

## Pressure mounts as council drives to privatisation

**T**he campaign against privatisation is stepping up as the Council faces critical decisions in the coming weeks.

A report this month will say that the outline bids for Environment & Integrated Facilities Management will be evaluated and compared to the internal comparators over July.

Another report will then go to Council in August to decide whether it stays in-house or whether there is a preferred bidder.

The report will also recommend that the Corporate & Transactional strand moves into full competitive dialogue - with one of the bidders likely to drop out and two others remaining in the frame. The final decision will not be made until the end of this year.

Lead negotiator Kevin Duguid outlines the UNISON position. "We continue to put the bidders and the process under the microscope and have recently put a set of questions to bidders about workforce issues which we will publish online."

The 'Our City's Not For Sale' campaign continues and has included briefings, an information pack for councillors, expert analysis of the process, leaflets and street leafletting by members in the city centre.

"Technical support from full

**our City's NOT for sale**  
**PUBLIC WORKS!**  
**KEEP EDINBURGH PUBLIC!**

**Branch officers are always willing to attend workplace meetings. Contact the branch office.**

time officer Peter Hunter, from HQ experts and lessons from colleagues in Newcastle have all been essential in this campaign", said John Stevenson, Branch President.

"But the campaign will only be won when we convince the Council that all the evidence, here and across the UK, points to these schemes failing to deliver, costing more and taking essential services out of local control."

He warned the Council on STV at the most recent UNISON demo that "like the trams, these contract will come back and bite them one day".

John was confident that the work UNISON has been doing will expose many of the problems and put real pressure on the Council to reconsider.

"But we can only do that with our members' support and we need you to get involved and throw your weight behind the campaign", he said.



**The Branch joined 500,000 in London on 26 March against public service and welfare state cuts - and to say 'there is an alternative'. See back page and page 2**

**Pay protection**

**Pensions - it's time to stand up and defend**

**Job Evaluation**

**Blindcraft**

**Social Work: Keeping Safe in the Workplace**

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**[www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk](http://www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk)**

## UNISON wins deal on protection

**T**hrough Modernising Pay the council ended the protection arrangements for people downgraded as a result of a review.

“UNISON argued that this position was not fair or tenable for staff and that they needed to have, at the very least, a staged reduction in their wages to allow them to ‘acclimatise’ to their new salary”, explained UNISON negotiator Kevin Duguid.



Kevin Duguid  
‘Better than no protection’

“This was to little avail with the officers of the council but we persevered and made representation to councillors via the Policy and Strategy

Committee and they instructed officers to recommence discussions on a Transitional Pay Protection Arrangement”.

Since then constructive meetings have taken place and the union are close to agreeing a sustainable transitional arrangement.

As usual, Kevin would have liked to achieve more but he stresses that “this will give staff more security than the current blanket policy of no protection at all.”

## BLINDCRAFT

**B**lindcraft will close its doors for the Final Time at the end of July after the council’s decision to close this historic 200 year old supported employment facility, reports *Kevin Duguid*.

It is a sad reflection on this council’s lacklustre approach to Blindcraft and it’s staff over the last 10 years that they have let this famous facility wither on vine and now the staff look like paying the ultimate price.

A number of staff have left already through voluntary redundancy but there are still over 30 who we are working with the council to try to get redeployed.

We are also trying to press the council to seek partners to open another supported employment facility in Edinburgh -

Both UNISON and the staff will do all that we can to avoid compulsory redundancies and to try to secure future employment prospects for people with disabilities in Edinburgh and beyond.

### Keep up to date with UNISON

The Branch has had a website for many years but did you know we are also on a blog, Facebook and Twitter? If you follow us on Twitter you can get breaking news direct to your mobile phone Use the links on the website at [www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk](http://www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk)

## Job evaluation appeals

**O**ver 300 job evaluation appeals were submitted in the wake of pay modernisation.

At the moment these posts are being re-assessed by the council’s job evaluation team in light of the information supplied by both line managers and staff.

Some have been completed and you may well have had a letter indicating the outcome of that assessment - if you are not happy with it you should advise UNISON that you wish to carry on to the

formal appeal hearing - just e-mail your details to the branch at [branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk](mailto:branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk) or contact your local steward.

We will be keeping a close eye on the outcomes of these initial assessments as this will be an indicator of whether the job evaluation scheme stands up to scrutiny or not.

It is expected that the first Appeals will begin at the end of June and they will run for about six to nine months.

## UNISON News View: There is an alternative to cuts

**A**s we went to press, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development was warning that cuts at the Government’s break-neck pace were threatening the recovery.

The OECD is not one for usually disagreeing with the Government so their intervention adds even more weight to the argument that, not only are the cuts bad for the country, they

are delaying recovery.

Just as UNISON has been arguing from the beginning.

More weight comes from Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz who is also an economic advisor to the Scottish Government.

Austerity measures “don’t work” and prevent countries from creating jobs needed to generate economic growth, he said recently.

“Austerity is an experiment that has been tried before with the same results.”

Cutting budgets in low-growth cycles leads to higher unemployment and hampers recovery. Austerity “doesn’t work, it does not led to more efficient, faster growing economies.”

As UNISON has been pointing out all along, healthy public services don’t just benefit people

who rely on them, they benefit the whole economy - public and private sector.

It is also astonishing that pundits and the Government seem surprised that they’ve had to borrow more because of a slump in tax receipts.

Well, if you make lots of people redundant, of course you are going to get less tax and you have to pay more benefits.

Which bit don’t they understand?

# Time to stand up and defend our pensions - and dispel the myths

In March, hundreds of thousands of people stood up for public services at the TUC march in London. Now we must mobilise to protect our pensions.

The government's strategy on pensions is clear, they want us to:

- pay more
- work longer
- get less when we retire

UNISON members face a number of threats from the government including:

Changing the way inflation is calculated from RPI to CPI. This may seem like a small deal but it cuts people's pensions **now** by up to 15% (see box).

Increasing contributions. Not a penny of the planned 50% increase in pension contributions will go into the fund.

"This money isn't going into pension schemes," UNISON NEC member Gordon McKay told the STUC last month: "It's going straight to George Osborne to pay for the bailout of the bankers".

Further attacks include:-

- All 27 of the Hutton Commission recommendations -

Public service pension schemes have around 7.3 million pensioners and 5.4 million active members. Including dependents, 20 million people are with us in the fight to defend public sector pensions.

closing current schemes and creating new ones

- The end of final salary pension benefits and their replacement by career average pensions.
- The end of pension protection if you face privatisation

UNISON is currently in negotiation but a dispute looks pretty likely. You may well be balloted for your views on industrial action over the summer. And it is important that any ballot is organised to avoid legal challenges on technicalities. That takes time.

In the meantime, other public sector workers in different pensions schemes are balloting on co-ordinated strike action on 30 June.

So, unless hell freezes over and the government

## Explode the public sector pension 'gilt-edged' myths

Most local government pensioners receive a pension of **less than £5,000** a year with the average only £4,100 a year, dropping to £2,600 for women.

From April, public sector pensions increased by the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Price Index (RPI). This means:

- a woman on the average pension for women in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) of approx £2,600 a year will be **£40 worse off this year;**
- a member with the average pension of

approximately £4,100 a year will be around **£62 worse off this year;**

While the bankers continue to award themselves obscene amounts in bonus payments, a 50% increase for our pension contributions is simply a tax to pay back government debts that were raised to bail out the banks.

**None of the increased contributions will go into the scheme** and it threatens the whole system if members opt out dramatically.

We have worked hard and paid over many years for the right to access our pensions and these proposed changes must be challenged.

backs off from their attacks we are gearing up for bigger and more widespread co-ordinated industrial action in the autumn.

Public service pension schemes have around 7.3 million pensioners and approximately 5.4 million active members. Including

dependents, 20 million people are with us in the fight to defend public sector pensions.

We need to use that power. See what UNISON Scotland is doing at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions)

Compiled by Luke Henderson and John Stevenson

## UNISON launches safety guide for social workers

UNISON Scotland and SASW have launched a guide to help social workers stay safe in the workplace.

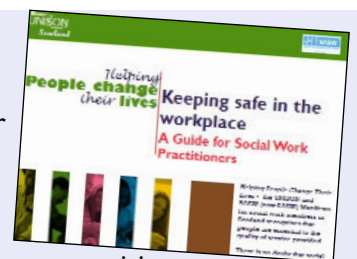
The new guide – Keeping Safe in the Workplace – aims to help social workers recognise

when they are becoming stressed or overloaded at work and to seek support from their employers, trade union or professional association when needed.

The guide has been written by social workers for social workers and

examines some of the key issues faced by staff in their day-to-day working lives.

The Branch has asked the Council to adopt the guide - partly written by Edinburgh's John Stevenson - the previous Social Work Manifesto and a guide to



supervision and workload management. See them at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork)

# 26 March: We can achieve anything if we act together

by John Stevenson  
Branch President

**We can achieve anything if we act together like this, said one marcher as 500,000 rallied in London on 26 March.**

The branch laid on a bus and train places to take members on the long and less than comfortable trip to London to say there is an alternative to cuts.

As I wrote some of this in Piccadilly, the UNISON contingent was still passing after at least an hour.

An ocean of purple and green UNISON banners, flags and placards packed London's streets to the deafening sound of UNISON vuvuzelas in a massive show of solidarity and resolve to save our public services and welfare state from the most savage attacks they have ever seen.

How do you describe the atmosphere? Electric. Moving. Vibrant. People from all walks of life

revelling in the energy as working people stand up and say enough is enough.

Together. Community. Acting together. All those things that those who attack our jobs and services despise.

This was the real 'Big Society'. The people who deliver our public services and the people who rely on them. Standing together against greed and for fairness. Backed by the wider public in a poll.

An inspiring day. Hopefully a signal to workers and public alike that we can change things if we act together.

"Pay attention Cameron and Clegg. This is just the start", said one report.

## What next?

Edinburgh has been instrumental in laying out how the campaign should progress.

In a motion backed by Scottish branches at UNISON's Scottish Council in April, we said we should 'celebrate the rally but not



dwell on it' and move forward to the next stage.

The rally showed us we were not alone and gave confidence to carry on our local campaigns.

That's why we called on the union to "progress our campaign with the maximum unity and the broadest appeal to our members and the people who rely on the services they provide."

That should include urging the STUC to find ways of bringing together civic society for further joint demonstrations and trade unions for joint industrial action where

legally possible.

Our motion also criticised the actions of some groups on 26 March which detracted in the media - although definitely not on the ground - from the overall impact of the demonstration, and risked putting people off from such rallies in the future.

**See page 2 for more reasons why there is an alternative to cuts.**

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