

Come along to the AGM

The Branch Annual General Meeting will be held on Wed 17th Feb at the Kintore Arms, Inverurie from 7.15pm A buffet will be available from 6.30pm.

The AGM is the main policy making forum for the branch and it is where branch officers and stewards are elected. It is your opportunity to come along and find out what the branch has been doing and to hold your branch officers and stewards to account for their work throughout the year. The annual accounts will be presented at the AGM and you will get a chance to ask questions about all aspects of the branch's work.

Remember that the union is only as strong as its members. Please come along and support us, especially if you have had a service from us in the past.

Women members enjoy a pathway into UNISON

Thirteen women from the Branch who attended a 2 day residential Pathways course in the Jurys Hotel, Aberdeen in November 2009 described the experience as enjoyable and inspiring.

The Pathways course is aimed at women members and new activists who would like to find out more about UNISON and to see how the skills they already have can be used in a union setting. It also has the advantage as with all UNISON training, of being done in paid time off work.

"I really enjoyed the day and felt a great sense of being part of something bigger, and hearing everyone's stories. I have a meeting coming up with a manager and feel much better about tackling it after the Pathways day." Bernadette

Lynne Duncan, Organising assistant, who organised and tutored the course said, "It went really well. All the women who came along took part fully in the event and I think got a lot out of it – they are all certainly more informed about UNISON and how the skills they already use in their everyday life are transferable to participating in the union.

"We don't push anyone to get involved at the end of the training but all the participants agreed to recruit within their workplace and to attend the branch AGM next year. On top of this, several have agreed to be contacts and some have agreed to become stewards," added Lynne.



"This was a great group of women to work with—they made my job very easy. Most of them had never met before but because they were all so open and friendly it was like they had known one another for years.

There was a wealth of talent and skills

on the training and I hope everyone left feeling more confident about using their skills both in the union and in everyday life. I'm really looking forward to meeting up with everyone again soon." Lynne Course tutor

There will be a half day follow up with the participants after the branch AGM to see how they are getting on and to support them with their development.

Lynne continued, "I would like to thank the branch committee for their donation of £600.00 towards the cost of the event and for the support and assistance received from stewards and officers, particularly Inez

Teece and Tricia Morrison, both with organising the training and also for their participation."

"This has been a very successful event which has encouraged more women to get involved in their union. Who knows – maybe we can do it all over again next year!" Said Lynne.

Please contact Lynne on 01224 620624 for further information on Pathways training.



We all need to do our bit to defend public service jobs and services

PUBLIC WORKS:

As UNISON Scotland launches its 'Public Works' campaign (the Scottish arm of the union's 'Million Voices for Change' campaign) with the message that public service cuts will increase costs for ordinary families and will delay economic recovery, the branch is keen to play our part in getting the message over. We will be running stalls in Woodhill House and Gordon House, so come along and support us and add your voice to protect our public services.

What can you do?



Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair said, "We think it is really important to involve our members in this campaign. After all we are both the front-line providers of public services and the users of public services. Who knows their importance and their value better than us?"

"So please, come along to our stalls and sign up to our "Public Works" campaign," she urged.

Kate added, "You can also sign up individually to the "Million Voices" campaign at national level. We would also like you to tell us what you do in your job and why it is important. And tell us your own experiences of using public services - how they have supported you and your families, by going to the branch website at www.aberdeenshireunison.com"

Why public services are so important

Affordable and value for money

Kate warned, "We need to get across the message that if these services are cut back or privatised the increased costs of paying for them individually can only increase the cost burden on hard-pressed families. We estimate the average household gets more than £10,000 a year in benefits from public services. Public delivery provides value for money through economies of scale and stopping shareholders taking profits out of the pot. A year's domestic waste collection sourced privately would cost

The average household benefits by more than £10,000 a year from public services.

around £2,500, and the average cost of a year's education outside the public sector in Scotland is around £8,200."

Important for the economy

Bob Revie, Branch Secretary added, "But it is not just that public services are essential for all of us. They also play a key part in the economic well-being of our communities. Cuts in public sector jobs, pay and pensions will only lead to less money being spent to stimulate the economy, and if public services were cut they would order and contract less with the private sector."



Cuts in public sector jobs, pay and pensions will only lead to less money being spent to stimulate the economy.

"Far from being the drain on the economy argued by those who created the economic crisis, the public sector contracts for supplies and services from the private sector - especially important

when private industry faces reduced order books.

A just and fairer society

"In addition money spent in the economy by public service staff will not be there if we accept the advice of the right wing think tanks to cut jobs, pay and pensions. Now is the time to build a fairer society based on social justice, good jobs and quality public services. It is up to all of us to highlight the importance of public services and to get across the message that Public Works!" said Bob.

Please come along and visit our stall at Gordon House on the 10th and Woodhill House on the 11th of February. There will be gifts and the opportunity to have your photograph and name added to the million voices for change campaign.

UNISON secures council pledge to consult staff and unions in Playgroups review

UNISON along with GMB and Unite met with management representatives of the council's education service in November to discuss the implications of the forthcoming review for playgroup staff and secured agreement on full consultation and no changes to Playgroups and staff until the review is completed.

If any member would like further information they can contact Kate Ramsden via the UNISON Resource Centre on 01224 620624 or go to the Branch website at the link below <http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/educationissues/playgroupreview.html>

Could F.O.I. help you?

If you are one of the people who was denied your results and managers comments unless you were going to the formal stage of your Single Status Appeal, you may be interested to know that a simple request addressed to foi@aberdeenshire.gov.uk will get you that information.

Branch Website wins award

The branch website has won UNISON Scotland's Branch Communications Award 2009 for Best Use of Electronic Media.

The award was presented to Kate Ramsden, Web manager, by Lilian Macer, Vice Convenor at UNISON's Scottish Council Meeting of Scottish branches on Saturday 5th Dec 2009, along with a cheque for £250.

Kate said, "I am delighted that once again Aberdeenshire Branch has won a Communications and Campaigns award. I think it is a tribute to all the organising and campaigning work done by the branch.

"I maintain the website, but I am never short of things to report. We are a very active branch and the website shows just how much work all our branch officers and activists do to support our members."

David stands in

We are delighted to report that Regional Organiser Emma Phillips has had a baby boy, John, a little brother for Sarah. All are doing well.

We are pleased to welcome David O'Connor to the Branch as acting Regional Organiser covering for Emma's maternity leave.

**Join us today: UNISON Aberdeenshire
Tel: 01224 620624
E-mail: aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk
www.aberdeenshireunison.com**

Congratulations

Mrs Isla Swan from Turriff you were last times winner and a cheque for £25 is on its way.

Competition

In this issue all we are asking you to do is to tell us why public services are important to you (please attach another piece of paper if necessary). All entries received will be put in a hat and the entry drawn out will win the £25 cheque. We would like to be able to use your quotes as part of our campaign to defend public services so please let us know if that's okay.

Name:

Address:

Job:

Membership number:

Public Services are important to me because.....

I am happy to be quoted in the Branch Newsletter or website YES/NO

Cut out and send in to UNISON Freepost (AB048), 7 Alford Place, Aberdeen.