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



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## **91% of members vote to accept Brexit beating pay rise of 9.5% over 3 years**

UNISON members have overwhelmingly voted to accept the pay offer for local government workers.

The move follows a consultative ballot of UNISON Scotland local government members in which 91% voted in favour of the deal and in record numbers.

UNISON's ballot closed on Thursday 31 January.

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The pay offer would deliver 9.5% cost of living increase over three years:

- 3.5% for 2018-19 (backdated),
- 3% for 2019-20 and
- 3% for 2020-21.

In addition it provides a commitment to fully consolidating the Living Wage, putting more money in the pockets of lower paid council workers, something UNISON has been campaigning on for years.

It also provides a commitment to re-open negotiations if the total pay offer value for teachers is becomes greater than the sum agreed for the three-year deal. The award will be backdated to 1 April 2018.

UNISON Head of Local Government Scotland Johanna Baxter said: "This is a great outcome, delivered as a

### When am I getting the pay rise?

Each of the three unions have to finish balloting their members. The final ballot for one of our sister unions closes on 28 February.

The backdated 3.5% pay will be negotiated as part of the next available pay packet.

direct result of the campaigning activity and political lobbying efforts of UNISON members up and down the country. The cost of living increases meet current and projected levels of RPI and we have secured commitments to fully consolidate the living wage and maintain parity across the local government workforce. Our members have been waiting on a pay increase for over a year now so look forward to receiving their increase soon."

UNISON chair of local government committee in Scotland Mark Ferguson said: "UNISON has campaigned hard to get the best deal we can for local government workers. While the offer does not make up for the many years of austerity, the offer, and particularly the commitment to consolidate the Living Wage, provides important safeguards for our lowest paid members.

"We will work to ensure this is properly delivered and local government workers will now receive back dated money in their pay packets in coming months."

**With the pay agreement lasting for three years, members can be confident that they will get the increases whatever the outcome of Brexit. This will also help the Council to plan ahead and ensure you get your next pay rises in April 2019 and April 2020 without delay.**

## Year of young worker shows need for trade unions

Millennials: Avocados, flat whites and Instagram – right? Not quite. The hipster characterisation masks a much starker reality for the houseless generation. Most young workers are contending with low wages, insecure jobs and no voice at work. They need trade unions more than ever.

This is why UNISON has voted to make 2019 the year of young workers. Considering the working conditions young workers face and the need to secure protection at work for future generations, it is a moral imperative. But it's not all doom and gloom – young members are one of UNISON's fastest growing demographics. We are already reaching out in new and innovative ways and demonstrating the practical impact we can bring to young people's lives.

### Did you know?

- Almost one in three young workers is on low pay.
- Young workers get £2.81 less per hour than their older colleagues.
- If you're under the age of 25 you get paid a lower minimum wage.
- One in five 21-30 year olds have worked on a zero-hours contract.
- Just three in ten young workers feel their current job makes the most of their experience.
- Four in ten young workers have been given little or no training in the last 12 months.
- Just thirty three per cent of people in their late 20s own a house– compared to 60% for the 'baby boomer' generation, when they were the same age.



# Council implements mental health plan after UNISON campaign success

UNISON has had a major success on mental health for members at Aberdeen City Council. At the Staff Governance Committee on 31 January 2019, the Council put forward its mental health action plan.

This comes after months of campaigning from UNISON and awareness raising with management. In June 2018, Branch Secretary Kenny Luke warned the committee that morale was at its lowest in his 26 years at the Council. UNISON has been working with management since then to effect change.

According to official figures, 8.9% of sickness absence in 2017/18 was related to mental health. It is the leading reason for absences and was the reason for 39% of referrals to Occupational Health at the end of 2016/17. Councillor Copland reminded the committee that absences for other physical illnesses can be a symptom of stress and anxiety. The real impact of mental health may be much higher.

The new mental health action plan will be implemented over the coming year with a report back to committee on how it has progressed.

**UNISON strongly supports this initiative.**

The plan includes tackling the stigma of mental health at work, training managers to have sensitive conversations with their teams, developing a wellbeing plan and a supportive culture for employees, and raising the profile of mental health.

## Still feeling the impact of job cuts

Members are still struggling as the impact of job cuts continues to be felt. The Council's transformation has not happened quickly enough to relieve the stress of taking on work left behind from departing colleagues. In the first two years of job cuts beginning 2017/18, we have lost more than 500 FTE. That's around 10% of non-teaching staff.

# AGM 2019 to be held on 13 March—have your say in how the branch is run!

Whether you're an activist or not, you have a voice in your union. We are a democratic organisation that relies on its members to tell us what they want.

You'll hear about what we've been doing this year, our plans for the year ahead, vote for who is on the branch committee, and get to have your say about the big issues affecting us all at work. Reports will be available on our website 7 days beforehand.

**Last year we had a record turnout of nearly 120 members**—there was some excellent debate and feedback on transformation. We'd like to do even better this year, so put it in your diary!

Lunch will be provided and members in attendance will receive a £10 Bon Accord Centre voucher.



## Have you considered being a steward?

We need more of our members to get involved in the branch to help us deal with the changes that lay ahead. Being a steward means that you are entitled to statutory time off to represent colleagues, are given five days of specialist training, and can learn lots of new skills. This is a really rewarding way to be involved in your union and understand more about how employment issues affect us all.

# UNISON calls for better funding deal for councils

UNISON is calling on the Scottish Government to improve the local government funding settlement to stop the cuts to local services.

According to the Local Government Benchmarking report, an annual report by the Improvement Service, funding to Scottish Councils has been cut by 8% over the last 8 years. Although the Scottish Government says it has not reduced funding, inflation has caused cuts to budgets in real terms.

As so much of the budget is ringfenced, the cuts have been focused on specific areas of councils. Across Scotland there has been cuts to roads spending of around 15%, planning has seen 34% cuts, and environmental services has seen 10%.

In Aberdeen City Council this has resulted in a need to cut more than £40 million in 2019/20 alone. This is an astronomic figure, several times larger than in previous years.

UNISON is concerned about the potential impact on members' jobs and the quality of local services in Aberdeen. The funding settlement for Aberdeen has created a real terms cut of almost 4% this year.

The Council's administration group has continued to give assurances that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the ongoing transformation programme. However, as our members struggle to deliver the quality of services they know people deserve, the funding cuts are now having a very visible impact on our city.

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## Newsletter recognised at UNISON communications awards

For the second year running, Aberdeen City branch has been recognised in the UNISON Scotland Communications Awards.



This year the branch was presented with the bronze award for Best Printed Publication. The branch newsletter is now in it's fourth edition and has had excellent feedback from members..

The award came with a cash prize which was matched by the branch and donated to the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

As transformation continues at Aberdeen City Council, the Branch Committee want to keep members clued up on the latest developments. The newsletter, edited by the Branch Communications Officer, is a positive way of doing this.

## ESSENTIAL COVER

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