

UNISON Clackmannanshire Council Budget Special



April 2018 Newsletter

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Cuts, Cuts and More Cuts

UNISON has been working tirelessly over a number of years to prevent job losses and reductions in all of our terms & conditions and indeed challenging service cuts, however as many of you will be aware, Clackmannanshire Council passed their budget on the 8th of March giving the green light a huge raft of these cuts.

Now that Councillors have voted for this budget, it appears likely that Council officers will look to implement them as soon as possible.

For anyone who still thinks that the cuts in budget don't affect them we would point out yet again that unsocial hours and overtime rates are a barrier to increased job cuts, a move to a 24/7 standard working week. This in turn in our view will lead to people being asked to do more with less time and resources, ultimately leading to increased stress and pressure on those attempting to deliver services, but just as importantly for the services that remain there will be a impact on quality.

Over the past few years, UNISON officials have seen 'suggestions' from departments like Social Services, Housing & Community Services and Development & Environmental Services to have many staff providing services to members of the public in the evenings and weekends as standard. Only the additional cost has prevented those suggestions from going forwards. UNISON works best when branch and members work together and support each other. We can promise you that your branch officials are doing everything in their power to prevent changes to your terms and conditions, so please support us and help us to achieve that goal and we might just win through in the end.



Update us with YOUR membership details

As we hope you are aware, UNISON, like every organisation holds information on our members. We need this information to be as accurate and up to date as possible in order to organise our members and to contact you should the need arise. This is now an urgent task as we are currently preparing a ballot for possible industrial action should the Council attempt to impose changes to our terms and conditions. It is vital that we have your correct details in order to provide you with a ballot paper.

As people change jobs or homes, updating their UNISON details is something that tends to fall by the wayside and so our information often gets out of date. We need you to spare us 5 Minutes of your time and either fill out and return the UNISON Membership details form attached with this newsletter, go the website listed on the form or call the UNISON central office number and provide us with your current details. We can't stress enough how important this is, so please do this for us as soon as you possibly can.

What You Need To Do

In the lead up to this year's budget UNISON branch officials were meeting with managers and elected members to lay out our opposition to the cuts proposed in the budget papers. Our goal was to protect jobs and to prevent the erosion of hard fought for terms and conditions. And it still is. We cannot, and will not lie down to managers and councillors alike who, for far too long, have seen staff as the easy target to solve the financial mess that the very same managers and councillors have gotten us into.

In the day's since the budget was approved our local branch has been in touch with UNISON's Local Government Committee who are raising the issue of imposing wage cuts to low paid staff with the Scottish Government and with COSLA. Your branch officers have initiated a campaign targeting both the tradition press (newspapers, radio and TV) but also using social media to raise awareness of our issues and our points of view. This campaign will not only continue but will be stepped up and will see UNISON engage with more community groups with shared interests.

We have requested urgent meetings with all of the political parties to seek their explanation for voting for proposals designed to target the staff who can least afford another cut in wages. We want to know how they think the situation can be resolved, or if they are really prepared to allow all staff at Clackmannanshire to be sacked and rehired in order to cut wages and yet still leave the Council with millions of pounds of savings to make in order to meet our future budget commitments.

While all of this political lobbying is important, approaches from constituents have the greatest impact so we need our members who live and work in this constituency to contact their local councillors and to tell them of your opposition to the cuts they have voted for.

As this situation develops we need to make sure that our members keep up to date with what's going on. We are somewhat limited while using the Council's email system, especially when it comes to organising industrial action, so we would urge all members to follow us on Facebook or regularly check the website for updates (details on both at the front page of this newsletter).

This is a deeply troubling time for all of our members and Stewards and branch officials have been fielding a large number of questions about the budget and what happens next. You will see on page 3 a Frequently Asked Questions section. This is by no means a definitive list but it does answer many of the questions we've been getting so please have a read over it and if it doesn't answer a specific question you have, please contact the office or your local steward and we'll do our best to get back to you with an answer.

UNISON Needs You. Become a Workplace Steward

For many years now our branch has been short on Stewards and Officers. Year on year it's the same people representing members and doing the work of the branch. Unfortunately this leaves great swathes of our workforce underrepresented as our knowledge of what is going on in Services and departments is somewhat limited, unless someone informs us about what is (or isn't) happening or if we have a steward working in that area.

It is at times like these that it becomes apparent that we often don't have all the information we require in order for us to represent our members interests fully. A good example would be the recent budget negotiations where a fairly innocent looking suggestion for change on the budget paper has massive implications for staff on the ground, but

which we only find out about after the budget is set.

The ideal situation is obviously to get a steward in every area of the Council, and we would like to see someone come forward where there is currently no local steward. You are allowed paid time off from your work in order to train and represent members and we can honestly say getting a result for one of your colleagues really is great feeling.

If you would like to know more or are considering becoming a steward, please call into the main office for more information or alternatively speak to any of our existing stewards.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q- Could I lose my Job because of cuts in the budget?

A—Due to specific budget cuts a number of posts will be going. However your employment and the grade you are on is protected because of the SNP national policy of no compulsory redundancies. SNP and Labour councillors have both stated that they are against Compulsory Redundancy so no-one will be made unemployed. It is possible that councillors could change their position in the future, however we don't think this is likely any time soon.

Q—If my post is targeted what will happen?

A—Pools of posts will be created and all staff in those pools will be offered a Voluntary Redundancy package. If enough people from those pools accept redundancy then everyone else stays in their current jobs. If not enough people accept redundancy then it is likely a competitive interview process will be used to appoint people into any remaining posts. Any member who is asked to attend a meeting to discuss potential redundancy should request representation from their local steward or the branch office.

Q—What if I find myself without a post due to budget cuts?

A—Anyone who does not have a post will be placed onto the redeployment register until a suitable job is found. Until that time the Council will ask you to perform duties which are suited to your skills, experience and grade.

Q—Exactly what was voted for at the Council budget meeting in relation to terms and conditions?

A—At this stage the honest answer is we don't know exactly. Meetings are ongoing with Council Officers but when asked this very question at a meeting on the 14th of March, the response was that there is no definitive list yet but it will be made up of things we have been talking about. (Unsocial hours, Overtime rates, long service awards, death in service awards etc)

Q—Did the Council vote to reduce the hours in a working week?

A—No. This idea was floated on the council's public consultation but it was never an option Councillors were considering as part of the budget.

Q—Are UNISON members taking part in industrial action?

A—Not yet. UNISON has committed to running a full ballot on Industrial Action 'if' the Council chooses to impose changes to our terms and conditions. Although this was voted on in the budget, the Council Officers have not taken any steps to implement that budget decision by the time we'd published this newsletter. That said a ballot on Industrial Action does not happen overnight. It takes several weeks to prepare so we cannot sit on our hands and do nothing in the hope that the Council will back down.

Q— Would Industrial Action mean every member out on strike?

A—Not necessarily. UNISON is committed to only taking the level of action needed to get the managers back around the table. We will do everything we can to achieve our goals

before taking strike action.

Q—What types of Industrial Action can be taken?

A—Action can consist of strike action and/or action short of a strike. Action short of a strike will usually involve a refusal to perform full normal duties and includes a ban on both contractual and non-contractual overtime. The branch will need to guide members on what activities are being boycotted.

Q—If a strike is called how long will it last?

A—It's difficult to say. If a strike is called we would look at a half day, or a full day for all members in the first instance.

Q—Is the CEO getting a package to leave the organisation

A—We don't know. This decision was taken during a confidential paper at a previous meeting of Clackmannanshire Council. It is rumoured that the CEO will be leaving on an early retirement/Voluntary Severance arrangement and the estimates of how much this will cost the council varies drastically. At this time it is all purely speculative, however as far as we know the CEO is not near retirement age so it seems likely that there will be a significant cost to the Council.

Q—If the CEO, and many other senior managers do leave the organisation through Voluntary Severance or Redundancy arrangements will the cost come from the employment fund?

A—Again we can't say for sure as the detail of how the corporate restructure will work has not been discussed with the trade unions yet, however this would seem likely.

Q—I've heard that some jobs are going yet the Council is bringing in private contractors to take on some of those tasks. Are the Council outsourcing some services?

A—At this time a number of worrying cases have arisen that would suggest that posts/services are being run down and then private contractors brought on board to take over. If this is the case then this is privatisation via the back door and it is something we are currently investigating and speaking to elected members about. If anyone is aware of a situation where contractors are currently doing the work also done by Council staff, or of Council staff who have left in the past year or so then please do get in touch and let us know about it.

Q—Why are you criticising/not criticising political party X?

A—UNISON exists to protect our members jobs and their terms and conditions. There is plenty of blame to go around. The UK Tory government has cut the Scottish block grant, the SNP government in Holyrood has protected other public bodies at the expense of Councils and our Councillors chose to attack wages of low paid women to balance their budget. None of these things are acceptable and UNISON has spoken out against all of them. We will continue to make our arguments no matter which political party holds a particular office.

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS

MEMBER UPDATE OR MISSING INFORMATION FORM

To ensure we have your correct contact information and improve our communications with you we would be grateful if you would complete all sections of the form below and return to us as soon as possible. Thank you.

Title: Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/Other:		NI Number:
Name:		
D.O.B:	Contact Telephone No:	
Address: _____ _____ _____		
Postcode:	E-mail:	

Employer Name:	Start Date:
Workplace Name:	
Workplace Address: _____ _____ _____	

Job Title: <small>please do not use abbreviations</small>	Payroll Number:
Department:	Gross Annual Salary: (Essential for Direct Debit Payers)
Please give a brief outline of your duties: _____ _____ _____	
(This is required in case we do not have an exact match to your job title on our system)	
Signed:	Date:

Please return completed forms to:-
FREEPOST RTJK-HXJU-RXGX, UNISON, Douglas House, 60 Belford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3UQ

Alternative you can update your details online at: <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison>

Or call UNISONdirect on 0800 0 857 857