



Gateshead UNISON News

April 2016

Gateshead UNISON protecting Jobs, protecting terms and conditions. Proudly representing over 5000 members in over 130 employers in over 400 workplaces.

Budget Update - Reviews, Delivery Models, TUPE, Reducing Demand ...

Extensive discussions and negotiations are now well underway across the council attempting to reach extremely challenging savings targets – discussions are entirely focused on protecting jobs and services.

The main areas of activity centre on new delivery models across Adult Social Care including, Day Services, Dom Care and Independent Supported Living Schemes. Underpinning most of the new models are measures to significantly reduce the demand for services and discussions with the Clinical Commissioning Groups to establish if health budgets can assist with delivering what are critical services. Significant changes are also being developed and implemented across Commissioning and Quality Assurance teams with the intention of dramatically reducing spending on a range of commissioned services.

Across Children's Services a range of proposals are emerging to reach challenging savings targets including the closure of high quality in-house looked after children provision, significant reductions in the Contact Service and a review of administrative support. A reconfiguration exercise will also be undertaken across CW&L Early Help. Discussions are also underway across other service areas looking at budget and service reshaping proposals.

Council reserves are being utilised to allow for service redesign to be phased-in over the coming months which will help mitigate the impact on employees and service users. The council have also committed to look at alternative delivery models which could prevent services being transferred into other sectors. A range of arm's length, trading models currently operate across the country - we will consult with UNISON colleagues in other areas as any proposals emerge.

Approximately 100 Housing Services Staff have been TUPE'd into to the Gateshead Housing Company including members working across Sheltered Housing Schemes. Whilst acknowledging the anxiety, challenges and uncertainty this transfer has created we understand the limited options the Council have as government policy designed to devastate social housing is implemented at pace. However we will continue to work closely with TGHC to limit the impact on jobs and services and deal with operational issues as they arise.

UNISON representatives have literally met hundreds of members and are attending continuous review meetings - we will continue to do so as the measures to reduce demand for services reverberate around our communities.

Pay update - Unions press for further pay talks

All three NJC trade unions have now completed their membership consultations on the LGA pay offer. UNISON and Unite now have a mandate to seek industrial action ballots.

Given the strength of our members' feelings about the current offer, UNISON and Unite are pressing the Local Government Association (LGA) to put a revised, one-year offer on the table. In particular, we are calling for more certainty and firmer timetables for the proposed joint reviews of term time working and restructuring of the Green Book NJC/GLPC pay spines. We want these reviews completed within a year..... **Watch this space.**

Lords inflict blow to the Trade Union Bill

The House of Lords has inflicted a triple blow to the government's controversial Trade Union Bill.

Peers voted overwhelmingly for three amendments to the bill, on electronic balloting, facility time, and the funds used by unions for political campaigning.

The government was heavily defeated on each vote, and will now be forced to rethink its plans when the bill returns to the Commons.

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said: "It was great to see the Lords reject some of the attacks on unions that are in the Trade Union Bill – and I want to thank every UNISON member and branch who have helped lobby peers.

"In April the Lords will vote on the government's attack on 'check off'. We hope that peers will take issue with the government on that crucial issue too.

"But in the month that ministers have until that vote, there is still time for them to think again about their brutal attack on ordinary working people – and withdraw this ill thought-out and wholly unnecessary bill."

Peers also voted by 320-181 to commission an independent review of electronic ballots for strike action – which ministers have rejected, despite calling for changes that would require a minimum turnout of 50% and backing of at least 40% of those eligible to vote.....

..... they also voted 248-160 against a cap on facility time.

And where the bill requires Labour-affiliated union members to "opt in" to paying a levy to the party, peers voted 320-172 to apply those changes to new members only, with a 12-month transition period.

WARNING - Pensions / Exit Caps / National Insurance - what's happening???

You may well ask! Whether by coincidence, or not, we face being simultaneously hit by a raft of changes to our pay packets, redundancy packages and pension rights which we thought were protected under our terms and conditions. It's a rapidly-changing picture which we'll monitor

via the Branch Website. Meanwhile, to start with, there are three main sets of proposals on exit payments which you can access via this site: <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/03/Exit-Payments-briefing2.pdf> and for those of us dreaming of getting our pension we need to be wary as thousands of people continue to be scammed out of their retirement. The Pensions Regulator has produced a new short film, updated material and new booklets, including a ten step guide on pension scams accessible at enews@thepensionsregulator.gov.uk So, no good news, we're afraid, but plenty to be vigilant about—and we'll certainly be updating you on these key developments over the coming months.



Top Teaching Assistant wins prestigious award

Karen Jackson, a higher level teaching assistant at Thomas Hepburn Community Academy, has been awarded the prestigious Clare Tierney Memorial Award. The award celebrates the UNISON steward or activist who it is felt has made the greatest contribution to the branch and its members in the previous year.

The award was presented to Ms Jackson by Tom Watson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, at Gateshead Civic Centre, for her outstanding contribution in raising the profile of teaching assistants nationally.



Since 2013, Ms Jackson has been part of a national focus group for teaching assistants. The group met with the then shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt to discuss the vital role teaching assistants play in education. She has also taken part in a well-received and lively debate on "What is the point of teaching assistants" at the *Sunday Times* Festival of Education in Berkshire.

In 2014, she was selected by the Department for Education to be on the independent expert review panel set up to develop professional standards for teaching assistants. In 2015, ministers made the decision not to publish the standards, which would have finally recognised teaching assistants professionally. However, professional organisations, including UNISON, are looking at how to take the standards forward. Ms Jackson is still determined to get all teaching assistants the professional recognition they deserve. She said: "There is a need for and value of professional standards for teaching assistants nationally. The standards that were developed had the potential to empower teaching assistants in their work with children and young people".

Karen also described her job as "The most satisfying job she could have wished for"

let us work for a better future drop the Trade Union Bill

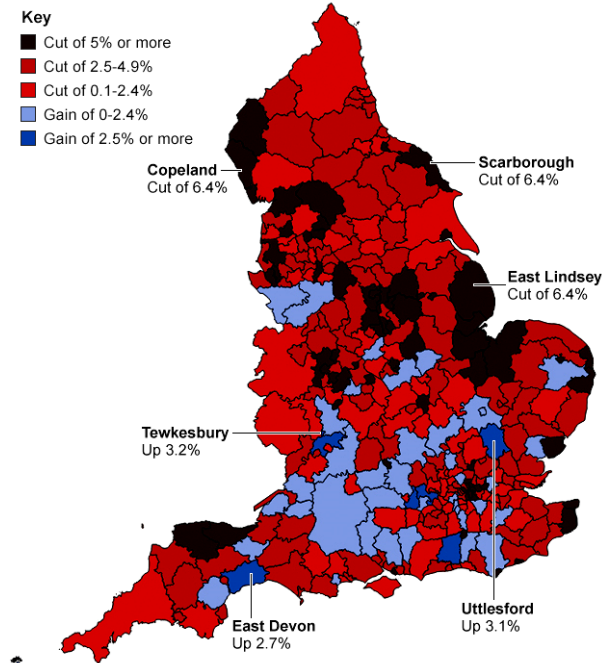
'We can't recommend getting on a bus when we don't know what the fare is and we don't know where it's going' - North East Devolution - Update

As you will be aware UNISON have provided regular Devolution updates and attended various consultations events and meetings as the Devolution proposals have developed. As any deal will have a profound long-term impact on everything we do and stand for - lets attempt to understand the overall position.

The latest position is - Gateshead Council's Cabinet recently voted to reject George Osborne's "devolution" deal following consultation with elected members, the public and Trade Unions. Fundamental concerns were raised on the basis that the Chancellor had categorically reneged on the government's commitment to a fair financial settlement for Gateshead and the wider the North East and the lack of democratic accountability of a proposed regional Mayor.

Cuts Heat Map

Change in council spending power, 2015-16



All Local Councils agreed to consider a deal with Government last year, with an categorical prerequisite of a fair financial settlement for our region. Since 2010 Gateshead residents have suffered huge unfair (Cuts Heat Map) budget reductions of £110m with a further £78m of cuts ahead. A key point has to be - not a penny of the recently announced national £300m Local Government Transition fund landed in Gateshead or any of the other Tyne and Wear Local Councils, over 80% went to southern Conservative councils.

Obviously - an unfair financial settlement for Gateshead and the wider the North East continues at pace ... clearly disregarding the fair funding prerequisite?

There is increasing opposition among Labour Councillors, Regional MPs, and regional Trade Unions to the proposed Deal. In particular to the unseemly and unnecessary haste of the approval procedure, as the secondary legislation will not be presented before June.

Hence, the detailed operational provisions of the Mayoral Combined Authority will not be known until June – after any deal is signed!

For info - the Devo Deal offers a paltry £30m a year for investment across a region stretching from Berwick to Bishop Auckland. It fails miserably to meet the needs of the North East - while placing all of the responsibility for ongoing cuts and reduced services - whilst demand increases - on the shoulders of Local Councils and residents.

Similar deals across England have also been criticised by both Labour and Tory MPs and Councillors, who are concerned over the transfer of powers without adequate resources. Gateshead MP Ian Mearns described the NECA deal as lacking in ambition for our region, whilst Dave Anderson MP for Blaydon slammed it as a "con trick".

Further afield Councillor Bob Wheeler, Leader of the South Derbyshire District Council said after rejecting their devo deal **"We simply don't know in detail what the powers of an elected mayor or combined authority would be. We can't recommend getting on a bus when we don't know what the fare is and we don't know where it's going."**

It is underhanded that council leaders, other elected members and the people they represent were expected to agree to a deal which contains no detail on the key mechanisms of governance and economic value.

Therefore, UNISON, Unite and the GMB are calling on Councillors in the other six NECA authorities reject the dire devo deal that is currently being offered by the Government and push for a fair deal – as Gateshead Council has done.

Essential legal cover when you need it most

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free legal advice and support on:

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- Employment law (accessed via branch)

"I nearly gave up hope, but thanks to your persistence a good result was achieved. Many thanks to Thompsons and UNISON for all their help and advice. Thompsons and UNISON – an excellent partnership."

Michelle, UNISON member

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