



Pay up for Local Government Workers

Dear Colleague,

I am writing this as UNISON continues to fight for fair pay for Council Workers as your branch secretary and colleague, I urge you to vote in this postal ballot for industrial action. The main points to note are below. As you will know pay is increasingly becoming the most pressing item on the agenda for our members as the cost-of-living crisis bites increasingly into our pay packets. UNISON members need to send a clear message to our employer that their current offer is not enough. That's why I am asking you to return your ballot papers today! Our employer is banking on a low return of ballot papers. You can make them reconsider what they think they can get away with by posting your ballot paper and proving them wrong.

UNISON members working in waste services in Stirling and Perth and Kinross are on strike for fair pay. In the first phase of our pay campaign.

UNISON are balloting school staff across Scotland for strike action. The ballot opened on the 31st July 2023. We recommend you vote YES for strike. But whatever you think Vote!

Despite our efforts COSLA have not improved their April pay offer, which UNISON members overwhelmingly rejected in a consultative ballot. COSLA say they don't have the cash to improve their offer but will not approach Scottish Government for additional funding.

COSLA want to see if UNISON can beat anti-trade union strike thresholds, this is why it is so important that you vote. We did it last year and can do it again this year. If members vote to strike, any action will take place after the summer break but before the October holidays.

Your ballot paper will arrive by post in a PURPLE envelop.

If you work in Schools and have not received a ballot paper our ballot help line opens on 7th August.

Members should contact the ballot helpline on 0800 0 857 857 or email: membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk.

Ballot Closes at 10am on the 25th of August, please post your ballot to allow time for post!

Janet Robertson

Falkirk UNISON
Branch Secretary

Name The News Competition

We are looking for your help in naming our newsletter and to make it more interesting we are running a competition for members to come up with a title.

There will be a prize for the best name, goodie bags for all entrants.

Please send your suggestion to office@unisonfalkirk.org.uk.

Please state "Name the News" as the Subject Title.



Branch Officer position Communications Officer. (Volunteer)

UNISON Falkirk are looking for a Communications Officer, all our Activists are UNISON members, who volunteer their skills and want to develop their skills in different areas.

What is involved.

This is a key branch role which involves keeping out members updated with the latest news on what is going on in the Branch, Region and Nationally.

Our Communications Officer will liaise with the branch to develop effective communications, through our social media, Website, Newsletters external Media such as Local Press, Radio, and TV. Will assist with developing content to support our campaigns and keep members up to date to promote the work with which we are involved.

Rewards.

This position offers an opportunity to develop your creative and communications skills.

Gain recognition from your branch.

Training provided with approved time off work to attend training courses.

Contact:

Janet Robertson
for more information at
office@unisonfalkirk.co.uk

New Faces

There has been a lot of changes in the branch following the AGM with a new branch leadership team elected from the membership and activist base. These are as detailed below:



Janet Roberson remains in posts as Branch Secretary, Janet works in Children's Services.

Rodger Ridley is our New Branch Chair, who works in Social Work Services.

Natalie McKechnie is our Vice Chair, who works in Social Work Services.

Natalie McKechnie our Vice Chair recently became a Steward before being elected as Vice Chair. Natalie reflected on her journey as a UNISON activist "I became a Shop Steward in 2019 and was trained as an Accredited Trade Union Steward soon afterwards." Supported by Falkirk UNISON Branch Natalie was quickly picking up casework and attending meetings with the employer "The training was very informative, and the branch and fulltime officers helped me find my feet. Being a steward is a great way to learn new skills and meet new people." "It is very rewarding being able to support our members,

particularly at this time when Council Workers are under such extreme pressure."

Susan Crook a stalwart of the branch, who works in Place Services, remains as Branch Treasurer & **Tony Beekman** (CLD) Community Learning Development is building his knowledge of running the branch budget, as Assistant Treasurer and remains as a Steward.



New Stewards who will become familiar names now that their training has been completed are, **Andrea Leishman** who works in Homecare & **Nicola McCormack**, Social Work Services.

With **Shirleyanne Mrozs** Homecare and **Dean McGrandles** Social Work Services soon to follow suit.

If you are interested in joining the team or just have a question as to what the role of steward entails or what training and support is available just give us a call or drop us a line with a convenient time to call you back.

CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

If you are experiencing any changes to your Job, please contact us and let us know it is happening to get advice on the matter.

Tel: 01324 630082 or Email: office@unisonfalkirk.org.uk
Secretary: Mrs Janet Robertson

Violence and Aggression at Work

Falkirk Council has a zero tolerance to violence and aggression at work; however, incidents still happen suggesting just having a policy is not enough.

During the Spring, UNISON have been speaking to members about the level of Violence and Aggression they face, sometimes daily, this is particularly prevalent in Schools and where Council Workers have face to face encounters with difficult members of the public while carrying out their duties.

Our conversations carried out across Scotland suggest that managers may not be confident in Supporting their staff with incidents when they occur. There appears still to be an “it’s just part of the job” attitude in some areas. When raised with a local manager a level of Violence and Aggression is accepted as the norm and played down. This should not be seen as a reflection on managers, but it appears this culture exists within organisations. This is leading to an underreporting of Violent and Aggressive behaviours at work.

No employee should be subject to any abusive behaviour at work, and we believe any employer would support this premise. Even low-level abusive behaviour toward members of staff will eventually have a detrimental effect on staff wellbeing and could escalate towards serious breaches of Health and Safety or Human Rights.

To tackle the problem, it is essential that UNISON members take the time to report issues with their Employer and follow up on them if they hear nothing back. Falkirk Council have systems and procedures for tracking and responding to incidents of violence, abuse, and aggression at work, but we know that members still do not always use these tools when something happens. UNISON is here to support you should an incident occur, but no matter what happens after an incident, please report it using whatever process is available to you. We need to provide evidence that a workplace has a problem before some employers will act on it, without those reports it is much harder to achieve a Zero Tolerance culture within the workplace.

If you have experienced Violence or Aggression at work and need Support, please contact the UNISON Falkirk Branch Office for advice.



UNISON conference celebrates – Black Workers

The Year of Black Workers will focus UNISON on the important issues that affect Black members and their everyday lives, with their lived experiences being central to campaigning.

Janet Robertson our Branch Secretary said: “My hope for this year is that UNISON Falkirk Branch can promote the benefits of being part of our Trade Union to Black members and activists to achieve tangible success, both in terms of UNISON

structures and maximising the union’s capacity to improve working conditions.”

UNISON’s Year of Black Workers is underpinned by the desire of ‘establishing legacy to generate change.’

In UNISON, ‘Black’ is used to indicate people with a shared history. ‘Black’ is used in a broad political sense to describe people in the UK who have suffered from colonialism and

enslavement in the past and continue to experience racism and diminished opportunities today. Our branch would encourage any members from this group to contact us if they are subject to abuse in the workplace, relating to their Racial characteristics. We would also like to hear from you if you would like to play an active role within the branch.

Please contact your local steward or the Branch office for more information.



UNISON National Delegate Conference in Liverpool

National Delegates Conference

Attendees from the UNISON Falkirk branch at this year's conference were Janet Robertson, Andrea Leishman Steward, Shirleyanne Mrozs (Steward), sharing photos of the conference in Liverpool 2023.

Janet Robertson, Branch Secretary, said it was great to attend conference it was a great experience for all of us; getting to know more about the inner workings and decision-making process of our trade union. It also allowed us to do a bit of networking with members from other areas within UNISON, finding out about the challenges that we are having and indeed the solutions they are coming up with.

Andrea stated, "Conference in Liverpool was my first conference, I found it very interesting, I learned a lot and am looking forward to returning in the future."

Conference is a great experience, learning about our campaigns and the work UNISON does for our members as it inspires activists to achieve more successes for this Great Trade Union. UNISON. Shirleyanne Stated, Liverpool was my first UNISON conference I enjoyed meeting new people and networking with others from different branches, getting insight to what is involved in National Delegate Conference. "



Shirleyanne and Andrea

What is on the go at Falkirk UNISON?

The branch continues to support members with individual cases but are also working on wider collective issues, notably Libraries, Social Work Assistants, Environment Enforcement Officers and have been involved in other discussions with Falkirk Council around Budget Cuts.

Libraries

Redesign in Libraries has resulted in a preference exercise. UNISON is monitoring the situation and we are looking to engage with members on this issue. If you have any concerns, please contact us.

Social Work Assistants, we are supporting our members in this area, through a disputes process, who have highlighted concerns following successful re-evaluation of their role. Whilst being notified that they were moving up a grade, they were advised that the council policy does not allow for back pay. A shock for this group as their re-evaluation has taken close to 5 years to complete.

This is also a concern for UNISON, as it is contrary to the ethos behind the Nationally Agreed Job Evaluation scheme within Falkirk Council. Dare we say cake and eat it, the employer can ask you to work beyond your role, you ask for recognition – the review takes months or years and if successful you are not rewarded for the work already done.

UNISON raised the issue with the

employer, and it was agreed they would look to benchmark other areas and come back to the trade unions unfortunately many months have passed, and we have heard nothing.

We will continue to pursue this issue both based on achieving equality but also fairness.

Environmental Enforcement Officers

these staff have been challenging the Council Decision to cut this service, which places the Council in the position where there is no deterrent against control of dogs or fly tipping. UNISON has raised this with the Councillors, highlighting the issue in the Local and National media. Falkirk Council are not willing to reconsider the negative impact on Staff or the Local Residents. UNISON will continue to raise these issues and campaign for better consultation on matters of importance relating to public health and safety.

Home Care

Meetings have been ongoing with UNISON regarding concerns around the medication policy.

The employer provides training for staff as required, consisting of at least 3 observations as a minimum and more where required, including refresher training where medication requirements change and where controlled drugs are to be given. Our request for a buddy up system is to be considered for 4 weeks to minimise

risks, Falkirk Council has agreed to this and is looking at asking pharmacy technicians go out with staff to provide support on the administration of controlled drugs.

The employer said there is no legal requirement for 2 staff to administer medication and that it is known as Gold Standard. Luckily for us that is the practice which is used in NHS – Bearing in mind we are part of the Health & Social Care Partnership we are asking for parity of training and support with our NHS colleagues.

Current medication Policy will be reviewed once all actions are completed, UNISON has requested that an appendix is added to the current policy to address inappropriate wording which implies the employee would be responsible for any drug errors to reduce impact on genuine mistakes that may affect SSSC registration.

We are advised that an App is available for staff to download called Safe Med, which Falkirk Council is checking is safe to use, this will be made available for staff once approved.

Meetings are ongoing with TUs and the employer the next meeting will be in 6 weeks' time, at which point the employer has agreed to provide a response on the Actions to TUs. If you have any questions or wish to comment on managements proposals, please get in touch.