

February 2017

Dear Member

INFORMATION BULLETIN



Update on Budget Cuts and Pay:

This is a significant few weeks in regard to PAY and CUTS in Scottish Local Government. Please read the following thoroughly.

PAY:

At the end of January, the employers did (finally) respond with an offer on pay for 2017/18 that was, frankly, disappointing.

Our claim was for £1000 on all points. This was not unreasonable under the circumstances. The offer can be summarised as £250 on all points up to £25000 but just %1 on all points above that.

We had also asked that the living wage be applied then any pay award on top of that but this was declined.

This is a poor offer that goes nowhere near redressing the loss in pay we have suffered over recent years.

Indeed, if inflation projections for this year are accurate, we will once again be going backwards. Our union has a position in Scottish Local Government, following a motion from Glasgow branch last summer, that all pay negotiations would be progressed such that, if no "reasonable" offer was received by start of February, we would begin the process of Balloting for Industrial Action. Discussions at the Scottish Local Government Conference, compromised on the basis that the employer had stated that this was not a "final offer" and a further negotiation meeting would be happening mid-February.

It should be noted, however, that we expect the bargaining position of the employers to be around increasing the flat rate and cut-off point to a maximum of around £400.

We should not expect an offer, therefore, that we will be able to recommend. So it is likely we will be moving towards balloting over the next month or 2.

We will, however, require a consultative ballot to gauge opinion on any improved offer before we can proceed to a full postal ballot on industrial action.

With the implementation of the anti-union laws requiring 50% turnouts in public sector industrial action ballots, we will need a similar turnout in any consultative ballot to justify the postal ballot.

I don't believe this should make it impossible to achieve but we all need to be aware of our responsibilities here.

Each branch of the union will need to ensure that it gets a decent response from as big a percentage of the relevant membership as possible.

We cannot do this without you.

If we fail to recognise the need to get the necessary turnouts, we will be dooming ourselves to perpetually lower pay and/or worse.

Please ensure you respond to any formal or informal ballot as soon as you can. Be sure to report to the branch if you think you are not getting necessary ballot information. Make sure your contact details are up to date. (the easiest way to do this is to maintain your electronic member account on the national Unison website - this is fed back to the branch).

P.T.O.

BUDGETS/CUTS:

We are well down the road of the annual budget setting process with some councils having already set a budget.

As previously stated, DCC had projected a likely cut of around £12.5million in its annual budget for 2017/18 onwards. This was on top of the £23million in 2016/17. Finance had already started to lay out their base budget (covering more than half the savings) last week.

Last minute haggling in Holyrood has resulted in a significant improvement in funding to "local services" but it was not entirely clear what the net change to each council's budget would be.

At a guess, the £12.5million will be reduced by a couple of million. This still leaves a big gap and will fall on services that are already creaking.

Elsewhere, there have been reported threats from some councils that there may be **compulsory redundancies**.

This includes **neighbouring SNP run Angus Council, who are cutting their home care services to the bone**.

Our branch has been quite clear that we would make our employer pay a very heavy price for any compulsory redundancy - both in terms of insisting on the government (legislated) guidance on redundancy compensation in Local Government and by way of industrial action in support of anyone threatened with compulsory redundancy or any attempt to reduce the terms of compulsory redundancy.

Our own employer's commitment to no compulsory redundancies has, in recent years, changed from an absolute commitment to a "desire" to avoid it. This suggests there will be no compulsory redundancies until there are compulsory redundancies.

- The **administration's proposals** for this year's cuts should be published on the **13th Feb**.
- There is a **Dundee Against Cuts march and rally** planned for **Saturday 18th Feb**.
- We hope to **Lobby the budget setting meeting on the afternoon of 23rd Feb**.

Please put these dates in your diary and watch out for further updates on PAY and CUTS.

Also note - Branch AGM will be held at lunchtime (Steps theatre conference room) and in the evening (Baxter Park bowling club) on Friday 3rd March. Please put in your calendar and watch out for paperwork.

There will also be a Race Night at the bowling club following the evening AGM meeting (maximum 60 tickets - available through branch office) to raise money for Unison "There For You" members welfare charity.