



**SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
REPORT TO SCOTTISH COUNCIL – 16 APRIL 2011**

PAY

Following the employers imposition of a non negotiated pay award last year, the joint trade unions lodged a formal dispute with the employers and sought a meeting of the SJC in order that the employers outline to the council the reason for their actions and their future commitment to national bargaining. We also sought to invoke a reference to ACAS for arbitration. Regrettably the employers on both matters refused to participate. These matters were raised by the trade unions at the SJC Annual Meeting.

The Living Wage Campaign continues to be a priority for UNISON and formed part of our claim lodged in November 2009. Both the Labour Party and the SNP have made commitments to introduce a Living Wage. The Living Wage currently stands at £7.15ph which equates to SCP 11 in the SJC. The current lowest point on Grade 1 is £6.16 ph. The Joint Trade Unions have put pursuance of a Living Wage on the agenda at the SJC and at the time of writing the detail of our pay claim for 2011 and beyond is under discussion with GMB and Unite.

NATIONAL CARE SERVICE

There has been considerable discussion and debate around the Labour Party proposals to create a National Care Service and the SNP proposals to integrate older people's services with Health. Both of these proposals would see Local Authority Social Work functions and staff transferring to the NHS.

The Social Work Issues Group have raised serious concerns over these proposals, broadly under the following headings:

- Is integration the only way to produce better services?
- Funding and the costs of integration
- Service Delivery
- Professional conflicts and integrity
- Democratic Accountability
- The impact on Councils and remaining social work services

A Local Government Delegate meeting took place in March where Jackie Baillie MSP again addressed UNISON delegates on the Labour Party proposals. From a Local Government perspective there remains serious concerns over the evidence that the proposals will improve services for service users, a weakening of democratic accountability, disempowerment of local communities and threats to the long term viability of local Councils.

The development of this issue and the broader discussions on public sector reform will remain high on the Local Government agenda following the Holyrood elections in May.

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CUTS

The cuts within Local Government are savage. The settlement means a cut of 5.5% in real terms. Councils are given a classic Hobson's choice. A cut of 2.6% if they accept the Government's priorities, or a 6.4% cut if they don't. Unsurprisingly all Scottish Councils have accepted the 2.6% cut and with that are making millions of pounds of cuts to services, job loss is considerable with many considering compulsory redundancies.

The Local Government Committee recognise that Local Government members had a key role to play in UNISON's overall cuts campaign and that the committee should draw on existing links with other services to progress the campaign. A small working group has been formed to take initiatives forward.

Bargaining Briefing Sessions called 'When the Going gets Tough...' have taken place in February and March that were well attended by Local Government Branches. These provided useful tools and updates on attacks to terms and conditions, the case for in house services and outsourcing and Industrial Action. Resource Packs full of useful material were distributed at the sessions.

It is essential that information continues to be gathered on the effect of the cuts to both jobs and services and branches are once again asked to regularly complete our own Cuts Impact Assessments and return them to the Policy & Information Team. From the forms received, and there are a number of gaps in the returns, the job loss figure for this year is in excess of 10,000.

Stephanie Herd, Chair
Local Government Committee

Tracey Dalling, Secretary
Local Government Committee