

A bulletin on UNISON Scotland's public services campaign and public service reform
No 2 May 2007

Police staff move to shared services

The programme for setting up the new Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) to deliver common services is moving forward quickly. This will bring together staff working in areas like forensics and IT under a single employer. The Commencement Order to enable the creation of the SPSA took effect on January 1. On that date David Mulhearn took up the post of Chief Executive and Mervyn Rolfe the post of Convenor. The transfer of staff to the new employer is now underway. Approximately 1300 non-IT staff were transferred on April 1. Current plans do not involve any physical relocation of staff but there is no

guarantee that this will remain the case. Current staff are covered by TUPE, and negotiations are currently underway regarding terms and conditions for new and promoted staff.

This is a complex process involving staff transferring from various employers. Most are employed by Scottish police forces, but some work for Tulliallan College and others individual local authorities. This move will provide important lessons for all branches as more employers move to share services.

Council Tax Rates Set

Scottish Councils have revealed their Council Tax Bills for 2007/8. In addition to this income, councils will also receive £8.7bn in core funding from the Executive, a 4.8 per cent increase on 2007/8, Branches should look at the impact this funding increase will have on their own council along with other local financial information. In particular, branches should look at how councils intend to use these addition funds to ensure single status is properly funded. Branches should also look at additional moneys

councils may make from increased council tax collection rates and the disposal of assets. This may provide the finance to meet the one-off cost of past discrimination claims.

For further information on how to analyse council finances see the Equal Pay Campaign Pack <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/equalpay/index.html> or contact the P&I Team

Glasgow City Council Outsources Culture and Sport

On April 1st Glasgow City Council transferred nearly 2,500 staff working in Glasgow's libraries, museums, arts development, leisure centres, swimming pools and other sports facilities to a private charitable trust in order to avoid paying tax and business rates. Council 'assets' – i.e. the physical artefacts owned by the council will be safeguarded in the event of the need to bring them back in-house – staff have no such guarantees.

Whilst many other authorities have set up trusts to run sports and leisure service, this appears to be the first time that all these services plus libraries are to be hived off. The introduction of a huge 'pseudo-charity' of this sort is unlikely to be welcomed in the voluntary sector

The proposals were rushed through the council with little or no consultation, in order to set up the huge charity before the election. UNISON has strongly objected to the proposals.

Kate Riordan, Glasgow Branch Convenor of Culture and Leisure said

"These proposals will mean all of Glasgow's culture and leisure services moving out of the control of the people of Glasgow, and into the grasp of unelected bankers. The only reasons being given by the council are financial, and there are major concerns from staff (and the public) about the joined up services we currently provide and the long-term viability of any trust – given the track record of other examples down south." Full details of the campaign available from

<http://www.glasgowcityunison.org.uk/id3.html>.

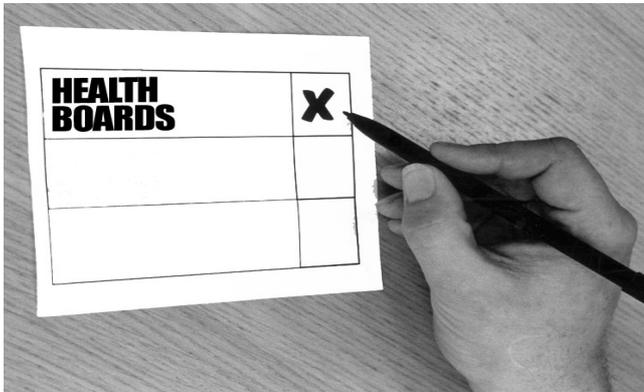


Mitchell Library Glasgow

In the Victorian era a range of charities and private companies offered a patchwork of arts and leisure activities. This patchwork was not meeting the changing needs of society. No one was accountable to users for these services, access was not guaranteed. The problem was solved by the creation of local government.

Why is Glasgow turning the clock back?

Health Board Elections Bill fails



In February the Scottish Parliament voted against the non-executive Bill by nine votes. The Bill aimed to make Health Boards more democratically accountable by directly electing their members. The bill failed despite the extensive consultation process in which the Health Committee and almost every party organisation that expressed a view, supported direct elections.

Shared Support Services in the NHS

Since late 2003, UNISON has been heavily involved in challenging significant implications of setting up a Shared Services system in NHS Scotland. We submitted detailed reasons for opposing the proposed models both in the Outline Business Case in Feb 2004 and recently to the Final Business Case in January.

UNISON demonstrated that the models - either the "Big Shed" or latterly the 'Hub and Spoke' models - were deficient both in terms of delivering an efficient standard set of financial accounts and payroll, and because they

UNISON supported this bill because we believe that local people are able to understand the complexities of health service delivery. We trust them to make difficult decisions when fully involved in the decision-making process. That is after all what happens in local government over other local service delivery issues.

This may not be the end of the campaign. Scottish Labour at the Oban conference, again agreed to support direct elections (*Scotland's Future* p68) by piloting the scheme. All parties apart from the Liberal Democrats support the principle of the Bill.

Current community anger and ongoing campaigns around changes to health service provision show clearly that the current consultation process is not working effectively. There is a general perception that consultations are a cover for decisions that have already been made and that the needs of local communities are not taken into account. As elected representatives, MSPs and councillors then become the focus of anger felt in communities about health board decisions as no-one else can be held accountable.

meant that thousands of Admin & Clerical(A&C) jobs would be lost. The consultation process raised many concerns about the original plans. In response the project will now concentrate, in partnership with UNISON, on developing the system's infrastructure (the virtual model) before moving to any operation that involves transferring, redeploying or reducing A&C staff jobs.

Work is now going ahead to find pathfinders for the new proposals. The project team will report conclusions and final recommendations to the project board in April.



NHS budget allocations

Funding for NHS Boards will go up by over six per cent next year as NHS Scotland's annual budget reaches more than £10 billion. Scotland's 14 area health Boards and eight special NHS Boards receive around £7.8 billion in 2007-08. This means the overall health budget for next year is more than double the amount spent on health in 1999. In 2007-08 total health spending per capita in Scotland will be £2,019. This compares to £974 in 1999-00, and £1,867 in 2006-07. In England the comparable figure for next year is £1,839.

Last year saw significant increases in productivity. 5,500 angioplasty heart operations (up 21 per cent year on year); over 29,000 cataract operations (inpatient and outpatient, up 14 per cent year on year); saw 4.5 million outpatients attendances; 1.4 million new A&E attendances; over half a million attendances at nurse-led clinics; issued 77.3 million prescriptions; carried out 775,000 in-patient and day case principle operations.

COSLA responds to *Transforming Public Services* consultation

COSLA have published their response to the SE consultation. Unlike UNISON they have not laid out a vision for the future of public services. Instead they make six key commitments to driving forward the reform agenda.

- Working with the Executive as equal partners to obtain fundamental changes in the way we deliver and account for public services
- All public services which are locally delivered should be locally accountable
- Examining how best to expose the following functions to local democratic accountability - regeneration and local economic development, health improvement and primary health care and further education - and assess the impact on the quality and efficiency of service delivery
- Reaffirming its commitment to consider further structural change only where there is clear evidence that these changes can deliver better quality services, efficiency gains and local accountability
- Working with the Executive as equal partners to develop a more coherent policy, scrutiny and funding framework which support the reform agenda rather than acting as a barrier to change
- Working with the Executive as equal partners to establish governance arrangements to coordinate and give political direction to the work we are all doing on public sector reform

The full document is available from:

<http://www.cosla.gov.uk/attachments/publications/transformingpublicservices.pdf>



Scots want public services to stay public

A recent poll by Ipsos MORI shows Scots remain firmly committed to public services delivered by the public sector. A clear majority of Scots (over two-thirds) support publicly owned and operated services in health, social work and education.

New Efficiency guide for branches

UNISON has produced a new guide for branches to support bargaining around the various efficiency initiatives. The guide covers the whole of the UK. It contains useful background information and case studies as well as a check list for branches and a model contract clause. Efficiency will be high on the agenda for all sections of local government staff for the foreseeable future. This will provide valuable information for current bargaining and for preparing for the future for those not currently affected.

Improvement Service targets planning workloads

A Government Improvement Service survey has found that Scottish planning staff are being held back by heavy workloads - especially middle ranking and support staff. It is no surprise therefore that these people are increasingly poached by the private sector for higher salaries.

The survey found that staff are very experienced and possess a wide range of technical and transferable skills. Staff are also willing to further develop skills and knowledge. This is more evidence that staff are well placed to develop improved ways of delivering services. They also need the resources and freedom to develop the networks and learn from best practice. The P and I team have produced a new briefing on implementing the new planning system encouraging branches to engage with employers to ensure that additional resources are made available (briefing no 157 <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/planningimplement.html>)

Common Efficiency Measures

The Efficient Government Initiative highlighted the lack of consistency among local authorities measuring of efficiency. Audit Scotland has also recently questioned the way efficiencies are calculated. Some projects had not set a base line against which to measure efficiencies against. They also emphasised the importance of developing measures of quantity and quality to ensure that any efficiency gains are not at the expense of service provision. The Improvement Service has been working with local authorities and a consultancy firm named Arpiren to establish a common framework to demonstrate how they have improved services and implemented efficiency gains.

Glasgow City Council saves £9m

Glasgow City Council has saved £9million through its e-procurement programme. It expects saving to reach £21 million by over the lifetime of the programme. The money is to be reinvested in service delivery.

Automatic message tracks Fife teachers

Fife Council's automated messaging system to secure supply teachers has won an e-government award. The awards honour innovation that makes a real difference to service delivery in the public services. The system once notified of a vacancy searches a data base of suitable staff and sends an automatic text or email

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire councils are about to enter the first stage of a joint procurement initiative. They are also about to roll-out an electronics system to support procuring goods and services across both councils.

Clackmannanshire Council tops customer enquiries poll.

The Society of IT Managers carried out an exercise checking how councils responded to telephone queries. Only Clackmannanshire gave a satisfactory response, the rest transferred callers round the council when the information was available on their websites.



Consultancy costs

UNISON Scotland recently tried to find out how much money the Scottish Executive has spent on consultancy.

Despite an appeal by UNISON and the significant public interest in this information the current accounting system means the cost of finding this information would be well in excess of the current £600 cost limit on freedom of information requests. There are in excess of 48,000 suppliers on the Executive database. Fortunately the Executive will be introducing a new "purchase to pay" system this financial year. This will mean that we will soon know how much public money has been spent.

Audit Scotland highlights key issues for councils

Audit Scotland's recent overview of local authority audits highlights what they believe to be key issues for the future management of local government.

These include:

- Significant and steadily increasing financial costs, such as equal pay settlements,
- implementing the single status agreement and
- rising energy costs.

These costs are reflected in accounts as at 31 March 2006, which show a 14% drop in the total level of reserves, the first downward move in recent years. General funds, used for day-to-day expenditure, dropped by more than a third.

Another key issue is the big change in the way in which council business will be conducted as result of the large number of councillors who did not stand for re-election in May and the changes in political control following the new form of voting in local government elections.

Councils face many other pressures too. As Scotland's age profile changes, services will have to adapt to different needs. Public sector reform, efficiencies, working with other agencies and sustainability requirements are also high on the agenda.

Despite the pressures, council services are improving overall and financial stewardship remains generally

sound. There is a strong commitment to engaging with communities to plan services and early evidence of progress in sharing services, although this work does need to be developed.

Although services are getting better overall, councils need to develop far more robust methods and tools for driving improvements and measuring performance, such as improving the links between policy-making and financial planning, better performance information and enhanced service scrutiny by elected members.

UNISON's response to the report emphasised that Scotland's local government staff are delivering improved services despite facing failures to deliver equal pay and continuing threats to split up council services.

Dave Watson, UNISON Scottish Organiser (Policy) said

"This report demonstrates important service improvements, and shows that UNISON members are delivering."

Whilst welcoming the AC's belated recognition that equal pay is a massive problem for local councils, UNISON is critical of the failure of the AC to fully address the issue.

The union also points out that the AC recommendations to increase joint working and information sharing across councils, is challenged by some council's attempts to rid themselves of services to new employers.

Revitalising Public Services

Please continue to send details of how the Efficient Government Initiative and/or shared services are impacting in your workplaces to the Policy and Information Team so that we can keep other branches fully informed of developments across Scotland's public services. For further information on any of the above articles please contact Kay Sillars k.sillars@unison.co.uk or 0870 7777006



