April in Clyde Square, Greenock to mark International Workers' Memorial Day.



Inverclyde Council hosted the service and the Reverend Alan Sorensen, minister of Wellpark Mid Kirk conducted the service before wreaths were laid by representatives of the Council and trade unions.



Branch Health & Safety Officer, George Steele is pictured above with the wreath laid on behalf of UNISON Inverclyde.

On 28 April each year, International Workers' Memorial Day (IWMD) is a time to remember those who have died either because of a workplace accident, ill health or diseases as a result of work.

**Why we 'remember the dead and fight for the living'**

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) annual statistics show on average that 135 workers

are killed in work related accidents each year. They also estimate that there are around 13,000 deaths each year from occupational lung disease and cancer caused by past exposure at work to chemicals and dust (such as asbestos or silica).

However, safety campaigners estimate that the true figure for all work-related deaths is closer to 50,000 each year.

Although it is rare for a UNISON member to die in a workplace incident, unfortunately some do suffer serious injuries and work-related ill health, including musculoskeletal disorders, stress, anxiety and depression. This can significantly affect them, their family, friends and other work colleagues.

UNISON knows that the key to providing safe and healthy workplaces is effective risk management, eliminating or reducing the risk of harm and having safe systems of work, including training and access to protective equipment.

Additionally, UNISON health safety representatives play a vital role in keeping workplaces safe and healthy by working with employers and raising members' concerns about working condition, as well as undertaking inspections of workplaces to check all steps are being taken to keep workers safe.

As an international day, each year a theme is chosen to help focus on a campaign for change.

This year the theme was Make safe and healthy work a fundamental right





## Democratic Double Standards

Branch Young Members Officer Ryan MacSween gives his thoughts about Democratic Double Standards below



Now the dust has settled on the local elections we can look at what they mean for trade unionists and workers. However, I will leave the nit picking of which parties have gained and made a loss to the armchair political commentators. Commentators who cannot see past party politics as the only vehicle for change.

The other main headline of this local election, and of so many previous, is the dire turnout.

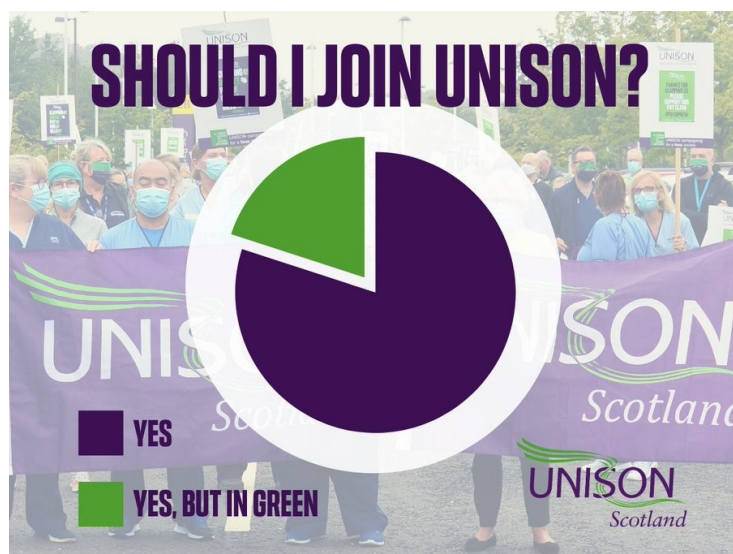
Nationally the official turnout was a mere 43%. Locally, only one ward breached the 50% threshold (Inverclyde West, 54.8%) and the lowest turnout was Inverclyde Central with a 37.7% turnout. The reasons for this are wide ranging, but the linkage between high levels of deprivation and low voter turnout is arguably one of the major causes of this over the country. However, this subject deserves more attention than a few lines in an article. What should be addressed here are the democratic double standards that put in place for trade unions.

If this election was an industrial ballot, it would not be lawful. As we know, we need a

50% turnout for our industrial ballots to be lawful. The overall election turnout in Scotland was 43%, so put under the same conditions as trade unions face this election is not lawful. However, it is of course lawful and the elected members, even with turnouts as low as 30%, are put into positions where they can make decisions that effect the public.

So why are trade unions held to such a higher standard than these elected members who represent the public? Simply put, trade unions are the most effective vehicle for changing the balance of society in favour of workers, redistributing power to workers rather politicians. So, in their hunger for power they make trade unions jump through hoop after hoop in order to express their democratic will, whereas the same is not applied to themselves. The worn out cliché “one rule for them, another for us” springs to mind (I think it may be worn out due to it being true day after day).

As trade unionists we need to highlight this double standard to our members and the public and through this put pressure on these “elected” members to scrap the anti-trade union laws that put these extraneous standards on unions. This election has once again shown the unfair standards unions, and only unions, have to reach.





# Update your details online today

[unison.org.uk/my-unison](https://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](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.



## Standing up for public services