

# What UNISON can do for you!



When we speak on behalf of our members.



When we speak to our members.

UNISON is the leading public services union with over 1.3 million members. And when we talk we need people to listen. But when we're helping or advising individual members, we prefer the more friendly one-to-one how-can-I-help-you approach.

To become a member and get the backing of many or the support of one, call 0845 355 0845 or visit [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk). **UNISON – All for one.**



## Join us today!

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### Support our members and promote their interests.

The branch is involved in a great deal of work for, with and on behalf of members.

Branch officers and stewards support individual members who have grievances or who are being disciplined or investigated.

We give advice on a range of issues about people's jobs and conditions of service and about council policies. We consult with members about their issues and raise these with the council.

For example, we have had meetings with members who are homecarers and teaching support staff, and have raised their issues with the council.

### Negotiation and consultation.

We negotiate with the council and with other employers about matters such as single status, service and modernisation reviews, pay in the voluntary sector and more. We respond to consultations on policy development and review.

### Campaigning

We campaign on issues at both local and national level, both on behalf of our members and on wider citizenship issues, such as asylum seeker children; and against the BNP.

### Keeping you informed

We do our best to keep you up to date with all that we do through our branch website at [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com); through our newsletter which we send out to all members 3 times a year; and through bulletins on particular issues such as Single Status and Equal Pay.

For more information about all these activities, go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com/branchactivity.html](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/branchactivity.html)

The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the UNISON Aberdeenshire Branch



# Matters

The Newsletter for UNISON Members in Aberdeenshire

Editor: Kate Ramsden - Winter 2007/8

Happy New Year....Happy New Year....Happy New Year....Happy New Year....Happy New Year

## Appeals training

As single status appeals begin, 16 branch officers, stewards and activists came along to a two day training event on the Appeals Procedure and the Job Evaluation Scheme, so that they can support members who have appealed their single status mapping.

Day one focussed on the CoSLA Job Evaluation Scheme which forms the basis of Aberdeenshire Council's pay and grading structure, and underpins the Job Families and Job Role Profiles. Participants looked at the 13 factors which make up the scheme and familiarised themselves with how these are



applied. They did exercises in using the scheme to help them to see how they can support their members who believe they have been allocated the wrong factor score. The second session took activists through the Appeals Procedure itself, with a practical focus on how to support members at each stage of the appeals process.

"We were delighted that so many people chose to come along to the training and it was clear from their enthusiasm that they are keen to support their colleagues in UNISON," said Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair. "It is difficult just now to know exactly how the formal stages of the Appeals Procedure will work, because it is uncharted territory," she added. "However, we are as well prepared as we can be and it will be a case of learning more as we go along."



All those who attended felt that it had been a worthwhile training event and most have signed up to "shadow" branch officers at the informal appeals meetings set for the New Year.



## Aberdeenshire Branch AGM

will be held on  
Wed 20th February 2008 at 7.15pm  
at the  
Kintore Arms, Inverurie  
Buffet at 6.30pm  
ALL WELCOME

Prize draw for those who come along.  
Win a meal for two or an M&S  
token worth £20 and £30



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For more information, breaking news and other stories go to the branch website at [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com)

# Progress on pensions



Three way talks between the Trade Unions, CoSLA and the Scottish Government on the "new-look" Local Government Pension Scheme have resulted in agreement on most of the outstanding aspects of the scheme.

## Contributions

It has been accepted that the average contribution rate for members should be 6.3% with actual contributions paid on a tiered rate which would ensure that staff earning below £18K will pay a lower contribution for improved benefits than in the current scheme. "This is good news for many of our lower paid members who make up half of the local government workforce," said Mike Kirby, Scottish Convener and UNISON negotiator.

## Ill-health retireals

One of the most difficult issues to resolve has been ill-health benefits. "The UK Finance Act requires that ill-health retirement provisions in all pension schemes have to meet the "permanent incapacity" test. This has limited the scope for real improvements in this area and our focus has been on protecting the entitlement of members who currently qualify for benefits, without falling foul of the law," Mike said.



Mike Kirby

This has been achieved by targeting enhancements to service on those who are most unlikely to be able to return to gainful employment before they are 65. This is Level 1 of the ill-health retirement provisions. They will receive 100% enhancement up to age 65. This means they will be able to retire on a full pension. This is an improvement on the current scheme.

Staff who meet the "permanent incapacity" test but don't qualify for Level 1, presumably because they are not quite as "permanently incapacitated" as the Level 1 staff, will be on

Level 2 which will attract a 25% enhancement up to age 65. "This is not quite as good as we were hoping for," Mike acknowledged, "but we believe it is the best that can be done as things stand." However, if any scheme members will be worse off under the new scheme they will get transitional protection. This will be reviewed along with the scheme every 3 years.

## Discretionary payment proposal

Because of the UK Finance Act, it was not possible to include a Level 3 in the scheme for staff who are not "permanently incapacitated" but are unable to go back to their jobs in the foreseeable future. Any provision has to be made outwith the pension scheme. The employers have proposed that discretionary payments be made available to these staff, based on one week's salary for every year worked, tax free up to £30,000. These would need to be negotiated with each local authority and for this reason UNISON has some reservations about this proposal. However, it would apply, if agreed, to all employees and not just those in the LGPS.

Where scheme members move to a lower paid post for reasons of ill-health it has been agreed that they will get extended protection for service accrued on the previous higher salary.

The consultation period ended on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007.

## Ballot

Members will be balloted on the new scheme in the New Year. It is proposed that when it comes into force, (likely to be April 2009) a line will be drawn under the old scheme and those retiring after that date will have two pension calculations, one on benefits accrued under the old scheme and one for benefits accrued under the new. This will be reviewed every 6 years.

The next pensions delegate meeting will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008 to consider the draft regulations and to plan the ballot.

For further information go to:

[www.aberdeenshireunison.com/pensions/pensionsupdate2nov07.html](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/pensions/pensionsupdate2nov07.html)

## One year claim for £1,000 pa or 5%

The shape of the forthcoming claim for a pay rise for over 220,000 local government staff in Scotland was submitted to the employers on 14th November at the Annual Meeting of the Scottish Joint Council in Dunkeld.

As a member of the Joint Trade Unions negotiating team, Bob Revie, Aberdeenshire Branch Secretary was in attendance as the pay claim was lodged.

Local government unions UNISON, Unite and the GMB agreed that they would press for a one year claim of £1,000pa or 5% - whichever is the greater.

Dougie Black, UNISON Regional Officer and secretary of the trade union negotiators said. "This is a fair reward for the work that local government staff put in delivering our essential public services. We will be submitting the claim and the arguments that back that up to the employers today. The current two-year deal comes to an end in April 2008."



Dougie Black

"It is now up to the employers to come back with an offer," said Bob. "Then the negotiations will start in earnest." He added, "The trade unions have always been in favour of a settlement which includes a lump sum to favour our colleagues at the lower end of the pay scales. We await the employers' response with interest."

In addition to the pay element of the claim, the trade unions also want to seek an increase of 3 days annual leave (both at basic level and after five years service) and an extra one day public holiday.

## Competition Corner

For Christmas, six brothers and sisters received CD albums as presents. The albums were by Madonna, Steps, Robbie Williams, Boyzone, Mozart and Shania Twain.

Kevin chose a CD by a solo girl singer. Laura hates pop music but got an album she wanted. James chose a solo singer. Rebecca chose a girl singer, but not Madonna. Joanne and Steve both chose CDs by groups. Steve chose Steps.

Win £25 if you can determine who received which CD?

Entries on a postcard with your name and membership number to: UNISON Freepost (AB048)

7 Alford Place, Aberdeen

The answer to last issue's brainteaser was: 50p, 39 x 10p pieces, and 60 pennies £1, a 50p, 28 x 10p pieces, and 70 pennies x £1, a 50p, 17 x 10p pieces, and 80 pennies x £1, a 50p, 6 x 10p pieces, and 90 pennies. Congratulations to the winner, Elaine West who wins £25.

## Paltry pay award for Cornerstone but campaign underway

Financial constraints amongst voluntary sector providers has meant that UNISON has had to reluctantly accept a 1.5% pay award for our members working in Cornerstone.

UNISON held a consultative ballot which showed that almost 70% of those voting wanted to reject the offer. However, as less than one in three members voted this was not seen as a mandate for action, leading to the decision to reluctantly accept the employer's offer.

"We have to accept that whilst we have a respectable number of members in Cornerstone, these are patchy across the organisation," said Bob Revie, Branch Secretary, urging members in Cornerstone to set about recruiting others into membership. "With further challenges in the future, UNISON will be better placed to represent our members if the membership is higher," he added.

## Joint campaign

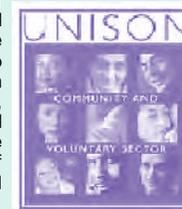
This situation has highlighted once again the impact on staff and services in the voluntary and community sector because of how such services are funded by central and local government. UNISON has been central, via the STUC, to getting agreement between the voluntary sector and trade unions on a set of campaigning points to take to the Scottish Government and CoSLA.

UNISON Scotland has joined with the STUC, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, TGWU/Unite and Community Care Providers, Scotland, to pledge a joint campaign to secure

• a commitment by public sector purchasers to fund wages and conditions of employment for **front line workers** in the community and voluntary sector at the same level as those in the public sector.

• Five year contracts for community and voluntary sector providers to replace the current short-term funding arrangements  
• Improvements in commissioning and competitive tendering to ensure high quality services  
• A national contract framework covering the key principles of commissioning and funding to be agreed between the Scottish Government, purchasers and providers.

"These measures will hopefully ensure a more level playing field for this sector and will reduce the pressure to drive down pay, conditions and therefore the quality of services," said Bob.



## Branch welcomes Irene as regional organiser

Irene Sinclair has been appointed as Regional Organiser for Aberdeenshire Branch, amongst others, to cover for Emma Phillips' absence on maternity leave. Emma had a baby girl, Sarah, in September so is being kept busy in a very different way!

Irene took up post in October 2007. Before that, she was Branch Secretary of Moray Branch and played a lead role in their single status negotiations and appeals process.

"I have very much enjoyed the post so far, and the people I have been working with, and have found it an interesting challenge," Irene told UNISON Matters. Irene is with us until September.



## New year message from the branch

Happy New Year to all our members and best wishes for 2008.

2008 brings in a year which will see the Branch facing a number of major issues.

Some of these are current issues which flow into the New Year such as Aberdeenshire Council's Single Status implementation and it's associated appeals process, as well as the programme of Modernisation Reviews underway.

## Stewards needed

These are hugely resource intensive for the branch and we have begun a programme of training for our Stewards and contacts to allow them to take a greater role on behalf of members. It is our intention to offer this training again over the next few months to bring others on board.

You will see from other items in this issue and from direct mailings sent to you that

our AGM is on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. We really need more Stewards and contacts and if you can help in any way please do. I remind existing stewards that they must return a completed nomination form to remain in office.

## Voluntary sector

Our Community and Voluntary members face a difficult future with constant funding pressures putting their jobs, pay and terms and conditions under threat. UNISON will lead campaigns with VS employers to Government to seek full funding for the sector which provides a quality Public Service to some of the most vulnerable members of society.

## Decision time

In the early part of the year the New Local Government Pension Scheme will be put to those of you affected for consideration and UNISON will provide you with full information on this before you need to take a decision.

*As a Branch UNISON Aberdeenshire pledge that we will work on your behalf, listen to your concerns and involve you as much as possible on matters which affect you. With your help we will go forward – have a good year!*

Bob Revie, Branch Secretary

