

Update on Budget Cuts 27/3/11

Dear Member,

I wrote to you in November to give you an update on how things were shaping in the Comprehensive Spending Review and what we would be doing to fight the cuts. This is the latest update on this matter.

We requested that you fill in a yellow card with any information to speed up communication between the branch office and you. Around 500 members responded which is great but we need many more than that.

Since my last letter the picture has turned worse than even we could anticipate. Now the Council are talking of 700/800 job losses this year as they have to find nearly £42 Million worth of cuts. The Coalition government deserve every criticism for the way in which they seek to dismantle public services whilst allowing the banks we bailed out in their crisis to continue to pay out massive bonuses! It is simply appalling.

I have been attending briefings for members to give my support and analysis of how things are shaping up. Members have expressed their views around the Essential Car User Allowance, Car Parking Charges and the other dubious proposals.

UNISON has not and will not agree changes to terms and conditions of services arbitrarily which is certainly a matter under the Essential Car User Allowance as it is a Part 2 National Agreement. We will hold a consultative ballot of all members and we have made this quite clear to the council in our weekly meetings. Obviously at some point the council will have to decide when it will serve the 90 day notice in writing otherwise known as Section 188, which will declare the intent to make job losses (I believe they will still talk of trying to avoid compulsory redundancies)

Members have been expressing their frustration and concerns at the Council's proposals on Essential Car User Allowance, Car Parking charges, and other ways to make cuts. They say it will save jobs, but we see little evidence of this to date. We in turn have put those points to the Council every single week we meet. If the council seek to impose anything we have opposed then I will update you further. At time of writing this we believe the Council have set a date of 1st April to introduce staff car parking charges. The free scheme was never a local agreement but was custom and practice, which also hits the pockets of our members in a time of wage freezes and costs going up. The branch will have to go to the region and request a consultative ballot on this.

I intend, together with other officers and reps to extend the number visits to as many workplaces I can and put to you all, the situation as it develops. I ask that if you do not have a rep please invite me to your workplace and get as many members as possible to come along. In some workplaces we will need a room at least big enough to hold 30 + You will have your say, both at meetings where we can hold them. We had a very useful meeting at Turnpike House on the 8th Feb.

We have circulated all the relevant information to our reps, but the problem is in certain buildings we have no reps. If you would be good enough to act as a contact, we can put you on our e-mail list. All you need to do is e-mail office@salfordcityunison.org.uk and ask to have your e-mail address added to the RMS record of you, which is your personal membership record. You can even add your home e-mail address if that helps.

The council are still (to date) unable to identify all the cuts they are making, which means that the trade unions are still asking questions as to what we believe to be unnecessary spending, such as the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Salford Reds sponsorship.

Meanwhile the "identified" cuts have been put before us and managers will be meeting with members to explain what they are up to, to date, but that does not mean identifying people at risk at this stage.

We are committed to fighting against compulsory redundancies, until such a time that this seems likely, if and then when we have to face that, we will hold a consultative ballot with all members.

A Team in HR called Creating Capacity are overseeing requests and we are taking to them any anomalies where member's are concerned about processes not being followed as expected.

At national level we are urging as many members as possible put their names forward to travel on a coach we intend to provide to go the National Demonstration Against the Cuts on Saturday the 26th March. If you want to go please contact the office to try and get your name on the list. If we get more than a coach load we may put on more coaches. The coach will be free as part of your membership entitlement. I hope you can join us.

We have still got a fair way to go yet before the picture becomes clearer and I do urge members to realise how many calls and emails we are fielding each day and if we do not respond straight away to ring the branch again and we will do all we can to give advice

and support our members. It will become increasingly difficult to respond personally to every individual e-mail that we receive due to volume of them.

Please pass this on to your colleagues and that way we can reach as many people as possible.

Ray Walker - UNISON Branch Secretary

www.salfordcityunison.org.uk