

UNISON

Fife

Branch NEWS

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ISSUE 1



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PAY AWARD 2024

Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning Members managed to secure a strike mandate in Fife - Congratulation to them. This mandate will be in place for 6 months and UNISON Scotland's Local Government Committee will now advise us of next steps.

Unfortunately, School & Early Years Members did not manage to secure a strike mandate with the results of the recent ballot having us just under 5% short of the Tory trade union law of 50% returns of all members balloted. This was disappointing for our members and our branch.

The LG Committee have also confirmed that ALL LG members will now be balloted for strike action. We will let you know when that PURPLE ENVELOPE will be dropping through your letterbox.

The yearly pay award can be confusing and we would like to outline some main points. The pay claim is submitted by the 3 joint trade unions in January/February. This is a pay award for all Local Government SJC staff across Scotland. UNISON Scotland hold negotiations along with the other 2 trade unions and the employer. If the employer (COSLA) make an offer which falls far short of the pay claim, UNISON Local Government Committee will look to form a strategy to address this. This may be by calling members to vote for strike action. They may not wish to ballot all members - this is called a targeted approach.

Your can find out more about strike action [HERE](#)

Letter from your Branch Secretary



Colleagues,



Welcome to our new branch newsletter. I hope this provides another form of communication with our members moving forward. With the industrial action ballots on pay recently, we have been extremely busy as a branch, but would like to outline some of the good work we have been doing.

Health & Safety - Concerns have been raised over the last few months regarding the use of the cleaning chemical D10 in workplaces. Our H&S Officer, Tam, has challenged the employer on the diluting of this chemical. Steps have now been taken to make sure our members are safe. No employee should be diluting this chemical without appropriate PPE, risk assessments in place and the correct dosing equipment. All spray bottles should be provided already diluted. If you are being asked to dilute this product for a 2 stage clean, without the above PPE in place - please contact the branch.

We continue to have dialogue and raise concerns with the employer regarding Violence & Aggression in the workplace - to be assaulted at work is not part of your job. As we continue to see increases in V&A incidents in Education we are now looking at the V&A stats in all our services across the council. I recently met with the HR Service Manager with responsibility for Health & Safety, to raise concerns especially around reporting incidents. The meeting was positive and we are moving forward in setting up a working group to look more closely at this. We hope to discuss further 'UNISON's End Violence At Work Charter' with the employer in a hope we receive a commitment in signing up to the charter - You can find out more about the charter [HERE](#)

Risk Assessments and Moving & Handling - The branch continues to hear reports of members undertaking tasks where the employer has failed to put in appropriate risk assessments or moving & handling procedures. If you are being asked to undertake tasks as part of your role and you believe there may be a potential risk involved or moving & handling, please ask to see the appropriate assessment first and make sure you are trained. Where there are issues - please contact the branch.

Our Self organised groups are establishing and I am extremely proud of the work our officers are doing to take these groups forward. We still have officer positions for 'Disabled Members', 'Black Members', 'International Members' & 'LGBTQ+ Members', so if you think one of these is a self organising group you could lead, please contact the branch to discuss. All our self-organised groups play an important role in our branch and wider union.

Finally, as we await all our membership within Local Government to be balloted on PAY, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our members during this PAY ballot process. Whether you are a member who has recently been balloted or a member who has been supporting our fellow colleagues, thank you for your continued support. Industrial Action is always a last resort and all our colleagues in Local Government deserve a decent pay rise. The stronger we are as a union & branch, the better voice we have at the negotiating table.

Debbie Fyfe
BRANCH SECRETARY

Why are we in dispute on PAY?



FAIR PAY IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR. THERE IS NO DOUBT IT WILL TAKE A CONTINUED PROGRAMME OF SUSTAINED INDUSTRIAL ACTION TO SWAY THE EMPLOYER!

- The latest offer received from COSLA was overwhelmingly rejected by members with 9 in 10 workers (89.92%) voting against the offer in a consultative ballot. The offer does not represent a significant improvement and is an attempt to divide the workforce - all members deserve a fair pay rise!

Friday 27 September 2024 - UNISON Scotland

Strike ballot will go ahead after COSLA's decision to impose insufficient pay award, says UNISON
More than 90,000 council and school staff in Scotland are to be balloted for strike action over pay, UNISON says today (Friday).

The move by Scotland's largest local government union follows the decision by employers' body COSLA to impose a wage rise already rejected by a majority of the workforce.

The current offer from COSLA includes an hourly increase of 67p (or 3.6%), whichever is higher. However, the union says this falls short of expectations given the 25% real-terms pay cut over the past 14 years.

UNISON Scotland local government lead David O'Connor said: "To say this is a bitter disappointment is an understatement.

"Just two days ago, COSLA's lead negotiator Councillor Katie Hagman and the cabinet secretary for local government and finance Shona Robinson MSP assured the union they were committed to a negotiated settlement.

"Now, they've resorted to some of the worst employment practices by imposing this deal. They should be utterly ashamed of themselves.

"Councils are in a state of crisis. They're grappling with severe recruitment challenges, leaving the workers they have to do more with fewer resources and lower wages.

"Local authority employees and the essential services they provide are under untenable pressure. The only viable solution is to grant these dedicated staff the higher pay rise they rightly deserve."

"There are already live strike mandates at 19 employers and the union will move quickly to fix dates for those workplaces. UNISON is also finalising a timetable to ballot its entire membership affected by local government pay settlements.

"Council staff are the backbone of society, providing essential services that keep everything running smoothly. "It's both upsetting and infuriating to see that they're once again so undervalued. Politicians have enjoyed pay rises upwards of 6.7%, but they're telling dedicated workers to limit their expectations. This disparity is unacceptable and must be addressed immediately."

UNISON Scotland Local Government Committee chair Colette Hunter said: "Thousands of council workers have already overwhelmingly rejected COSLA's pay offer. They're demanding a fair increase to prevent their pay from consistently lagging behind and to ensure their wage rise is in line with other sectors of the economy.

"Staff are outraged that the current offer falls significantly short of their pay claim and is well below the 5.5% awarded to NHS colleagues."

PICKETLINE INSPIRATION

As we await our **PAY BALLOT** Purple Envelope to drop through our doors, please have a look at your colleagues in Schools and Nurseries in 2023 taking to the picket lines in our last **DISPUTE ON PAY** and our colleagues in **WASTE** getting **Ballot Ready**.

We can do this again with our **WHOLE MEMBERSHIP** in 2024. Watch out for news about when the ballot opens.



Stand together
for better pay



SUSAN SETS OUT HER STALL!



Susan, our steward who works as a Catering Supervisor in Facilities Management, recently set up an information and recruitment stall at her employer's Summer Summit event.

There were some UNISON freebies on offer and Susan was on hand to talk about the benefits of being in UNISON - we've outlined these below.

7 GOOD REASONS TO JOIN

1. Advice, support and help when you need it at work
2. Legal services for you at work and your family at home
3. Financial assistance and debt advice in times of need
4. Helpline open until midnight
5. Compensation for accidents and injuries at work
6. Member discounts – including up to 50% off holidays
7. Education, training and support

Event happening in your service - let us know and we can arrange to come along

Workplace Steward

The branch now has a number of workplace stewards. They are all a fantastic addition to our branch and support to our members. Their main role in your workplace will be to -

- make a positive difference to people's work lives
- learn new skills and meet new people
- help create a fairer society

Every workplace should have a steward to become this please contact us.

You can find out more about a workplace Steward [HERE](#)

Welcome to new stewards in the branch

Eric Petrie - FM Halbeath Depot
Pauline Clark - EYO - Education Services
Angela Stav - PSA3 - Education Services
Alison Laing - EYO - Education Services
Claire Richardson - EYO - Education Services

Rhea Thompson - Home Carer (Start Team) - HSCP
Paula Heggie - Social Care Worker - HSCP Adult Res
Vicky Long - Social Work Assistant - Children & Families
Matt Simon - Senior Practitioner - HSCP Older People
Sharon Young - EYO - Education Services

STEWARDS TRAINING



January and May saw our new stewards undertaking their accreditation training, along with our next cohort of stewards in November. We also have new Workplace Health & Safety Reps undertaking their stage 1 training in November. We've had really positive feedback from new stewards about the support the branch offers to help them develop in their role. New stewards, under the trade union recognition agreement with the employer receives up to 15 days paid training in their first year of stewardship. Thereafter, they can take up to 10 days per steward term to further enhance their knowledge.

STEWARDS TRAINING cont.



STEWARDS DEVELOPMENT DAY

Tuesday 3rd September saw all our Stewards and Branch Officers come together for our annual development day.

We started off the morning welcoming Councillor Jim Leishman MBE who is currently, The Provost of Fife. Jim gave a motivational talk surrounding mental health and the importance of talking and feeling good.

Gillian Merchant from Thompson's Solicitors then gave a presentation. Gillian covered the following aspects - Attendance Management and Capability. There was in-depth discussions throughout. This was valuable training and certainly aspects which will help support members in their workplaces.

We then had the pleasure of listening to Steve Michie and his colleague Graham Arnott who are H&S Lead Officers of our main employer - Fife Council. Topics covered included - Health & Safety Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements, Health & Safety Management Framework, Fife Council Stress Management and Accident & Recording. This was such a beneficial training opportunity and our stewards were left wanting more. Hopefully another session will take place as our branch H&S committee takes shape over the coming months.

Branch Office News



BUKO TOWERS



Meet Diane, our new Branch Officer...

As I am new in the role as a Branch Officer, I am currently focused on familiarising myself with the services and understanding the key issues our members are facing. In the short time I have been here, I have attended service forums where members voices are heard and their issues are addressed. I look forward to sharing more specific updates and success stories as I become more settled in my role.

Diane

Daily Duty System - A problem shared is a problem halved!

The branch offers a daily duty call system. If you have a work related issue you can call us between 9am and 4pm or alternatively email the branch and our friendly admin team will log your call and pass it to one of our branch officers, who will offer you advice and the best way forward to deal with your query.

Meetings with your Branch Officer

Our branch office has a room where you can meet with your branch officer to discuss your case. Please never worry about where you can meet your officer, just ask to arrange it here



Our Admin Team!



UNISON Fife Admin Team

Here at UNISON Fife, we have a dedicated Admin Team who are here to take all your calls and emails as and when you require advice and support from our Branch Officers. Our Admin Team consists of Alexis, Carol & Brenda who are all very experienced and are happy to help guide you. They take up various task within the branch to help our Branch Staff and members.

Contact the Branch -

Unison.Fife@fife.gov.uk. / 01592 583686

visit UNISON Fife at -

<https://www.unisonfife.org.uk/>

FOLLOW US ON -



[HERE](#)



[HERE](#)



[HERE](#)

BRANCH AGM's



UNISON Fife Local Government Branch's Aggregated Annual General Meetings will take place on the following dates and times -

Tuesday 25th March 2025 at 6pm at Victoria Hotel, 28 Victoria Road, Kirkcaldy KY1 1DS.

Wednesday 26th March 2025 12noon at Rothes hall Glenrothes (Room 10).

Wednesday 26th March 2025 @ 6pm via TEAMS.

If you would like to join the AGM via TEAMS, please email Unison.fife@fife.gov.uk from Friday 7th March 2025 to request the link.

We hope to see many of our members attending one of the meetings and as always, a buffet will be provided at our in-person meetings along with a prize draw at all meetings.

Members who have taken part in our competitions

★ STARS IN OUR SCHOOLS ★



Michele
Catering Supervisor



Dougie
Janitorial



Irene
PSA



Jackie
PSA

★ STARS IN OUR H&SCP ★



Pam
Enablement Support Worker



Kirsty
Occupational Therapist Senior Practitioner

Our stars are all members of UNISON and were nominated by a colleague - they received a £100 gift voucher for being a star - going above and beyond in the workplace and obviously standing out to their colleagues.

Our next 'stars' competition will be running soon - please look out for this in your email inbox, it's important to give our members in the workplace the recognition they deserve.

Christmas Give Away

We had multiple winners in our Christmas prize draw



We know it's a bit early, but look out for the next prize draw. We select at random from our membership.

COLLEAGUES WHO LUNCH



Winners of our best 'picket line' photo. £50 voucher for lunch.



We have many 'competitions' and 'give aways' throughout the year, so please keep an eye on our Social Media and your emails!

PENSION TALK.....

State Pension and missing National Insurance Years

Follow the links below which contain information about your State Pension. The information sets out how individuals can buy voluntary National Insurance (NI) years to boost their state pension, if they have any missing National Insurance (NI) years.

For individuals this applies to, they have until 5th April 2025 to buy back any missing national insurance years from 2006 to 2016. After this date, individuals will only be able to buy back missing NI years for six years.

The full 'new' state pension is ~ £220 a week, however, how much you receive depends on how many 'qualifying' full national insurance (NI) years you have. Most individuals collect NI years through working and paying NI, but you can also get them if you're claiming benefits or caring for others.

We've provided a webpage in links below which details information on what to consider before deciding whether to buy back missing National Insurance years, if this applies to you.

The number of National Insurance years you have can be checked on the government website. Prefer a podcast? If you have access to BBC Sounds there is a podcast on the topic (link below).

Any queries will be directed to Colin Paterson or Tam Templeman (your Fife LGPS Pension Board members) at the Branch via unison.fife@fife.gov.uk or on 01592 583686.

LINKS.....

The number of National Insurance years you have can be checked on the following government website: Check your National Insurance record [HERE](#)

The Martin Lewis Podcast - [HERE](#)

Money Saving Expert - [HERE](#)

FIFE PRIDE

There was another amazing turnout at Fife Pride this year. George, with the support of his colleagues set up a stall, along with our sister Trade Union - UNISON Fife Health Branch.



WOMEN'S GROUP



Our new Women's Group is now set up and running and had their first meeting on the 16th September. This was well attended for the first event.

The evening started off with a wee game of 'get to know you bingo' it's amazing how much it started different conversations between people and how much everyone enjoyed it!

If you would like to know about our next meeting, please follow us on Facebook [HERE](#) or please contact our Women's Officers - Jenna or Jackie at the branch - Unison.Fife@fife.gov.uk

The next group will take place on the evening of Monday 02nd December @ the branch in Glenrothes and we heard 'Christmas Craft' being mentioned - don't miss out!

Some of our Women's Committee from the night!



Employer Related News

Education

PUPIL SUPPORT ASSISTANTS across Fife are currently in the process of a managing change exercise to implement 1hr of protected non-contact time into their working week. UNISON Fife Branch listened to our members that no time was given for admin tasks outwith their contact time with children. We are now on our way to having this implemented.

TERM TIME WORKER?..... REMEMBER, if you are off due to illness over a school holiday and have obtained a GP fit note, you can claim your A/L days back. Term time, Single Status staff have a calendar of A/L dates which is contained within the 'Education Tile' on the employers intranet. UNISON Fife Branch worked hard to achieve this for our members, so please remember to speak with your HT about this if you find yourself off sick during these periods.

NURSERY Meals..... there is a guidance document on roles and responsibilities for the delivery of meals. If you're unsure, please speak to your HT and ask for a copy of this guidance, or contact the branch and we can send it out.

FRS/Cireco

Branch Officers met with members recently in relation to the potential for targeted industrial action. Members were advised that banners/placard/flags etc were already prepared should the call from the union to take action come.

Domestic Waste Operations

The Branch have been successful in getting improved waterproof PPE for members and are currently lobbying management in relation to the cleaning of these items.

Roads & Transportation Services

The Branch is working on a targeted recruitment campaign for new employee's.

Health & Safety

Tam our H&S Officer has been out with Corporate H&S to carry out his first workplace inspection in a care home. Tam and Susan (STEWARD) also visited a nursery where a member was having issues. They contacted Corporate H&S and within a matter of hours many of the issues had been resolved - there are still a couple of issues to be addressed but they're hopeful that all members issues will be resolved in a timely fashion. Tam would also ask all Stewards to find out when their workplace inspection takes place at your work and ask to be involved as the UNISON representative - **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

HOUSING SERVICES UPDATE

Housing Officer (HOO) Role Review The Housing Management Executive (HME) has completed an internal review of the Housing Officer (HOO) role in response to feedback from staff and trade unions. This review also follows the Managing Change exercise conducted two years ago. One key outcome of the review is the recognition that the current HOO role has become too broad in scope. To address this, the HME is proposing the creation of two specialized functions within the HOO role:

1. **Landlord Responsibilities:** Focusing on housing allocations and the management of void properties.
2. **Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention:** Emphasizing the prevention and assessment of homelessness.

This new approach is expected to benefit both staff and customers by allowing a more focused and effective service. It is important to note that the grade for the HOO role will remain unchanged.

The Head of Housing will be meeting with the Joint Trade Unions Secretary to discuss the review findings and to agree on a short-term implementation timeline. All HOOs will be notified once an implementation date has been finalised.

Safer Communities Caretaker Managing Change Exercise After two years of collaborative work on a Managing Change proposal for Safer Communities Caretakers, the proposal has been put to a vote. An overwhelming 78.6% of members voted in favor of the change exercise. The service is now preparing to implement the changes as soon as practically possible. Further updates will be provided as the implementation process progresses.

YOUNG MEMBERS



The Young Members Group met for the first time on Tuesday 24th September at the bowling Alley in Dunfermline. A great time was had by all (as you can see from the picture!).

This is such an important group - it is our future and we need this young workforce to come together to continue to shape their future employment.

Can we ask all members to encourage their 'younger colleagues' (30 years and under) to contact our Young Members Officer - Rhea, to find out more and become part of this group - Unison.Fife@fife.gov.uk



Education POC/ Steward Nights

Our next catch up night will take place on Wednesday 27th November at the Victoria Hotel in Kirkcaldy with doors opening at 5.30pm for refreshments and networking before we have guest speaker - Donnie Macleod, Education Executive Director along for the evening from 6.30pm. We will get an update out to everyone soon but in the meantime, please save the date!

Please remember to try and come along - it's a great way to share information and talk all things EDUCATION!

Retired Members

Our retired members also meet regularly for social events and informative events.



Brian



Kathleen



Margaret

If you're thinking about retiring soon or just newly retired, why not get in touch with our retired members committee and join in the fun! We need to keep reminding them to take photographs of all their events and hopefully there will be one in the next newsletter!

thanks for reading

Team UNISON Fife