

# UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

March 2018

## 2018 AGM REPORT

Branch members attending this year's aggregate AGMs again pledged to defend council services and the workers who provide them. There was also overwhelming support for action to end period poverty in our schools and to improve awareness of disability, especially amongst managers, to ensure that disabled members are supported in the workplace.



Heather Wakefield

### Heather shares her vision for UNISON into the future

Our guest speaker, Heather Wakefield has been UNISON's Head of Local Government, Police and Justice since 2001. Heather has a background in women's rights and equality and has long campaigned for equal pay, equalities legislation and equal opportunities for women.

She called on UNISON to **"speak out more than we have about the impact of austerity"** and to protect members on the front-line – especially women and minority groups who have borne the brunt of the Tory led governments' austerity agenda.

**"UNISON must be the public services champion – for workers and services,"** said Heather.

### Be proud of our council services and council workers



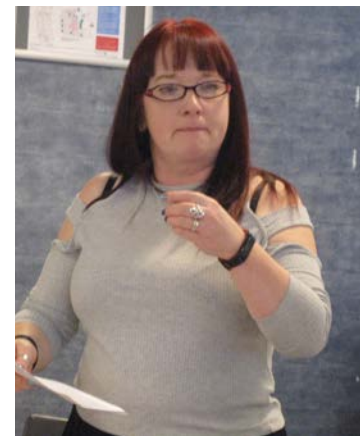
The AGMs pledged to campaign locally to highlight the impact of council cuts and to lobby MPs, MSPs and councillors for an improved budget settlement, as Branch Secretary Inez Kirk called for a co-ordinated nationwide UNISON

campaign to save local services and local authorities.

**"We all need to be proud of the services that local government provides, and say that our services matter."**

**"We need to build a robust media campaign that promotes the work of local authorities and the essential nature of the wellbeing work carried out."**

The branch has begun this campaign by delivering a Valentine's Day card to our SNP MSPs calling on them to **"love their council workers" and give us decent funding and pay**."



Inez Kirk





## End period poverty



Kate Ramsden

The AGMs overwhelmingly supported a branch call for sanitary products to be made available in all Aberdeenshire schools to ensure all girls have ready access to sanitary wear.

They condemned the **“shameful”** decision of the council administration to reject

this plan and will lobby the council to change their position and to make sanitary wear available in girls’ and unisex toilets.

Moving the motion, Branch Communications Officer, Kate Ramsden warned that period poverty is a trade union issue and a health issue, with girls forced to use unsuitable materials at risk to their health or having to miss school.

**“Girls that are already disadvantaged in so many ways by growing up in poverty end up missing school whenever they have their periods,”** slammed Kate.

## Branch calls for greater disability awareness in council

The AGMs backed measures to hold the council to account for meeting their commitments under their Equalities Statement and called on the employers to provide more specific training and awareness raising for managers in particular, on disability issues including reasonable adjustments.



Kathleen Kennedy

Kathleen Kennedy, Branch Equalities’ Officer said that whilst we are pleased that Aberdeenshire Council has made the commitment to awareness raising as part of the Disability Confident Scheme, **“we are asking for more**

**– we are calling for employers to provide specific disability awareness training.**

**“We also want our council to monitor their progress honestly in relation to all staff with protected characteristics.**

**“When employers say they are committing to this we ask for evidence based on workers’ own experiences.”**

Members at the AGM asked that mental health is given a higher profile in our discussions with the council, with proper supports and reasonable adjustments available to those who need it. This was agreed.

We also heard from a member about a family member’s experience at a council run event which was a clear breach of equalities, and the branch will take up this matter.



Cornerstone members at Glasgow AGM

### Business

The accounts were approved with a vote of thanks to the treasurer, Ann Gray, and the

motion approving an honorarium for the treasurer was overwhelmingly supported.

The annual report was

agreed with a vote of thanks to Inez Kirk, Branch Secretary,

The uncontested branch officers’ and stewards’ posts

were approved, and following a count of ballot papers returned, Inez Kirk was declared Branch Secretary with 104 votes to Kate Ramsden’s 79.

# PAY UP NOW CAMPAIGN

**U**NISON members call on local MPs to vote for a decent pay rise for public service workers



Branch members call on their MP to support decent pay

Members of Aberdeenshire UNISON delivered postcards to Colin Clark MP on 30th Nov 2017 calling on him to support a decent pay rise for public service workers, as part of UNISON's Pay Up Now! Campaign.

*"We have sent postcards to all Aberdeenshire MPs. Since they are all members of the Conservative party in power at Westminster, they are uniquely placed to use their influence to stand up for their constituents who deliver Aberdeenshire's essential services,"* said Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair

As a result of a UNISON petition calling for decent pay for public service workers signed by over 140,000 people, a debate was held in Westminster on 4th December. The postcards from his constituents will demand that Mr Clark and his colleagues support this call.

Kate added, *"For seven years now, with the Conservative party in government, our*

*members have not had a pay rise. In each of those years, we either got no increase at all or saw our pay rise by just 1%. At the same time there have been steep rises in the cost of living which mean that our pay has actually been cut by around 15%."*

Branch members including home carers, clerical workers, housing assistants and school support staff carried placards showing how much they get paid and how much they would be getting if their pay had kept up with the cost of living. For example, some home carers are now £2,500 worse off than seven years ago.

**U**NISON Aberdeenshire has launched a new campaign to put social care and social care workers at the top of its agenda.

The new campaign will put UNISON at the heart of supporting and upskilling staff, and ensuring each workplace is adopting the best practices for its workforce. Our social care team of Susan, Karen and Lorcan will be out and about near your workplace soon.

*"The crisis in social care has led to under-funding, under-staffing, and the closure of some residential homes. At the same time, higher standards for staff (such as getting SVQs qualifications) and registration with the Scottish Social Care Council (SSSC) mean that staff are more likely to held personally accountable if anything goes wrong."*

If you are willing to help out in any way, just give us a call, text or email. Our outreach organiser Susan Kennedy is on 07976 636131 or [s.kennedy2@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.kennedy2@unison.co.uk).

**A**berdeenshire UNISON has contributed to evidence to the Local Government Committee on the proposed Planning Bill.

*"UNISON is concerned that this suggests that planning must focus on economic development rather than community development. While the two are linked it should be made clearer that planning is about making lives better for people not businesses."*



Branch Chair, Steve Gray said. *"The Planning Bill still relies on the private sector led approach to delivering affordable housing which has been tried and failed across Scotland and the UK. The delivery of affordable housing by the public sector particularly local authorities needs to be recognised and given due statutory support in the Planning Bill especially for the acquisition of land."*



## FESTIVE CHEER FOR GLASGOW'S LOW PAID WOMEN

**A**round ten thousand low paid women at Glasgow city council received a large helping of festive cheer from Scotland's top judges.



The council was refused permission by the Court of Session on December 21st to appeal against the women's equal pay victory earlier this year.

After ten years of litigation, the claimants supported by UNISON and Action 4 Equality won a historic victory in August, forcing the council to start talks about substantial compensation.

Despite committing to *"do the right thing"* the council petitioned the Court of Session for permission to keep the legal battle going with an appeal to London. This was refused unequivocally today.

UNISON Scotland Regional Manager Peter Hunter said: *"In a clear and unequivocal*

*judgement read from the bench the Court immediately dismissed every shred of argument presented by the council lawyers.*

*"Glasgow city council has shown an appetite for endless litigation that has delayed justice for thousands of women.*

*"We have rarely seen such forthright and immediate rejection of an employer argument.*

*"The Court could not have been more clear – the council do not have a valid pay system and they must address their obligations to women and do that now. Our members were in court and could not be more delighted. We look forward to the hard work of delivering justice for our people in the new year."*

Another court victory makes it much harder for employers to ignore staff when making major changes in the workplace.

The Court of Appeal ruling means that for the first time employers will be obliged to consult with unions around any workplace issues that affect their members. Until now, unions only had the right to be consulted where the law required this, for example in TUPE regulations where employees transfer from one employer to another, and in redundancy cases.

The ruling means employers will also have to involve unions in issues such as those around working hours and holiday pay.

It will benefit thousands of employees whose rights at work are under threat and means that employers will face greater scrutiny over their treatment of staff.

### UNISON: HERE WHEN YOU NEED US

Write to: UNISON Aberdeenshire, Grampian Resource Centre,  
7 Alford Place, Aberdeen AB10 1YD Call: 01224 620 624

or email: [aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk](mailto:aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk) web: <http://aberdeenshireunison.org>

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