

STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Moray Unison fully supports the decision of The Moray Council to keep the council housing stock in-house.

There is room for improvement in every service and Unison welcomes the chance for a full dialogue with the Council on their proposals for the housing service in the future.

Housing plays a crucial part in the servicing of many of the departments of the council and this decision will alleviate many fears throughout the council.

Nationally we hope that the positively public campaign led by Unison and the clear solidarity shown by the North of Scotland local councils will give a clear picture to

the government that they have to re-think their policy on Stock Transfer.

Within Moray we have a dedicated staff who understand that each and every area of Moray has a unique service requirement. The properties have had major investment over the past years but this does not mean that we can sit on our laurels. Investing in housing services is more than investing in bricks and mortar. The Council has to invest in the staff.

Within the Housing Section staff turnover is very high. This year has also seen an increase in stress related illness to which the management has not responded. Unison recognises the problems, however, and will strive to give staff the support they deserve.

Housing Stock transfer has been the latest challenge, following Best value and CCT. The new housing Act will throw up new challenges for us all, but with Unison aware of the need for dialogue between the management and staff we will strive to ensure a fair deal for the tenants of Moray and our staff.



MORAY BRANCH WINS AWARD

Moray UNISON has won an award for its representation of members during the Housing Stock Option Appraisal process.

Moray UNISON was singled out for the award from branches throughout Scotland representing Local Government, Health, Utilities and the Community and Voluntary Sector in UNISON's Organise 2001 Awards.

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RETURN TO LEARN

Unison, Moray Council and the Workers Educational Association (WEA) in partnership have undertaken the provision of IT training for members of the council who have the criteria judged to be acceptable to the co-ordinating officer.

The scheme, in which three unions including Moray Unison are participating, starts on the 3rd December. The course will run over 10 weeks for two and a half hours per day to allow staff the basic introduction to computers. Many staff members on the front

line services think that they may never need to use a computer, however when they see friends, colleagues or young family members use them it fills them with fear. This course is aimed at removing that stigma of fear.

The course run by tutors in Elgin, from the WEA, starts at a basic level and will show that there is nothing to fear from a PC.

Unison believes that everyone deserves a chance, no matter at what their age or level of knowledge. We are never too old to

learn. The initial grouping will come from members of the DLO and Sheltered Housing Wardens, with the next groupings aimed at school non-teaching staff and home carers.

RETURN TO LEARN, IT'S NEVER TO LATE.

If you have a query contact Dougie McPhee on 01542 885517.



THE CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT

UNISON's Positively Public Campaign has been taken to the heart of the Scottish Government. Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary, challenged the then First Minister, Henry McLeish to work together with UNISON to deliver the improved public services that we both want. Previously he and other UNISON representatives had met Secretary of State Helen Liddle and pressed the case for Scotland's Public Services.

Matt Smith was speaking at a Conference run by the Centre for Scottish Public Policy to mark the fourth anniversary of the Scottish Parliament Referendum. Matt said, "I pointed out that we shared the same aims as the Government. That we agreed that public services needed improving; that they should deliver social justice; be provided by teamworking and building for the longer term – all calls the First Minister made in his own speech to the

conference. If this was so, why didn't we sit down together and jointly work out how to deliver these aims." **Matt pointed out the PFI projects run completely contrary to all these aims, being run for financial profit – not social justice, braking up the 'team' and failing to deliver the improvements promised.**

This point was also made in the meeting with Helen Liddle. Mike Kirby, UNISON's Scottish Convener said, "When the Secretary of State told us 'What matters is what works' we were able to point to her own area of Lanarkshire where PFI hospitals are clearly not working." Meetings will continue to be held to pursue UNISON's policies with the government at all levels.

Local Action

What do I need to do ?

- Get your postcards in now – if you've not already done so, fill in the enclosed postcard NOW and send it to UNISON
- Put the enclosed window sticker in your car or in a window at work or at home
- You've already received a copy of the Charter for the Public Services 2001 – UNISON's six principles for world class public services
- Tell your work colleagues what UNISON are doing
- Watch out for local information on the campaign and local events
- Contact the branch office if you'd like more postcards, window stickers, and copies of the charter and the Manifesto
- Look at the information on the UNISONScotland website www.unison-scotland.org.uk
- Offer to help the branch in the campaign



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THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ACTION...

School scheme lacks basic understanding of maths.

21 Local authorities have been awarded £5m to undertake feasibility studies into PFI in schools. 10 schemes worth £530m are already underway and many other authorities are being blackmailed into pressing ahead with schemes which they know do not represent value for money.

One of the latest is in Renfrewshire where an outline business case already anticipates paying £39m more than the Public Sector Comparator (PSC).

At a recent UNISON seminar, branch delegates had an opportunity to look in details at the flawed Glasgow Schools scheme. A scheme which will cost the taxpayer £35m more than the PSC. In return schools lost six swimming pools and games halls not to mention classrooms and staff rooms. When the refurbished schools opened this term, teachers said they “resembled building sites”. Clouds of dust, loose wiring not to mention missing computers and teaching materials. Contractors squabbled about whose responsibility it was to repair computer rooms.

An all too familiar tale of PFI in action.

Roads – defaults and profits

Private companies awarded the trunk roads contract after a seriously flawed tender procedure have already been served default notices by the Scottish Executive. And that only covers the summer period ! Not that this worries one of the firms Amey plc. They have just reported pre-tax profits up 30%.

And Amey is not alone. Balfour Beatty (the company behind the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary scheme) building division reported a 50% increase in profits. Market analysts believe PPP could yield the private sector £30bn extra revenue a year. Hardly surprising that they have established a PPP forum run by Thatcher’s former PR guru, Sir Tim Bell to promote their interests.

Health & Safety – Stress

Following UNISON’s objections to a recent stress leaflet produced by the Health & safety Executive (HSE), the HSE has now withdrawn the leaflet and agreed to replace it with one acceptable to UNISON, the TUC and the CBI. It is available from HSE Books and the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk/index.html. UNISON has produced a leaflet on stress entitled “Stress at Work” and copies of this leaflet are on order for all of Moray UNISON’s members. Copies will be issued along with the next newsletter.

Back Pain ?

Working Backs Scotland, in partnership with other organisations including UNISON, has produced guidance to sufferers of back pain. Further information can be accessed on their website www.workingbacksscotland.com.

If you have read the newsletter and are not a member but would like to join please call the recruitment hotline on 0800 70 70 77 or if you have access to the internet go to :-
<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/join.html>