

# Briefing on ...

## Real budget hits public services

### Introduction

This briefing provides a summary of the results of work undertaken by UNISON to establish the extent of planned cuts faced by members following the Scottish Budget being passed on Feb 3. Even the incomplete picture currently available gives a figure of cuts across all areas organised by UNISON of at least £466.3 million with the possibility of £474.3m. Planned job losses announced so far are *at least* 4504 with the potential to go as high as 4744. The figures for proposed job losses can be expected to rise as all employers complete their own budget processes. The focus on Local Government in this briefing reflects the greater availability of information at time of writing.

### Background

The Scottish Budget Bill was passed on Feb 3. The main budget allocations are largely unchanged from the draft budget summarised in P&I Briefing 215). Of possibly greater significance is the establishment of an Independent Budget Review to make recommendations on the options for future budget cuts. That could cover the Barnett consequential of a post-UK General Election emergency budget and/or next year's Scottish Budget. That review is bound to be pressed to look at issues like the privatisation of Scottish Water and

other services together with other alternative business models and targeting rather than universal provision.

Branches were asked to complete a Cuts Impact Assessment form outlining the scale and nature of proposed cuts by their employer. For local government branches there are some headline numbers but not much detail. For many non-local government branches the budget process is at an early stage and information is very limited.

### Impact on Services

There is a clear trend of reduced services. Many councils plan to introduce or increase charges for services. Support for school transport and mobile libraries are under threat in several councils.

A number of councils are looking at Shared Services but there is little more detail in the budget documents. At the moment most councils are expressing an aspiration rather than outlining a plan. Most advanced seems to be the Pan Ayrshire Regulatory Services scheme. Interestingly not all of the Clyde Valley Partnership Authorities appear to be pursuing the Arbuthnott Agenda.

The cuts are clearly provoking a drive towards outsourcing, Edinburgh is the most extreme example but others are looking to begin or extend arms length organisations. Other trends are increasing charges and removal of services, support for school transport and mobile libraries.

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## Impact on jobs

The headline message is job losses of at least 4504 across all UNISON organised areas with the possibility of going as high as 4744. This is planned to be accompanied by cuts and 'efficiency savings' of at least £466.3m with the possibility of £474.3 million. This breaks down to; at least 3473 in local Government with the potential to go as high as 3713; outwith local Government the picture is 1031 job losses against a backdrop of £154.8m cuts. It should be stressed that this is still an incomplete picture as employers in several sectors have not yet released their plans.

Below these headlines there is a frustrating lack of detail. Many are unspecific either because of where we are in the budget process or because employers are in the midst of formulating plans for the next three years.

It should be noted that these are figures for this coming year, many organisations have further job cuts

and savings planned for subsequent years.

The level of cuts is at least six times greater than the Scottish Budget allocations would indicate. This reflects the real cost pressures on public services.

In Local Government the vast bulk of councils are undertaking some work to restrict recruitment- from straight freezing, through to assessments of whether posts should be filled. We can't say at this point if there is a trend in *which* jobs are targeted, but the scale of cuts means that the two largest departments (education & Social Work) will have contribute the most. In education that means school support staff and a recent FoI we did on this indicated a net loss of 117 so far. Next year looks significantly greater than this. In social work care services are being targeted including further outsourcing. Other announced job losses that come up more than once are Welfare Rights Officers and community transport.

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## Action for Branches

The ongoing completion and return of Cuts Impact Assessment forms is vital. These should not be seen as a one off exercise, branches should keep them updated as local budget processes develop.

Branches should seek to actively campaign in defence of services and build links in their communities with service users. *Public Works* campaign materials are available on the web site.

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## Further Information

UNISON Scotland

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk>

Briefing on draft budget Sep 2009

[http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/215\\_2010-11budgetbriefing.pdf](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/215_2010-11budgetbriefing.pdf)

Briefing on Arburthnott Shared Services Report

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/217Arbuthnotsharedservices.pdf>