

New stewards trained to support UNISON members



UNISON has been successfully training new stewards in January and February. Our newly accredited stewards will be providing their members with representation on workplace issues, supporting people through HR processes, and growing our membership.

Over the five day course they learned about the role of trade unions at work and how they provide support to their members. Trade unions have strength in numbers, so it's essential that we grow our membership to give us more of a say in workplace matters. They looked at how to organise around hot topics and the importance of standing up for equalities. In the final two days the new stewards carried out a mock disciplinary hearing, prepared their cases and defended their members.

UNISON relies on volunteers from our membership to become stewards and provide this essential service to their colleagues. Stewards are accredited under the Employment Relations Act 1999 by UNISON and have access to an excellent national support network through the union, ensuring that our members get the very best support and advice. **Find your steward on our website at aberdeenunison.org.uk.**

If you'd like to become a steward, express your interest online and we'll send you nomination papers, or come along to our AGM on 14 March 2018!

Gold for Aberdeen City in UNISON Scotland Communications Awards!

UNISON Scotland announced the winners of it's annual Communication Awards this month. Aberdeen City Branch was awarded the **Gold Award for Best Online Presence**, recognising the changes we've made to the way we communicate with members online.



Our refreshed social media channels on Facebook and Twitter (@abdncityUNISON) and the new look website have made it quicker and easier for members to stay in touch. You can now get advice online using our custom search linking to specialist support from UNISON, ACAS, SAMH and many more. Many of our members are also choosing to contact us for help through our online form.

We've also been making sure we publish updates on transformation at Aberdeen City Council and as much information about our activities and responses to issues in the workplace as we can. You can see all of our communications online and can find out about key campaigns, as well as receiving many by email. Our social media advertising strategy has been driving helping our message reach members directly.

ESSENTIAL COVER

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Aberdeen City Branch
March 2018



Inside this edition...

Meet our newest stewards

Find out about transformation

Read our statement on redundancies

Learn about our transformation principles

Help and support is available from your local steward. Find out who they are online!

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Standing against cuts, redundancies and jobs losses at ACC

UNISON Aberdeen City has agreed that we would defend members' jobs and support those who wished to leave ACC voluntarily. There are certain principles which we abide by. The first one of these is that we will oppose redundancy whether straightforward Compulsory Redundancy or by implication / the back door. UNISON is questioning the Council's recent statement that it only 'hopes' to achieve savings by voluntary means and we are seeking a more robust commitment to no compulsory redundancies from politicians and management.

Read more inside...

Continued from page 1

With the scale of savings required to be made in conjunction with transformation it is clear that ACC would require to resort to job losses.

We are fully engaged with all consultation opportunities available to us and we will continue to scrutinise and challenge proposals and defend our members' jobs. UNISON represents members by participating fully in the Delivery and Control Boards within the Transformation Programme and would encourage members to raise issues with the branch so we can be as effective as possible.

While ACC is hoping to achieve redeployment for any staff at risk of redundancy, UNISON will continue to ask how this will be achievable. Retraining is being offered, but we are concerned about how the new functions will provide suitable matches for displaced staff. Meantime we will continue to ensure that fair and appropriate procedures are followed in accordance with current policy.

Members are strongly encouraged to contact a UNISON steward immediately if they believe they are at risk from this. Find your local steward at aberdeenunison.co.uk

UNISON Aberdeen City sets out principles to protect jobs and local services

In response to the changes proposed at Aberdeen City Council as part of its Target Operating Mode, UNISON is setting out its own principles for change and a commitment to its members.

The scale of cuts the Council is proposing is significant, and adds to major budget reductions in previous years. With £125m less to spend at the end of this process, jobs and local services could be threatened. This city has seen enough cuts without putting the jobs of hardworking council employees at risk. Our members

are committed to providing high quality services, but have expressed worries they will not be able to maintain these standards if they can't be funded properly.

Councillors were told in August that achieving a balanced budget will mean savings are spread across all Council revenue expenditure – currently around 40% of spending is on staff. Management has now provided assurances that keeping services in-house is a priority and support will be provided to do this, so we will campaign to make sure this is the case.

We need to stand up for providing decent local services to the people who live and work here, and for the jobs of our hardworking members. To do this we have set out ten principles we will campaign for.

UNISON will campaign for:

1. **No compulsory redundancies, including by the back door**
2. **Protection of our members' hard won terms and conditions and pensions**
3. **Putting equality at the heart of community services and protecting vulnerable people**
4. **Effective redeployment with training and qualifications support and proper job matching**
5. **No forced changes to job roles or duties, with the right grade for the job being done**
6. **All changes to jobs must have full risk, equality and impact assessments**
7. **Protection of our members' jobs from privatisation**
8. **Improving quality by keeping services public first, because public works**
9. **Commitment to Fair Working Practices and Fair and Equal Pay in commissioning**
10. **Open, transparent and early consultation with trade unions**

UNISON challenges structure as “fewer jobs, more work”

UNISON has been representing the views of our members by challenging the Interim Functional Structure and focusing on specific areas of concern for some services. The Council is still failing to address the uncertainty this has caused for our members and provide little detail on plans, intentions or objectives. There is no clear information about where jobs will end up, if they will change, or if they will even exist.

A leaner workforce could lead to redundancies

UNISON is particularly concerned about the potential for redundancies within this structure. The aim of a “smaller, leaner workforce” isn't possible on this scale with voluntary severances and early retirement alone. Management have been unable to state how much of the transformation cuts are based on having fewer staff. While we appreciate a precise figure may not be known, to be certain that £125m of cuts is possible will have needed a ballpark figure. We now know the figure for 2018/19 alone is 370 jobs.

We are committed to no compulsory redundancies and protecting our members' terms and conditions. Deleting posts and using time-limited redeployment processes doesn't provide members with the security they deserve. If the workforce is to be smaller and leaner, there will have to be fewer jobs meaning no real opportunities to redeploy displaced workers. While this might not be the Council's definition of a compulsory redundancy, it is the spirit of it.

More work with fewer people will cause anxiety

Many of our members are concerned their workload will increase substantially with these proposals. Where colleagues have been released under VS/ER and fixed term contracts, we are aware that some teams are seeing unfair increases in workload to continue providing services. This has caused stress, anxiety and unreasonable pressure to pick up extra work.

If you think this applies to you, please contact your local steward to get support.

Transformation updates:

As change progresses, UNISON has a seat at the table. We are representing our members' views at the Council's Transformation boards, scrutinising proposals and holding management to account. The issues we're raising for you right now are:

- **Job cuts, redundancies and redeployment**
- **Challenging changes to business support**
- **Keeping Facilities and Fleet in-house**

We've been raising our concerns about **centralising business support**—many members are worried about this as the scope is constantly changing. We are trying to clarify this and supporting those affected.

UNISON has significant concerns about using **redeployment as a “redundancy by the back door”** where our members aren't job matched or jobs aren't available. We're challenging the Council to redevelop this policy and prevent issues arising.

Commissioning has worried a lot of people about the future of their services., but **we're beginning to win the argument for keeping services in-house**, with options for fleet and facilities management being proposed on an “enhanced in-house” model. Further proposals have been received which suggests some previous outsourced services may come back in-house.

After the very public collapse of Carillion (a major contractor for the AWPR), UNISON hopes that the myth behind the case for outsourcing has been exposed and the Council will recognise the excellent value our members add to in-house service delivery.

The long and winding road...

We still have many arguments to win including a commitment to keeping services in public hands, effective redeployment to protect against compulsory redundancies, and standing in solidarity with colleagues whose services are negatively impacted. This is just the first step on a long journey.