

Hi Kate,

Thank you for your letter of 18 instant. I have a keen interest in most if not all of the areas covered in your questionnaire and I will give them careful consideration before replying. I should tell you that some responses you may agree with and perhaps others, we could debate.

You of course are aware, that I am an independent candidate and as such will speak for the communities in Troup Ward in Banff and Buchan and that will probably include quite a number of your members. I am unfettered by political party imperatives or vested interest and that will shape much of my activity should I be elected.

While I understand your responsibilities and role in respect of your members, if elected, I am likely to have a less specific broader view e.g. on education where I will dig my heels in at the prospect of school closures aimed at saving money in the short term but support the development of a more efficient and fair learning process. Fair that is for learners and for teaching staff at all levels.

You actually touched on part of the reason I'm interested in the salaries of senior officials in general and that includes Aberdeenshire Council by the way. In this case I'm interested in UNISON because it is UNISON that is asking the questions. I am also interested in the Public and Commercial Services Union who asked similar questions at a public meeting I attended tonight. After all it is the hard work of unpaid activists such as yourself that probably ensures the continuity of the work of the union in respect of the interests of its members and as you intimate, the wider community.

However, the salaries of paid officials are, I imagine, paid for by the contributions of your members whom in many cases I'm sure, find it a struggle from time to time, to meet the financial needs of themselves or their families. I am always interested in comparing the incomes of senior managers with the incomes of those they represent just as I am interested in seeing how other volunteers or workers in the third sector fair when finite funds are disbursed.

I am of the view that the efforts of volunteers, in their many capacities, (perhaps like yourself) often goes unrecognised for the contributions they make to organisations and the community and I would hate to think that they might be seen as merely a useful and inexpensive way to further the aims of a particular entity.

I am also sympathetic to the plight of lower paid workers who are not in the public sector but who also experience great difficulty in this time of economic constraint and I am sympathetic to the plight of our older citizens who are placed at the end of NHS waiting lists or are afraid to leave their homes because of fear of crime or anti-social behaviour. The list is endless.

So perhaps you can see that while I may be sympathetic to the needs and aspirations of your members, I am also sympathetic to the needs and aspirations of so many others within our communities. There are few winners when cuts start to bite, when wage values fall and when jobs are lost. I would like to think that our job is to work together so that we can do what we can to reduce the number of losers.

Regards,

Bill Rebecca