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October 2015

The Members’ Voice

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**DROP THE TRADE UNION BILL**

**UNISON is campaigning with the TUC and other unions to oppose this attack on the rights of working people and their unions.**

The Trade Union Bill currently before Parliament is unfair, unnecessary and undemocratic. MP’s need to focus on the real problems the country faces and talk to us about how we can work together for a better future. They need to give us the respect we deserve: stop fighting our right to be represented and supported. The Bill will severely restrict working people’s ability to organise to defend their jobs and pay and to campaign for a fairer society.

The Branch wrote to all 66 Wirral Councillors and asked them to pass a motion which we provided against the Trade Union Bill at its full Council meeting on 12 October. Unfortunately our request was not considered. The Branch Secretary, Paddy Cleary will be addressing Labour Councillors on this issue.

The Branch has also written to the four Constituency Labour Party Secretary’s and have asked them to also to put the item on their next agenda and pass the motion against the Trade Union Bill.

**A mass lobby of Parliament to protect the right to strike has been organised for Monday, 2 November. The branch have organised a coach so if you are interested in going phone the branch office on 0151-643 7007 by no later than Friday, 23 October to reserve a seat.**

**WHAT CAN YOU DO? TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT OUR RIGHT TO SUPPORT AT WORK**

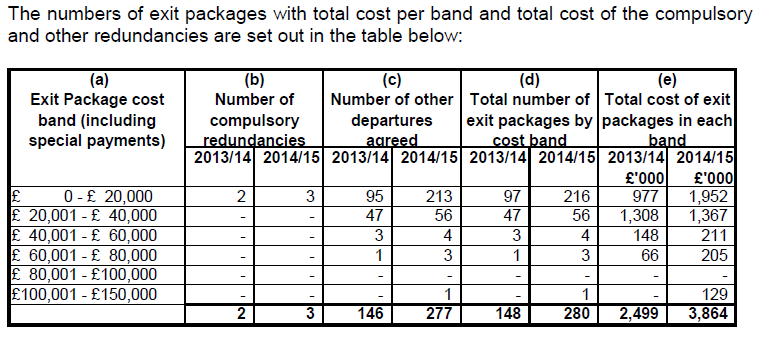
* Write or email your three local Councillors and ask them to pass the motion we have sent them
* Write or email your MP and make them aware of the dangers of this Bill
* Attend the lobby of Parliament on 2 November – book your seat on the coach now

**Council Update**

Members face the real possibility of a further attack on terms and conditions and the assumption that more services will be provided by alternate delivery models.

Staff should note that since 2010 the council has lost 40% in staff headcount numbers, in the financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15 ONLY TWELVE staff earning over £40,000 left the authority!!!

Below is a table taken from the Statements of Accounts for 2014-15 that clearly shows we are “all in it together !!!”



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*Formerly Wirral Autistic Society (WAS)*

The result of the ballot for paying the minimum wage for sleeps-ins

The members accepted the proposal as below

UNISON met with Autism Together (WAS) through ACAS to agree from July 2015 to pay the living wage to anyone who works a sleep-in.  For Autism Together to be compliant and not be breaking the law by paying less than the minimum wage for every hour worked, it was agreed that for those staff on a sleep-in the following calculation will be made – the total salary for the month including all contracted hours, overtime, additional hours and sleep-ins, will be divided by the hours worked to ensure that overall no hour falls less than the minimum wage.  If any topping up required for any hour worked then this will be paid the same month.

The financial situation of WAS if a back pay element before July 2015 was sought then the Society would become bankrupt as regional officials had been given access to their accounts and verified this position, which could ultimately result in the loss of jobs.

**The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority** by Paddy Cleary, Branch Secretary

Along with the Branch Chair, Sue Kellett, I attended the 2nd meeting held by UNISON in relation to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Health branches were also in attendance as proposals will affect a wide range of services provided by the Public Sector. These will include Transport, Housing and Spatial Planning, Health, Wellbeing, Social Care, Energy, Culture, Community Safety, Enforcement, Licencing, Regulatory Services, Education and Children Services.

UNISON has concerns over a number of issues including accountability and what the proposals will mean for other Council budgets & Services.

Meetings will be ongoing and members will be kept informed as we progress towards ‘Devo Scouse’ that has a possible implementation date of April/May 2017.

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The board at Magenta Living are looking to take a balanced approach to savings they have to make. The board have taken into account some favourable underspend, but still will need a program of cuts over the next 4 years.

Whilst one off initially savings will be taken into account, business reviews, fit for future reviews and changes to revenue expenditure will all be undertaken to meet initially cuts as well as loss of revenue from year 5 onwards.

Staff have been asked to declare an interest if they would like to leave the company under a VS scheme not just in year 1 but in future years.

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**NO to Austerity, YES to Workers’ Rights**

There was a good turnout from Wirral UNISON branch when we travelled up to Manchester for the ‘March Against Austerity, March For Workers Rights’ demonstration outside the Tory Conference on the 4 October. There were a huge number of demonstrators present, in excess of 90,000, with flags, banners, hand-painted slogans and placards declaring “I’m proud to be in UNISON”, they made their feelings known. There were lot of speakers including Dave Prentis and I had the pleasure of meeting Heather Wakefield our nominee for General Secretary.

By Phil Hamilton, International Relations Officer

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**Membership of UNISON**

Membership of UNISON comes with many benefits, from free training and access to legal services, death and accident benefits and support for your welfare

**List of key benefits**

Free training and development; Death and accident benefits; Legal services; Welfare benefits; NHS professional indemnity insurance; Financial grants for learning

**Free training and development**

Some of these courses are aimed at helping members to improve their general skills, for example using computers or building their confidence. Our member development programme includes the award winning Return to Learn programme for members interested in getting back into learning.

Other courses are designed to help members play a more active role in UNISON through our comprehensive training programme for workplace representatives and branch officers, including health and safety, equalities or learning reps. We also offer taster courses on key issues.

**Death and accident benefits**

Death benefit – Payment ranging from £127.50 to £510.00 to a deceased member’s partner, dependant(s) or estate, depending on length of membership at the time of death. The deceased must have had at least four weeks paid membership before death.

Accident – Payment of up to £21.00 a week for the period in which you are unable to work because of an accident (subject to maximum of £126.00 a year). You must have had at least four week’s paid membership prior to the date of the accident.

Fatal accident – payment ranging from £2,237 to £8,947 to a deceased member’s partner or dependant(s), depending on length of membership at the time of death. The deceased must have had at least four week’s paid membership before death.

**Legal services**

We offer a number of legal services to members and their families, for help with issues within and outside of the workplace. This includes assisting with workplace problems, injury claims, clinical negligence and free legal advice, wills and conveyancing.

**Welfare benefits**

Confidential welfare assistance is available in many forms, including:

■emergency grants;

■family holidays;

■help with other special needs;

■advice on a range of issues.

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**Alternate Delivery Models By Paddy Cleary, Branch Secretary**

I have currently been involved in discussions about the TUPE transfer of staff to the Schools Traded Service Company (Edsentials) and the Day Services Company (Wirral Evoultions).

UNISON have concerns about a number of issues going forward and will be looking for answers in areas around the Business case, Pension provision, Growth plans and an acceptable Recognition Agreement. These issues have also been highlighted separately to councillors. Meetings with staff have and will take place to keep them informed of progress on concerns raised.

**Reading Ahead with Andy McNab** by Gill Whitfield, Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator

UNISON along with Wirral Libraries are pleased to announce that Andy McNab will be launching this year’s Reading Ahead challenge. This is the new name for the Six Book Challenge which, since 2008, has inspired less confident readers to develop an enjoyment of reading at the same time as improving their literacy skills.

The launch will take place at:

**Birkenhead Central Library at 9am on 11th November 2015**

Tickets are free, but are strictly limited.

Andy will be talking about his latest novel “Detonator “, hosting a question and answer session, and signing copies of his book (on sale at the event). Doors open at 8.30am and refreshments will be available.

If you wish to attend please email with your details at gillwhitfield@wirral .gov.uk by no later than Monday 26 October. We have secured 50 tickets for UNISON members so it will be on a first come first served basis.

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As reported in the last newsletter all members were invited to attend a meeting to discuss the affiliated political fund membership and the benefits of joint UNISON / Labour membership.

Jason Hunter, UNISON Labour Link and Councillor Tony Norbury, Wirral Labour Party (pictured) were the guest speakers. The event was considered to be very informative by those who attended.

By Steve Bennett, Political Liaison Officer

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**WILL YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BE FINANCIALLY HIT IN APRIL 2016**

By Brenda Hall, Branch Negotiator

Many UNISON members will have their finances plunged into chaos as a result of these changes to tax credits. The average loss per family next April will be £1,350 per year this will hit low to middle income families with children.

There is model letter which you can send to your local MP (Angela Eagle – Wallasey, Margaret Greenwood – Wirral West, Frank Field – Birkenhead, Alison McGovern – Wirral South) who all voted against cutting the tax credit threshold.   This will have more impact if members include how they see themselves being affected.

If you are one of the many members being hit by the cuts and you are willing to take further part in our campaign with the press, then please get in touch with me on the number above so we can show the detrimental impact this will have on your household income. Contact the branch for email version of the letter. UNISON are working with MP’s and the House of Lords to do everything we can to try and defeat these cruel cuts, please support our campaign.

**CalAid Update** by Phil Hamilton, International Relations Officer

A great big thank you to all UNISON members who donated items and who contributed to fuel costs.

At the end of September I travelled to Calais along with four UNISON members with all your kind donations. It was an incredible few days we met some incredible people down there and made some new friends.

We spent the first evening meeting other volunteers who'd also travelled to Calais to help on the camp.

The following day we set off early and went to the distribution centre.

We spent the morning helping out as there'd been a lot of supplies left but they needed sorting. While we were there we watched as teams came in and out collecting supplies needed and head back out there delivering it to the most vulnerable on the site...some of these volunteers had been here for weeks and in some cases months, leaving families and jobs to help out in Calais.



We left for the camp in the afternoon and parked in a service road next to the camp...the people organised themselves in to orderly lines and waited at the back of vehicles. When we'd handed out all of the supplies we were invited to have tea with a group of young men who'd fled conflict in Sudan. We sat with these young people (mostly students) and they spoke about their families and friends back home.

We met so many other people on the site taking details of what they needed and arranging to meet with them the following morning with their supplies.

We also arranged for one young man to get to see the medics.

It was much the same the following day, organising in the warehouse and arranging supplies that the people had asked for the day before and meeting and making lists to pass on to other volunteers following on behind us.

We filled the empty van with clothes that weren't suitable for the "Jungle" and brought them back to the UK to sell at a ‘cash for clothes’ shop. This will be forwarded to the warehouse in Calais (£164.45)

Thank you, if it wasn't for UNISON members and others who kindly donated we wouldn't have been able to make the trip...

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**Your Branch Officers:**

**Branch Secretary** – Paddy Cleary

**Branch Chair** – Sue Kellett

**Branch Vice-Chair** – Steve Bennett

**Branch Negotiator** – Brenda Hall

**Branch Treasurer** – Angie Redgrift

**Education Co-ordinator** – Ian Upton

**Equalities Officer** – Karen Noonan

**Health & Safety Officer** – Nick Bower

**International Relations Officer** – Phil Hamilton

**Assistant Branch Secretary** – Sue Mathie

**Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator** – Dave Hardcastle

**Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator** – Gill Whitfield

**Membership Services Officer** – Ian Ward

**Sports & Social Officer** – Matty Moores

**Welfare Officer** – Angie Redgrift

**Womens Officer** – Rebecca Call

**Young Members Officer** – Hannah Plimley