

UNISON urges re-think on library cuts

UNISON has urged Edinburgh councillors and officials to address the many concerns about the proposed introduction of Open Libraries Solutions and staffless libraries, that remain unanswered.

No evidence has been provided that shows safety of staff, service user and council property is guaranteed with the installation of Open Libraries Solutions and CCTV.

Open libraries are



unstaffed and rely on a card entry system but that would not stop several people entering when one user opens the door.

CCTV will not provide the quick response that would be required in an emergency nor would it prevent the improper use of facilities or inappropriate

behaviour occurring.

There will be no one there to help with fire evacuation and medical emergencies or to prevent libraries from becoming a place to avoid in the evening rather than enjoy.

Evidence from other authorities has shown a drop in use, especially from women, the elderly, infirm or disabled, and people with learning disabilities who benefit from support.

Continued on Page 2

HEALTH & SAFETY Protecting you at work

Over the last few months UNISON has taken a more proactive approach towards the health, safety and welfare of members, services users, and third parties who use Edinburgh council services, reports Ian Mullen.

Workplace inspections have taken place in Community Centres, The Advice Shop, City Mortuary, Wester Hailes Education Centre, Waste Management and other service areas.

These inspections have highlighted what little Health and Safety work has been undertaken during the Transformation Programme, which was obviously the chief executive's priority.

UNISON found that risk assessments and codes of practice had not been updated or were non-existent.

Staff were not sure who their first aiders/fire wardens were. Many staff reported that fire drills had not taken place nor did they know where assembly points were.

Stress surveys have shown that absences due to work related stress

Continued on Page 2



**MARCH & RALLY
SATURDAY 7 OCTOBER**

It's time to do something about it. Come to the March & Rally and Family Fun Day: Saturday 7 October 2017, 11.30am, Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh

Public sector pay has risen by just 4.4% between 2010 and 2016 while the cost of living rose by 22%. On the average wage that means you've had a pay CUT of almost £4,000.

That's no way to treat hardworking people who play such a vital role in looking after us and holding our communities together – keeping us safe, healthy, educated, and cared for.

No compulsory redundancy and presumption of in-house

Unison has fought hard over the last few years to keep the council to their pledge of no compulsory redundancies and a presumption against outsourcing.

During this time, with over a thousand jobs going and budgets slashed it has not been easy.

Without UNISON's fight we are sure there would have been a different outcome.

As you know there is a new administration



following May's local elections, with the SNP now the biggest party.

The SNP and Labour coalition have now confirmed that they will retain both pledges.

There are currently

only around 20 staff on the redeployment pool seeking a funded post and UNISON will continue to keep the pressure on departments to find suitable vacancies.

H&S team action brings improvements

From page 1

continue to increase mainly due to reduced staffing levels, increased workloads and pressure from unachievable target setting.

UNISON members have said they feel pressurised to attend work while suffering from ill health as they do not want to be disciplined under the Managing Absence Policy.

Many sections have now become dependent on the goodwill of staff to remain open with staff members doing double shifts, called out at unsociable hours or doing unpaid overtime to cover absences.

All staff should be reporting incidents/accidents to their line managers when they occur.

The manager should record these incidents/accidents on the SHE portal.

Where more serious work related injuries occur, members are urged to report these to the line manager immediately so that they can be recorded on SHE and the Health & Safety Executive if required.

UNISON advises members to request copies of the logged information.

UNISON has

submitted a number of reports to the heads of section and Corporate Health and Safety highlighting our concerns and improvements are being made in certain areas, albeit after unavoidable delays.

These improvements are down to the efforts of the UNISON Health and Safety Team and workplace reps.

Libraries need well trained staff

From Page 1

There are also serious issues around unaccompanied children.

David Harrold, service conditions convener for UNISON Edinburgh says: "Management's endorsement of Open Libraries Solutions is primarily on the transaction/ loan aspect of library services.

"There is no acknowledgement that a

library does not function without a well-trained and motivated staff.

"We need these people to advise and guide our young students in their education, help the long-term unemployed back into work and provide a sense of community for the elderly and infirm.

"No self-service terminal or staff-less building will do that for the people of Edinburgh."

Janitors and facilities assistants review

The latest FM review involving the Janitors and Facilities staff did not start well and following pressure from the staff and UNISON, the right decision was finally made to consult more widely.

This now includes the Schools and Community centres who should take the opportunity to shape what service they actually need.

New branch structure

The branch office welcomes the conveners from Place and Communities and Families plus our new Health and Safety officer who now all have weekly facility time.

The group now consists of;

Service conditions coordinator and branch secretary -

Tom Connolly

Service conditions convener-

David Harrold

Service conditions officers –

Caroline McLean, Gerry Stovin, Pam Gifford & Ian Mullen

Place convener – Tom Howarth

Communities & Families convener – Pauline Henderson

Health & Safety Officer – Ian Mullen



Tom Connolly

Cleaning Review: Lowest paid must not carry the cost

UNISON fears that there are some big cuts being proposed in the forthcoming Cleaning Review, cutting the allocated hours to schools and council buildings.

This group of staff are predominately women on the lowest pay in the council, around £6,000 a year due to part time work and 38 week contracts.

They are also essential local jobs providing opportunities for morning and early evening work

The current mixed working patterns must continue, with no forced reduction in morning or afternoon cleaning hours.

Any reduction in cleaning hours allocated to a building must not result in a loss of hours



by Gerry Stovin
Service Conditions Officer

for individual staff.

There will be no slicing of hours from contracts and no pressure put on staff to volunteer hours away.

These cuts must be clearly expressed in hours, not hidden in a service level agreement to ensure everyone knows what the new service actually means for

“Once these jobs are lost from our communities they will be gone for good and the lowest paid council staff must not end up losing the most”

their building or school.

Once these jobs are lost from our communities they will be gone for good and the lowest paid council staff must not end up losing the most.

Recruitment is becoming more difficult and the existing staff must not be undervalued and their contracted working times honoured.

Council committee reveals government enforced cuts

The first Finance and Resources committee of the new council administration confirmed the size of the cuts over the next four years.

With a predicted squeeze on Local government finances from both Westminster and Holyrood a further cumulative saving of £96 million is required from Edinburgh Council.

£59 million of that figure is attributed to the cut in government grant funding.

UNISON will continue

to work nationally across Scotland to challenge austerity and promote the essential services we provide.

No doubt we will be back outside the Scottish Parliament on budget setting day and will work tirelessly to lessen the impact of the cuts to our members and the services we provide throughout Edinburgh.

Of the 50,000 public service job cuts in Scotland, 40,000 have been in local

government.

In addition to government funding cuts, the eight year council tax freeze has meant £3.15bn has been cut from local services.

This has had a devastating effect on local services, our economy and the staff left behind with fewer resources.

UNISON Edinburgh has called on the council to publish a parallel budget to show what services could be like if properly funded

Call for more time to turn Building Standards around

The plight of Building Standards may not high on most people's agenda - but to the staff who have suffered years of underfunding and under recruitment, the Scottish Government announcement that it has only awarded Edinburgh a 12 month 'contract' instead of six years has come as a blow.

Gerry Stovin, branch officer says: "UNISON stopped short of a ballot for industrial action in December on the promise of long overdue recruitment and funding.

"Now UNISON is pushing management to honour its pledge before the final audit in November.

"UNISON has called on the Scottish Government to allow additional time to recruit and train new staff, as the only way forward in turning the service around."

● A UNISON Scotland survey in July revealed that building control staff across Scotland are overworked, stressed and stuck in the office.

The report revealed a dedicated workforce committed to ensuring that buildings meet the standards required but who are under enormous pressure.

