

briefing# 1

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Feb 6 - the fightback starts here!

UNISON branches are faced with cuts in funding, exacerbated in local government by artificial restraints on council tax levels. This is likely to get worse in future years. UNISON wants to start the fightback now – with a twin-tracked campaign at Scottish and branch level engaging user groups and communities to lead successful opposition to cuts. It starts with a rally after Scottish Council on Feb 6 and will continue into an important demonstration in mid-March. This briefing is to tell you about the rally, but please also start to build support for the demonstration.

Public Works is UNISON's Scottish campaign against the storm whipped up by big business, some politicians and the media, to cut public services to pay for the massive loans pumped in to prop up irresponsible private sector bankers. *Public Works* is part of the UK campaign - *a million voices for change* - and has been busy challenging these attacks.

February 6 – the day of the next Scottish Council - is a key date in this campaign. UNISON is planning a major rally against the cuts and we need branches to make the day a success.

What you should do before Feb 6

A rally with General Secretary, Dave Prentis will take place at 12.00 noon on Saturday, in the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow. We need you to be there and to bring along:

- **Your activists** – stewards and reps who are not necessarily Scottish Council delegates
- **Branch Banners** – to take part in a photo opportunity and to link with your local cuts reports
- **Any user or community groups** who you are working with to fight cuts in your authority.

We are sending out a Cuts Impact Assessment. We need you and your Regional Organiser to fill these in jointly, and return to Fiona Montgomery by February the 1st – f.montgomery@unison.co.uk. We need this information to use in the rally to show how cuts affect jobs and services. The form is designed to be updated and will be used to monitor changing situations.

Local action

Branches need to plan their campaigns against the cuts at local level. Advice on running campaigns is contained in the Stop the Cuts toolkit circulated at an earlier Local Government Group. This will soon be on the website at unison-scotland.org.uk/publicworks. A course on running campaigns is available to be run for individual branches as a one or two day course. Contact Chris Bartter c.bartter@unison.co.uk to arrange. This course will also be run as a Scottish weekend course planned for 23 – 25 April – but these dates may be brought forward.



Campaigns should be part of the overall *Public Works* and *million voices* campaign and general materials for these campaigns are available from the Communications section in London and the P&I team in Scotland. Branches should be:

- ◆ collecting and monitoring the position on cuts in their own authority,
- ◆ planning and carrying out campaigning activities against cuts locally,
- ◆ contacting other trade unions, user and community groups to brief them on cuts planned, and to build alliances,
 - ◆ lobbying local politicians to challenge both specific cuts, outsourcing and other plans, and to build support for UNISON's alternative budget (see unison.org.uk/million/resources/Alternative_Budget.pdf),
 - ◆ making sure that UNISONScotland is kept informed of the impact in your authority

Use the upcoming General Election period – question your candidates, and get members to do so too! Some suggested questions will be circulated.