



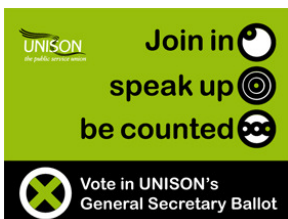
# UNION STREET NEWS



## Defend Coventry Jobs and Services Unison Members call for Joint Action over ABC

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The general secretary is the principal officer of our union, the face of UNISON in the wider world and the voice that speaks up for you. That's why it is so important that you have your say in electing our leader.

Coventry Unison Branch Committee has nominated Roger Bannister for General Secretary. Visit <http://www.unison.org.uk/elections> for further information on the election.

Over 40 Unison members attended a General Meeting on the lunchtime of March 31st. Staff and stewards raised their concerns about the ABC review, its links to wider attacks on terms and conditions and there fears about the latest developments.

Richard Harty, Corporate Negotiator, Coventry Unison, told the meeting that in his view, ABC was a major challenge to the union and that consultation on the proposals had been cursory, inadequate and a potential breach of collective bargaining protocol.

Sarah Feeney, Assistant Branch Secretary, remarked that the series of reviews around the Council will have far

reaching consequences with a major impact on jobs, workplace accommodation and workload for all Council staff.

The first part of the review was begun last year at Whitley Depot, staffed by 150 people. Unison were told that the only way to achieve the required savings would be by integrating wage bands and shift patterns.

The changes at Whitley, as proposed, will lead to massive impact on hours of work. Additionally, Council unions are in agreement that there is no evidence that there will be the savings of £350k achieved.

Richard Harty, pointed out that around £95k has

already been paid to private consultants, Price Waterhouse, in addition to huge amounts of senior management staff time being allocated to the review. An alternative union plan, not including the anticipated increase in senior managers would actually save money, leading to savings of up to £150k over the current proposals. Richard Harty commented that the changes appear to create the platform for privatisation.

Staff in a number of areas gave a range of comments about their concerns about the impact of review on their service area. Unison will continue to meet staff and organise a robust response to ABC.

## Editorial

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We are on Facebook—  
 look for Coventry Unison

### Unison vs BNP

Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis welcomed the BNP's electoral disaster following the General Election

Nick Griffin, the party's leader, came a poor third in his attempt to win a parliamentary seat and his supporters failed to win any council seats in Barking and Dagenham or in Stoke.

UNISON members and staff campaigned with a range of anti fascist organisations including [Unite against Fascism](#), and Hope not Hate, to combat the BNP. Thousands of union members argued that public services depended on migrant workers and that we should celebrate our diverse society.

"We are in difficult political times but one thing is certain - the BNP and their message of hate has been rejected by the British public," said Mr Prentis. "There is no place for the BNP in a decent society."

Welcome to the first edition of the new *Union Street News*. This is your magazine for Unison members in Coventry. It will be produced on a quarterly basis with the latest news and updates to make sure you are in touch with your branch and how we are working to defend your terms and conditions of employment.

This new venture comes at a critical point for local government staff. The recent election outcome presents major challenges, as the two coalition 'condem' parties commit to huge cuts in public expenditure and to outsource services to the private

### Solidarity News

**A new weekly presentation of international labour news is now available on the Internet.**

The audiocast - called Solidarity News - is available on [RadioLabour.net](#) every Monday morning. RadioLabour is the brainchild of Marc Belanger -- the founder of SoliNet, which was the first trade union

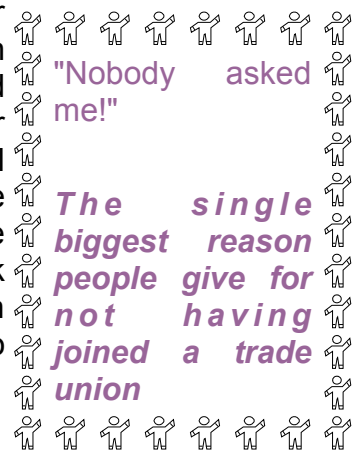
sector. Strong trade unions will be vital in these uncertain times and unions can only be strong if we have high membership and active workplace organisation.

If you work with people who are not members of a union, show them this magazine and ask them if they can really afford not to be a union member any longer. Likewise, think about becoming a workplace steward and actively representing your workplace in branch decisions and supporting your colleagues. Full professional free training is available for stewards in work time, along with agreed facility time to

carry out your duties. Contact the Branch Office for more information about becoming a steward – details in the left hand margin of this page.

Enjoy the magazine and let us know what you think. If you want to write a letter or make a contribution to the next issue, that would be fantastic! Just write something down and drop us a line or e-mail.

All the Best  
 Coventry Unison.



online network back in the 1980s.

Solidarity News focuses on union and workers' activities and issues from around the world with special emphasis on emerging market and developing countries.

RadioLabour reporters will provide regular weekly presentations, but a special feature of

the audiocast will be reports from unionists who want to report on particular events or publicize an activity of their organization.

Scripts of the audiocasts will be available as aids for unionists who want to learn the use of English as an additional language in the international labour movement.

## Personal Choice in social care. How Do we Deliver Service Quality?

By  
Steph Lunn, Community  
Services Steward

Many Unison members will have direct experience of how disabled people, older people and people with mental health problems are undervalued in our society. Decisions are often made about them without involving them. This leaves people feeling powerless and frustrated. The help that people receive from Social Services can sometimes add to this frustration. For example, how would you feel if you could not go out with your friends in the evening because your carer comes to put you to bed at 9pm? When services are not flexible, people who are already marginalised in society can become more isolated.

The 'personalisation' programme is an initiative from central government to make sure that people can do things differently, to suit them. Having their care needs met in a way that supports them to have a full life. Some people have chosen to employ family members and friends as carers, who can be more flexible than care agencies. Others have chosen to join in with local mainstream activities; for example, having a carer support them to the bingo instead of using a traditional day centre.

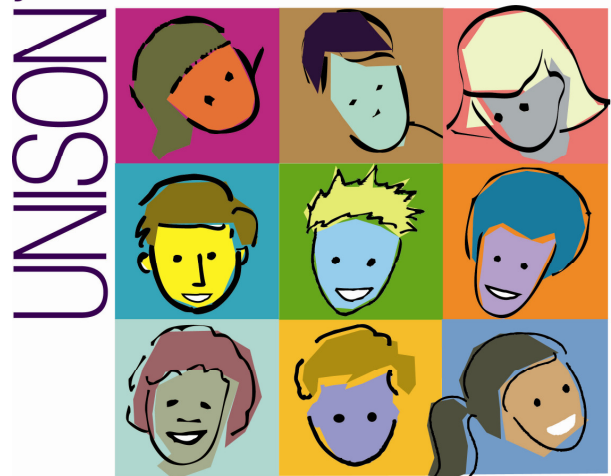
All of these very positive ideas are explained clearly in the government document 'Putting People First', however, the implementation of this programme can have some worrying implications. Personalisation should be about giving people choice and control over their lives and their care support. Local Authority services supporting older and disabled people across the City provide a service that is of high quality to some of the most vulnerable people in the City, something which cannot always be said of our private contractors.

People should have the freedom to choose between a quality service supplied by the Local Authority and putting together a support plan of their own. 'Personalisation' is being used as an excuse to outsource all services, and this puts

both jobs and the quality of services at risk. Where Local Authority services are valued by the people they serve and of a high quality, they should be embraced as a key part of the new personalised social care system; an option for people to consider. They should not be under threat to make way for private companies. We have already seen how the use of private companies (drawing a profit from social care services) can drive down the quality and reliability of services.

What the City Council should be doing is ensuring real choice. For this, we need quality services provided by the local authority. Disabled and older people can then make real choices, giving them the freedom to live their lives.

your friend at work



Union Street News is edited and published by the Coventry branch of Unison. The views expressed are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily the official view of Unison



By Julie Skirrow,  
Convenor

### **QUESTION:**

"There is a lot of negative press regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and how it is unsustainable in the current economic climate. Is it really as good as the media make out?

### **COVENTRY UNISON RESPONSE:**

Local Government pensions are being attacked – both Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have said publicly that they will end the local Government final salary scheme. This is ironic when you think that the average pension that a female local Government employee can expect after forty years of work is less than £4000 per annum; and that a Member of Parliament has to work less than three years to receive the same level of pension. We notice that changing the MPs' pension scheme seems to be on no-one's agenda.

Yet again the local Government workers are being treated differently to other public sector workers.

The local Government

pension fund (LGPF) is the only public sector pension scheme that has a 'pot' of money behind it. All other schemes are underwritten by National Government. This means that whereas local Government authorities need to put a set of money aside to ensure that they can meet the pension demands of their retired ex-employees other public sector pensions are funded out of the public purse.

In order to ensure that they have enough money in the fund to meet the pension commitments the Wolverhampton Pension Fund invest your money and the employers' contributions. Their aim is to use the investments to create income. They do this by investing in the stock market, Government bonds, by purchasing property that they receive a rental income for, and by loaning money to banks.

The decisions about how to invest the money is currently being made by fund managers, according to a policy decided solely by councillors. UNISON and other trade unions have reps on the main committee and the investment committee, but they only act as observers, they do not have voting rights.

So neither you nor your representatives have any say in how the funds are invested. Decisions are currently being taken on the understanding that the fund is there to protect the council tax-payer. Thompsons, Unisons solicitors believe that this is illegal as the 'primary fiduciary duty' as it is called of all pension fund managers should be to your pensions.



Unison is campaigning on your behalf to try to protect members pension rights. Unison believes there should be member nominated reps in a decision making capacity on every local Government pensions scheme in line with EEC legislation.

Since your pension is essentially deferred pay, this represents a major attack on our terms and conditions. We need to be prepared to fight this.

In order to be effective we need a representative in every workplace who can inform their colleagues and help us to organise to defend our pensions.

Unisons national office has set up a scheme to help us do this by asking members to become 'capital stewards'. Capital stewards can sign up to a website and gain access to information which will keep them up to date and inform them about what is being done in their name.

If you are interested in becoming a capital steward or in finding more out about what the pension fund does with your money then please let me have your name and address or email address so that I can send you some information. This could have a huge impact on the pension you receive when you retire, so please get involved.