

Meeting the Director

I am due to meet the director of Place on Tuesday 11 June.

These meetings are normally held quarterly and it is an opportunity for the joint trade unions to put matters that affect the workers across the department to senior management.

At the last meeting in March the unions were updated on the budget position, summarised below:

- 1.55% of the Council's budget is to be cut across the Council. In Place the director said that they were going to look at senior manager positions and expenditure on agency in the first instance.
- New fleet and a reduction in unused fleet should be saving £500,000 this year.

- Reviewing the use of depots across the city should save money by 2021/22.

- Looking to share some premises with Police or Lothian buses to save money.

- A review of the museums is looking at where collections are and trying to get more on display. This may save some money in the longer term.

- Income maximisation – The Council currently funds rugby and other events, looking to get these events to self-fund. Looking to raise revenue from maintaining some leisure facilities and possibly roundabouts. The Council is looking into the feasibility of generating some of its own energy.

- Marketing Edinburgh is having its Council funding reduced.

- The Localities model is being looked at. Management are looking to cut the budget by £300,000. UNISON will engage with members and management in this service area when there is more information.

- Management are looking to save money on waste disposal. Possibility of joint procurement with other local authorities. Looking to try and increase recycling rates in the city.

- Looking to raise money through a new controlled parking zone in the West of the city.

*Tom Howorth
Place Convenor*

Service Reviews

The Economic Development service is currently undergoing a review of the service after the Council voted to cut their budget, which includes the staff budget being cut by £1.2m. This is a huge proportion of the overall budget and is understandably a massive concern for all the staff working in this area. I am working with UNISON members and Unite to try and save as many Council jobs as possible in this area. Meetings with members and management are ongoing.

A review of the Public Conveniences service is due to start soon. I will be meeting with members and management regarding this soon. The current plan is to move servicing to a part-time basis.

The Roads and Transport review is coming to a close. There has been no overall cut to staff in this area. The hope is that the new structure will allow for more efficient working and better productivity. This review was due to close a couple of weeks ago but has been extended recently. At the time of writing I don't have confirmation of when that will finish.

Matters raised by UNISON

Flexible Working Arrangements

Feedback from members has been that they are finding it harder to get flexible working arrangements approved. This is being felt especially keenly by members with caring responsibilities. Some members are not in the best of health so have been looking to reduce hours, so that they can keep working. These are also being refused. The director of Place has recommitted to the flexible working

policies of the Council and that this would be disseminated to managers in his department.

Payslips

It is a constant issue, but many members struggle to get their payslips on time (Or sometimes at all!). We raised this again and have been assured that HR are looking into it. If you are not getting your payslips then speak to your manager and contact HR. You may be able to get them sent to your home address.

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If you have any issues you want me to consider taking to the director then please email (BranchOffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk) or call the branch on 0131 558 7488 by Tuesday 4 June.

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Risk Assessment

Risk assessment in Roads Services have been reviewed over the last few months, or at least they should have been. After a good start, working with our experienced senior steward, Neil Ramage, the process had stalled somewhat. The director promised to get this work back on track to keep all our members in road services safe.

Management Meetings

A spate of meetings between management and unions had

been cancelled by management without a good reason. The director has confirmed that the unions are vital in providing a link to the workforce and that meetings should be given due priority and only be cancelled in exceptional circumstances.

Sharing exit interview

I requested that exit interviews are shared with the unions so that we can work to identify issues and try and get them resolved. High staff turnover is unwanted and we should all work to make the Council a good place for people to work.

New members and Year of the Young Worker

As we go through service reviews, it is more important than ever to be in a union. Why not ask your friends and colleagues to join? Perhaps forward this bulletin to them to see what we do. They can join easily online at <https://join.unison.org.uk/> or get a membership form from any steward or the UNISON office on Infirmery Street. You are probably aware that the Council has an aging workforce, none of us are getting any younger! But it is also true that the Council has been recruiting lots of apprentices and other young workers over the last few years. A lot of young workers have never heard of the unions and don't understand what we do. Do you work with someone under 26 or are you under 26

yourself? If so, talk to others about UNISON. We get involved in lots of local political issues, whether that be Edinburgh Pride; fighting back against the rise of the far-right and all the racism and ignorance or lobbying politicians about the decisions they make about public services. Why don't you come along to the next event? Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/unisonedin/> or Twitter <https://twitter.com/unisonedin> for latest news and events. If you have any feedback on any of the matters raised in this bulletin, please let me know, especially any staff involved in a service review.

Dispute in Scientific Services

We are currently in dispute with the Council over their decision to unilaterally

close the Asbestos Service in Scientific Services with no notice or discussion with members or unions before the decision was taken. I have written to the director of Place to formally dispute this decision but have yet to see any progress from management on having any meaningful discussions on this decision. This will go back to the director for a proper response. Meanwhile all the staff working in this area have had their working lives turned upside down as the work they were diligently carrying out has ceased. Many of the professionals working in the service have been with the Council for more than 5 years, much longer in some cases. One member has since retired. What a sad way to finish your career. I wish the member all the best for the future and will continue to work with affected members to try and find a resolution.

Welcome to the new Place Vice-Convener

This month we are welcoming Christina Goddard as the new vice-convener of Place. Christina works in the Scientific Services department at Seafield. Christina said, "I am really looking forward to getting stuck into the role. I hope to get round and meet as many members as possible over the coming months". I for one am delighted that Christina is on board, I might be able to take a holiday now!

What can you do?

We are getting a bit thin on the ground in Place with only 5 stewards covering the whole department. This means that members are not properly represented across the service area. It means that I am not hearing what the issues on the ground are to take to senior management. So why don't you think about becoming a steward? Especially if a UNISON steward has helped you in the past, why don't you, "pay it forward" and volunteer to become a rep? It is a very rewarding role and you will get training, support and paid time off work to fulfil your role. I first became a steward after I was bullied by a manager and I got brilliant help and support from the local steward. It inspired me to never let that happen again and try and help others who were going through something similar. If you are interested in the role, give me a call on 0131 558 7488 and read a bit about it on the UNISON website

Join us in UNISON 0131 558 7488 or www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk