

## UNISON secures return of flexi time

You will remember at the start of the Pandemic the Council ended the flexi time scheme without consulting the trade unions. The initial proposals fell well short of the existing scheme. After months of negotiation, we are close to finalising a revised flexi time agreement that retains the right to build up time and use it to take a flexi day off for general use. The flexible starts and finish times

remain, and the core times have been removed.

The new scheme is intended to be very flexible, so it will need to be monitored and revisited to iron out any difficulties that may occur through interpretation by individual managers.

Gerry Stovin, service conditions officer said, **“we would like to thank all those who responded to our survey with such conviction**

**enabling us to negotiate with the full backing from our members”.**

Further work is required to allow more flexible working, where possible, for staff on fixed shifts or working patterns and further guidance will be needed to ensure any extra hours worked are covered by overtime or time off.

## Consolidation of the Scottish Living Wage

You will have received some communication that the council are going to pay the Scottish Local Government Living Wage as part of your basic pay instead of an additional supplement by April.

This was a requirement throughout Scotland of the 3 year pay deal that is coming to an end.

The pre consultation meetings started with the trade unions at the end of November 2020, a year later than they should have.

UNISON has also proposed an increase to

the number of pay steps at the lower grades, this would further be enhancing the pay of low paid members and as most of the workforce are female this would go some way to address the gender pay gap. The money is there to pay for this it just needs the council's chief officials and the political will to apply it.

As we move forward, we will remain vigilant to any threats to take home pay and any other cuts in our conditions, be that shift, evening or weekend working, threats to overtime rates or annual leave.

We have seen that some employers have used Covid-19 as an excuse to try and cut Pay and benefits, Scottish Gas is a prime example and another is TESCO, a company who has seen a huge rise in its profits, but at the same time is trying to cut their workers' wages.

Tom Connolly, branch secretary states, **“Any attempt to make our members poorer will result in us calling on our members to take action to resist this. Clapping does not pay the bills.”**

## Working at home

The council are currently working out when, who and if we will all return to our offices when the government tells us it is safe to do so. There may be a move to more working from home in the future and we expect to be consulted on this shortly.

We have requested on several occasions that payments are made for additional cleaning costs for care workers uniforms during COVID-19, and the extra cost of heating our homes during the winter while we are working from home. Unfortunately, all requests have been rejected.

The £6 a week HMRC tax allowance for heating translates to only around £1.20 pw or 24 pence a day for your heating. This is something that will need to be resolved as part of any new policy. We will consult with you all as soon as we have some details.

## Annual General Meeting

We will be having our AGM online this year and will be holding two events on:

**TUESDAY 2 MARCH AT 1800 & WEDNESDAY 3 MARCH AT 12.30**

Invites have been sent out with links to enable you to attend online, please join one of the meetings as we need a quorate AGM for your branch to operate effectively.

Hopefully, we will have an update and explanation of the Consolidation of the Living wage and any reply from COSLA to the unions pay demands.

**Join us in UNISON 0131 558 7488 or [www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk](http://www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk)**

P&P UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch, Douglas House, 60 Belford Road, Edinburgh EH3 4UQ

# Annual Budget Crisis & Plug the Gap

It is that time of year again when the Council must set a budget with ever decreasing funding from Holyrood and austerity cuts from Westminster. To add to the problem this year the Council has spent millions on COVID-19 related issues which will eat the 2021 budget and beyond.

The full council meeting on the 18 February will see the budget and UNISON will be making a deputation as usual. There will however be no lobby outside the City Chambers.

UNISON is running a campaign to Plug the £1 Billion gap in funding to Scottish Local authorities and is calling for:

- **Securing the long-term financial stability of local government:** calling for further investment in local government to protect jobs and pay for the future.
- **Rewarding local government workers:** for the vital services that local government workers provide to our communities.
- **Shaping local government for the future:** looking at how roles have changed as a result of the pandemic.

- **Consolidation of the Living Wage:** Delivery of full consolidation of the living wage for across Scotland.

To get more involved, such as sending an email to your MSP, go to: [www.unison-scotland.org/protect-our-council-services/](http://www.unison-scotland.org/protect-our-council-services/)

**Johanna Baxter, UNISON head of local government, said:** “The moral and economic imperatives for providing local government workers with a substantial pay increase are overwhelming. In a country where over 230,000 children are living in poverty and we face an economic depression like no other there is no better way to lift people out of poverty and stimulate economic recovery than putting money into the pockets of low-paid workers who have already borne the brunt of a decade of austerity, it just takes political will to do so.

These workers have gone above and beyond in keeping us safe and our services going during the period of the pandemic. No longer can they be treated as the poor relations of the public sector when it comes to decent pay and reward.”

## Pay Claim 2021

The pay claim below has been submitted by the joint trade unions and we are awaiting a response.

**The claim calls for:**

- A one-year settlement that runs for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022
- A £2,000 flat rate increase to all spinal column points, or 6%, whichever is greater (based on a 37 hour working week).
- An underpinning minimum rate of pay of £10.50 per hour.
- A separate, additional payment towards pay restoration.
- An equivalent percentage or, the median paid where the base salary increase is paid as a flat rate, uprating of all allowances.
- No less than parity with other Local Government bargaining groups.
- All professional costs associated with the role to be met by the employer.
- A commitment to exploring ways in which to achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week.
- An assessment of the pay gap against all protected characteristics.

## Shop Stewards/Health and Safety Representatives

We are looking for new stewards to get involved in your union. The first step is to become an organising steward and there are now online courses comprising six half day sessions starting every month from now till June.

To stand as a steward you can request a nomination form from the branch office: 0131 558 7488 or email: [branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk](mailto:branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk) or click on this link <https://unison-edinburgh.org.uk/stewards-and-reps-resources/>. for a form.

You will then need to organise a workplace virtual meeting or email the members in your workplace for a nomination. Once nomination has been sought two of your colleagues, who **MUST** be a UNISON member can sign it.

From there you can attend the training and get involved.

## Climate chaos

UNISON Scotland Green network is our Green campaign group promoting A just and green recovery and a member of **STOP CLIMATE CHAOS SCOTLAND**. If you want to get involved check out the Facebook page for upcoming events: <https://www.facebook.com/greennetworkunisonscotland/>

There is so much more we have left out, but it is important for this newsletter to go out before fast moving events overtake it.

The COVID information is changing daily so we have left that out for now.

The next issue will also cover our Equalities network, BAME network, Edinburgh Poverty Commission report, Health & Safety report, VERA update, No going back to Normal as well as updates on the Consolidation of the Living wage, VERA and Budget cuts.