

MERRY XMAS AND A FIGHTING NEW YEAR

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Savage Cuts to Council Budgets Again!

The Tory Government in Westminster once again cut public service budgets to the bone in their Autumn Statement.

The SNP Holyrood again passed the worst of those cuts on to Local Government—with much smoke and mirrors to hide where the axe fell.

For Dundee City, the net result is another cut of around £16-17million.

The Council Tax now only delivers between about 8% to 15% of the revenue that local government uses to pay for its services. The vast majority of our income is dependent on the grants from government.

The end of the Council Tax Freeze (allowing an up to 3% rise in Council Tax) will **only result in around an extra £1million** for Dundee City.

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F.E. College Workers Strike WINS early Xmas present!



Scotland-wide FE College Support staff were victorious after a lively campaign and just 2 days of strike action.

Dundee City UNISON supported it's members in Dundee and Angus College through the campaign and on picket lines on the strike days..

The action was called because of the pay settlement giving

teaching staff a larger increase than support staff. All teaching-staff have been awarded £450 increase for all, while support-staff have been offered £400 for those less than £22k and £230 for those above £22k.

Their victory is great for them but it should also be seen as a victory and a lesson to us all.

They were told the money wasn't there but the money was found.

Those of us who face cuts and budget restraint should not let that stop us fighting for decent pay rises that reflect rising living costs.

You don't need to go to college to learn the simple lesson:

Strike and you can win!

Join online at joinunison.org or call free on 0800 171 2193

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the public service union

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The extra around £100million that was to be raised across Scotland from changes to the Council Tax Charges for higher banded properties (to be distributed to councils on a needs basis to tackle the "Attainment Gap") will now be kept by the councils who raise them.

Instead the same amount will be given to councils on a similar basis (presumably having been lopped off the grant that would have been given to the councils anyway). **This reduces the progressive nature of the original plans and leaves Dundee City (and other councils with high levels of poverty but low levels of high banded properties) less well off than they might have been.** It seems Dundee City may have been collateral damage in some political games.

Perhaps the feeling was that as Dundee is no longer "marginal", it's SNP administration can afford to take the hit. We can only speculate.

The upshot is we will face another year of around 3.5% cuts across the board in what we all know are already difficult circumstances. Work is already underway to address the base budget adjustments (internal efficiencies, savings already made etc.) to try to bridge some of that gap.

Management have given assurances that they remain committed to **no compulsory redundancies** and are confident that can be avoided.

They have also stated that the capital programme that drives income/employment in construction and related services is stable going forwards and indicated that they have made progress on work with P&K and Angus councils on sharing services/resources.

We expect to hear what the final spending gap is by mid January but won't have sight of the administration's plans for what to cut until early/mid February.

Members will be aware that our branch has a strong position on taking action to defend key terms and conditions. Nothing has been said to suggest they are under threat at this moment but we will wait and see.

We also made clear our own commitment to pursuing our fair pay claim of £1000 on all points and felt bound to request that the employer take that into account when budgeting.

We are in the midst of a serious battle for the future of our own jobs, pay and conditions and the very services we provide. It doesn't look like anyone but ourselves, acting together, can be relied on to change things for the better. We need to be prepared to take the action that will be needed to win that battle.

Much will depend on how resolute we appear about defending ourselves.

Defy CoSLA Contempt for our PAY

Unison were very early in submitting our Local Government pay claim this year that was essentially for a flat £1000 per annum on all points and a demand to finalise the implementation of the living wage.

The employers had promised a response/offer to come from their CoSLA leaders meeting on 13th Dec but they subsequently stated they will be too focussed on resolving the budget issues to make an offer before the end of January.

Unison has written to all the group leaders in CoSLA to express its anger at this development. **It shows contempt for our members who have kept the lights on in councils while staffing levels have plummeted and their pay has done likewise—losing 16-20% in real terms over past years (while senior managers always seem to get restructured or regraded into higher paid posts).**

Our Scottish Local Government Committee met on 19th December and agreed to proceed with preparation for a potential Pay Dispute early next year.

Scottish Local Government Conference agreed last September that it would ballot for industrial action, if an acceptable offer was not made by February next year.

We must be prepared to be disappointed by 27th January's Leaders meeting—given councils appear to be showing similar contempt by budgeting for pay increases far short of our claim.

Look out for campaigning events around 24th January—get involved and get geared-up for that campaign.

As the FE workers showed, however, we should never simply accept claims that there is no money for our pay. They've shown we can strike and win.

With Council elections coming up, we may not have a better chance for some time.