

public services are under attack

Services that hold communities together and protect the most vulnerable in our society are being cut and privatised by the Tory-led coalition.

We have seen high inflation, high unemployment, cuts in benefits, cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance and Connexions service, rising university fees, attacks on pensions and service cuts - all of which the government is responsible for - and all of which are totally unfair and unnecessary.

We believe there is an alternative to the unprecedented attacks on jobs, services, pay and pensions and it is an alternative that you can help us fight for - join us and thousands of other demonstrators from all over the country on **Sunday 2 October 2011** to tell the Conservative Party that we are not "all in this together". Their cuts are hitting the poorest and most vulnerable in our society the hardest. **The bankers - who caused this crisis in the first place are still getting their bonuses, while communities across the UK are being decimated.**

join the protest
march for your
public services
sunday 2 october 2011

Assemble on Liverpool Road, Manchester city centre (off Deansgate) at 12 noon to march through the city centre to a rally at which leading national speakers will address the crowd.

manchester
for the
alternative

a million
voices
for
public
services

For further information visit: www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/regions_info_northwest.cfm

To see UNISON's alternative budget or to add your voice to our million voices campaign visit: www.unison.org.uk/million

To join UNISON online today visit: www.unison.org.uk/join or call 0845 355 0845

UNISON
North West

MANCUNION

SEPT 2011

THE UNISON NEWSLETTER

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JOIN THE TUC'S NATIONAL PROTEST MARCH OUTSIDE
THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE
SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2011

UNISON
North West



TUC
In the North West

In the first instance, if you have a work problem or query then get in touch with your local UNISON steward or workplace representative. Otherwise, telephone the Branch Office directly on the number below.

**UNISON Manchester, Sixth Floor,
Sunlight House, Manchester M3 3JZ
Tel: 0161 254 7500
Fax: 0161 274 7365**

If you have a membership query, please contact the Branch on the number above or you can email the Branch via the website at:

www.unisonmanchester.org

UNISON Manchester is organised by the Branch Executive Committee and is supported by skilled staff - locally, regionally and nationally. The UNISON Manchester Branch Officers are listed below.

Branch Chair: Noel Bayley

Vice Chair: Eddy Redmond

President: Mo Baines

Vice President: Rodney Lund

Branch Secretary: Pat McDonagh

Assistant Branch Secretaries: Julie Connolly, Cath Baggaley, Evelyn Doyle, Eddy Redmond, Jane Slater, Steve Swift & Rena Wood.

**Joint Trade Union Nominee to
m people:** Pete Banks

Equality Officer: Sonia Stewart

Branch Treasurer: Bob Oram

Communications Officer: Rod Fawcett

Mancunion Editor: Noel Bayley

Proofreader: Mark Bowden

Education Officer: Steve Swift

**Chair & Secretary of Health and
Safety Committee:** Geoff Archibald

International Officer: Isobel McVicar

Welfare Officer: Helen Clarke

The Branch Executive Committee, the Branch's decision-making body, comprises of stewards from across all the workplaces represented by the Branch plus elected Officers.

All members of UNISON Manchester are encouraged to attend meetings, vote in Branch elections and get involved in our campaigns and activities.

We are always looking for people who feel they can contribute to the work of the Branch and help other members. This could be a regular commitment or you could be a 'mailbox' steward and help pass on UNISON information to members in your workplace. The Branch provides training courses, advice and support for all our stewards and officers. If you can help, get in touch.

In my view...



The last few months have seen decisions taken to allow approximately 2,000 staff to leave the Council with most having now left, although a few hundred will be leaving over the next few months.

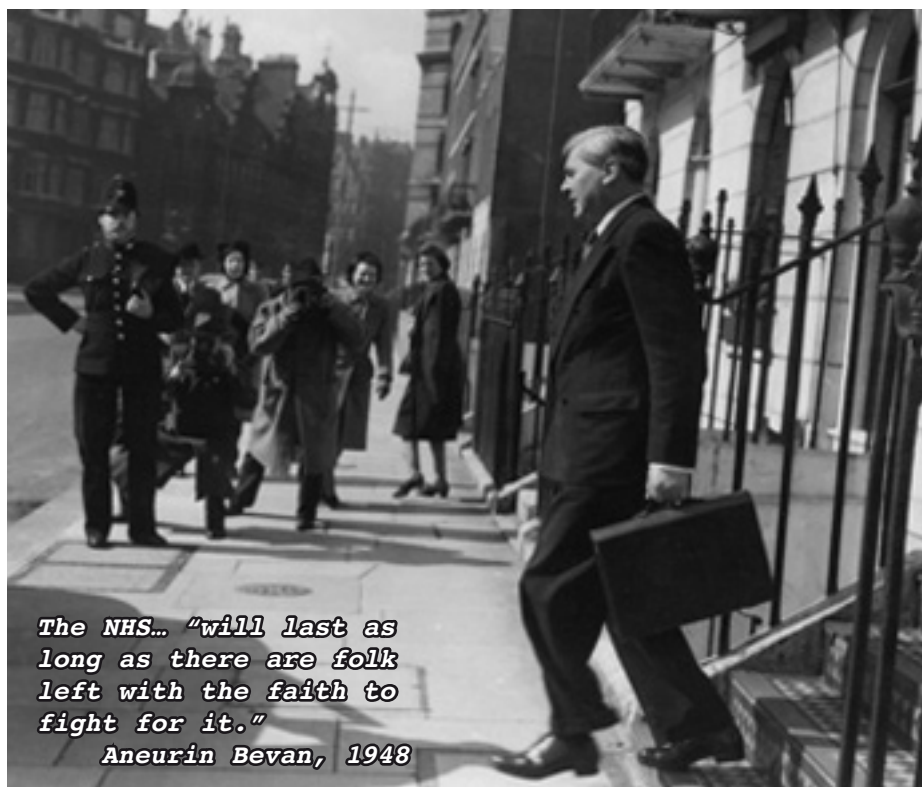
The budget savings through this and other non staffing budget reductions has meant we have just about managed to meet the massive budget reduction following the Tory/Lib-Dem attacks on the funding for Manchester.

It is a welcome achievement that this has been done without the need to introduce compulsory redundancies or attack staff service conditions or protection arrangements. That said, it has not come without very real costs and pain.

Such a loss of staff has been impossible to realise without a reduction in the level of some services and the closure of others. Some of those decisions have been made, but others such as the future of SureStart and children's centres will only become clear once consultation begins on proposals in the coming weeks.

However, there has already been major upheaval while remaining staff will have to flexibly cover gaps in services for some months.

This will be addressed in current service reviews which will both set new service objectives and match them to available future financial and staff resources. It will still be a



The NHS... "will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it."
Aneurin Bevan, 1948

very challenging period, but at least the overall position will be clearer.

Inevitably, there is the possibility of fall-outs over particular proposals unless we can effectively represent and secure agreements on future arrangements on behalf of our members.

In doing that we need to ensure we recruit any non-trade union members within all our workplaces to ensure we remain strong collectively

To that end the Branch is launching a recruitment initiative where any member will receive £10 per application form completed by a workplace colleague and returned to the Branch.

Most new members, when asked why they had not joined a union, stated: 'No one asked me!' Don't let that be the case in your workplace.

We continue to face difficult times and need to maintain our membership density, our influence and our negotiating strength more than ever. Also, we should not forget where the primary responsibility for the problems our members face stems from.

Whether it is massive cuts in local government funding, the pay freeze, the closure of services to young people or the proposed attacks on our pensions, they all stem from this reactionary, ideologically warped Tory-led coalition

We have a chance to protest locally on Sunday, 2 October when the Tory Conference comes to Manchester. The demonstration, called by the TUC, sets off at 12.00 from Castlefield on Liverpool Road.

Bring colleagues, family and friends to make it clear: Manchester rejects the Tories, their Lib-Dem lapdogs and their policies. Please show your support for a constructive alternative. *Pat McDonagh*



UNISON supremo Bob Oram showing solidarity with a member...

Name: Bob Oram

Job: I used to be in Chief Executive's Enforced Tendering Team back in the day; now Branch Treasurer and Assistant Branch Secretary.

How long have you been a member of the union? I joined on 1 July, 1986 - the day I started at the City Council.

What do you like about your role in UNISON? Being part of the collective - achieving something for members in the workplace.

Whereabouts do you live? Levenshulme.

Where would you want to live? Matanzas in Cuba.

Best thing about UNISON? Our members - with over 75% women members, we are a significant force in society

Who or what is your inspiration? Humanity. Marx. My family.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself? What is the trait you most deplore in others? Impatience, as I always want things to happen now. Selfishness.

If you were Prime Minister, what would you do first? Assuming I'd been elected, then this would have been on a socialist agenda which would mean creating

a constitution and enshrining education and health care as free, fundamental human rights.

What superpower would you like? To be able to cure illness, especially cancer.

What's the worst job you've ever done? What's your ideal job? Cleaning up a pig farm. I would love to be a really good journalist.

Favourite holiday destination, film, drink, football club? Cuba. My favourite film changes all the time, but I do love *Casablanca* more than most. I like wine, especially from Haro (Rioja). As for football, I support the only team in Manchester: City!

What was your best day at work, and your worst? Too many of both - winning contracts and saving jobs, saving members from dismissal at disciplinary hearings, being on great demonstrations during the last 25 years, like the TUC rally on 26 March. I quickly move on from defeats, but anything that means we as a class suffer is a bad day.

Why do unions matter? If we didn't matter, then why is so much time spent trying to destroy us? Unions are a force for good, and members have the ability, through coming together, to improve their lives and working conditions. There is such a thing as society and a union is its finest example.



Pensions update

Pensions can be complex, but the current challenge posed by the Government is pretty straightforward. What this Tory-led Coalition Government proposes is for members to pay more, work longer and receive a poorer pension.

This is the inescapable result of their plans to: increase 'contributions' by 50% (primarily to pay for the deficit created by bankers), move to the lower CPI measure of inflation for future pensions' increases, plus accept the proposals in the Hutton Report on public sector pensions.

Public service unions have been talking with the government to establish the principles around public service pensions, and now we're entering into sector-specific talks on individual pension schemes, such as the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

But the scale and nature of the onslaught on pensions means the union is probably 'on the road to industrial action', according to UNISON's National Executive Committee. To prepare the ground, a campaign is being mounted to alert members to the threat their pensions are facing and build maximum unity, both across UNISON and with other unions involved in the public services.

There is a lot of misinformation about public sector pension schemes, particularly in the press.

Here are some facts:

- The local government and NHS pension schemes were renegotiated in 2006 to make them sustainable and affordable. Both are cash rich - more is going in than coming out.
- The Greater Manchester Pension Fund is one of the largest and healthiest in the country.
- The average pension in public service pension schemes is very low. In local government, the average is just over £4,000, falling to £2,800 for women.
- If people didn't save for their retirement, they would have to rely on means-tested benefits paid for by the taxpayer.
- Government cuts to local government employers grants mean that the shortfall in pension contributions has to be made up by employees. They may have to pay between 50% and 100% more for a reduced pension. This is effectively a tax on low-paid workers.
- The local government scheme invests more than £100 billion in the UK economy. If the scheme collapsed, it would have a devastating impact on the economy.

"I'm not in the Pension Scheme, so it doesn't affect me..."

We've all heard various individuals at work saying they're not in the pension fund, so these

changes don't affect them. They're wrong on two counts.

Firstly, they should join the pension fund, as it's easily the most cost-effective way of saving. In fact, it's probably the single most valuable benefit of public service work in Greater Manchester - which is why it's worth defending. The employer shares the costs - something they would be unlikely to do with a personal pension. You also get life cover of three years' pay - from the second you join. And unlike other forms of life insurance, there's no medical - it's open to all. You get tax relief on all your contributions - even on extra payments you make to top up your benefits, and all members can take a tax-free lump sum as part of their benefits package.

There's much more information on the Greater Manchester Pension Fund website (www.gmpf.org.uk), and encourage anyone not in the scheme to check it out.

Secondly, changes to the pensions scheme will affect us all, in one way or another, but its likely that the effects of these changes won't be felt for some time. In one sense, this is a cut the Government hope will pass unnoticed (but only if we let them), but there's no doubt that if the Government get their way, pensioner poverty in the future will be even more chronic than it is today. And the gap between the elderly rich and the poor will grow ever more marked. This simply isn't the right course of action for a civilised society.

For more pension updates...

To keep up to date with the latest news in connection with your pension, subscribe to the Greater Manchester Pension Fund's email alert system. Once signed up, they will send you an email whenever there is a significant addition or change to their website, including any news briefings they have published.

For information on recent articles and news flashes published on the website, including a newflash last week following a recent Ministerial update on public sector pensions, check http://www.gmpf.org.uk/news_and_updates/home.htm

And of course, check UNISON's national website at: www.unison.org.uk

Huge gap in private sector pensions – UNISON's response

UNISON is calling for pension fairness, as a study by the High Pay Commission reveals a huge inequality between pensions in the private sector.

The study reveals that 97% of FTSE 350 company executive directors have a company-backed pension - compared to just one third of UK private sector workers.

This means that nearly 15 million private sector workers do not have access to a scheme to which their employer contributes.

The average FTSE 100 lead executive with a final salary pension could expect to receive nearly £175,000 a year - completely dwarfing the £6,000 pension those private sector workers who are in a scheme can hope to receive.

This study shows just how unfair pensions provision is in this country. At the top of companies, nearly all directors have access to a pension to which their employer contributes. When they do retire, they'll get a six figure pension.

Then at the bottom, two thirds of workers do not have a pension that their employer pays into. And the so-called 'lucky' ones that do will only get £6,000 a year when they retire.

Many of the most vocal critics of public sector pensions are the same company directors who are set to retire on a fortune. Private companies, who shirk their responsibilities to provide their workers with decent pension, are simply increasing the burden on the taxpayer.

The taxpayer ends up paying more in means-tested benefits, and in increased take-up of health and social care services.

UNISON believes in decent pensions for all, both in the private and public sectors, but it's about time the wealthiest started to pay a fairer share.

Public say resounding 'NO' to blood money

As if to prove nothing is precious to this Coalition Government, they're planning to privatise your blood! Despite a YouGov poll that shows

an overwhelming 72% of the public oppose the use of private companies running the NHS Blood and Transplant Service, the Tory-led Coalition Government is looking at privatisation.

The public have said a very resounding 'NO' to blood money. The Blood and Transplant service is an inspirational service, with millions of people willing to give their blood freely with no money exchanging hands.

Tory ideology will mean letting private companies move in, and that threatens to taint the whole service with the profit motive.

The NHS Blood and Transplant service is not for sale and UNISON will fight to make sure that it stays that way.

UNISON – Your Friend at Work

UNISON has done some sterling work in heading off compulsory redundancies and in securing Quality Assurance agreements in the *m people* process. But unfortunately, the Government's plans for 'austerity for the many, business as usual for the wealthy few' means that there's bound to be more cutting pain.

The savage, ideologically-driven cuts will continue for at least another couple of years, probably longer. More jobs are bound to be affected. People's lives are bound to be hurt, whether service-users or staff. UNISON understands this, which is why we are campaigning nationally and locally against these unnecessary cuts, but we are more than a campaigning union. We fight for you too.

Branch Officers work constantly for members on a one-to-one basis, handling numerous possible dismissal hearings and appeals, once dismissals have taken place. In a 10-day period recently, for example, Steve Swift had five such hearings and he is particularly proud that four out of the five resulted in success and reinstatement, with the other in the process of appeal...

Schools update

Following the retirement of Brian Stangoe, Steve Swift, Rena Wood and Cath Baggaley are the key Branch Officers which help

to cover the school network of UNISON members. All are keen to visit every school in the upcoming terms to talk to members and tackle casework. We should soon be even more visible to UNISON schools-based members, and will work closely and foster practical links with Stewards on the ground.

Housing Trusts

Housing Trusts remain a mixed bag; some work very closely with UNISON, others choose a more distant relationship. UNISON plays a full role, negotiating and bargaining with other unions where appropriate. In general terms, UNISON has good relations with most Housing Trusts, and good, solid work by an excellent group of Stewards has helped to reduce casework whilst engagement has gone up.

Third Sector

Not all UNISON Manchester's members work for the City Council or Housing Trusts. Some of our members work for private companies which provide public services, such as Capita. It has to be said that, in general terms, casework remains high in these areas, and a robust approach is necessary much of the time. UNISON is looking to strengthen its Stewards' network across all workplaces, so if you want to get involved and help your colleagues, then get in touch with the Branch. You'll learn invaluable skills, and benefit from some really useful learning experiences!

Corporate Core

Most redesigns of the Corporate Core are now coming to an end. These include Strategic Housing, PPRI, Planning, Neighbourhood Regeneration, Crime and Disorder, Corporate Property, Communications and the Shared Service Centre (phase 2 is to start in the Autumn), with many staff now in post in the new structures.

There has been massive activity over the last six-seven months, which Jane Slater, Deputy Branch Secretary has been heavily involved in, but the sheer speed of change has been difficult for all staff.

In City Solicitors, the merger with Salford is on course with many engagement events

for both groups of staff and a dedicated trade union meeting, with representatives from both authorities attending. The final transfer of staff is due to take place in March 2012.

The Corporate Technology Unit service is still in redesign, with a conclusion to consultation due. Staff will receive the feedback from the issues they raised over the next few weeks, and then the assessment process will take place.

Many staff in the Core have left on VER and VS which, in common with other workplaces across Manchester City Council, has left holes in services. This is currently being monitored by managers, with the *m people* team moving staff to cover services.

The corporate contact centre is now up and running and as with any new service there have been teething problems. The management team are currently looking at the harmonisation of terms and conditions in the service. UNISON are engaged in this and we are working with management to have a bespoke flexi-time scheme in that area which will give some staff the opportunity to work on a flexi-time contract for the first time.

m people update

The *m people* team has been in place for eight months now and has had to respond to the devastating attack on local services by the coalition government to avoid any of our members facing the threat of compulsory redundancies.

So far, the team have placed 921 people into roles within the City Council and 2,040 baselines have been submitted. 334 staff have opted in and, of those, 113 have been found permanent roles and 27 are in placements.

As well as continuing to match people to posts, the team are currently working on a review of all future staffing structures and how departments will look after current and up-and-coming service redesigns. The team have also been asked to match available staff to those posts which most urgently need filling.

If any member is unhappy with any aspect of their *m people* offer, they have the right to a Quality Assurance (QA) review. The

process and form are available at <http://intranet.mcc.local/corpserv/personnel/mpeople/Pages/qualityassurance.aspx> on the intranet or you can contact Pete Banks, Joint Trade Union Officer, at: p.banks@manchester.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Services update

Julie Connolly is now the UNISON Branch Officer for the City Council's Neighbourhood Services.

Neighbourhood Services provides a wide range of services across Manchester and is undergoing a full service review to achieve the necessary savings brought on by the massive cuts imposed by the Con/Dem government.

A review of all its 23 services is now underway. This is likely to mean new working arrangements and a new structure and new method of delivering services being implemented.

For many members, this means they may see changes within their service, about the job they do, their work location, and some could experience a change to all three.

The Neighbourhood Services' review continues at a pace and most members will by now have attended Dialogue Events and, hopefully, been informed of what is happening in their work areas.

Julie has been active in these events, and is keen to provide members with all the help and support they need. Along with the team of UNISON Stewards, Julie will work to support and keep all members informed of all proposals and changes to service delivery.

In addition to the Neighbourhood Services' redesign, Julie continues to represent members in their individual workplace issues and offers support and guidance to all Unison members within Neighbourhood Services.

In such challenging times, we all need a strong Stewards' network and ideally, one UNISON steward to represent each and every workplace. If you would like to become a Steward, then please contact Julie via the Branch Office.

Training, support and advice is always available, and as well as helping out your work mates, it'll give you really useful and valuable experience.

Directorate for Adults

UNISON members in Directorate for Adults are experiencing significant challenges, as are their colleagues elsewhere, as a result of the implementation of the Conservative/Lid-Dem cuts in Manchester. To date, somewhere in the region of 360 staff in the Directorate have left as part of the recent VER/VS scheme, with another 100 due to leave by 31 March 2012. Approximately 200 staff were refused VER/VS, mainly because the Directorate's view was that their skills will be needed going forward, and are in the process of having the decision reviewed.

In order to meet the savings' targets the Council needs to move forward with planned service redesigns. The Customer Journey redesign, involving the merger of functions from Care Management/Reablement Management and MEAP relating to assessment of customers, has now moved to implementation stage. Currently, staff are in the process of being interviewed for roles within the new structure. Some issues have risen regarding Social Work Managers/Senior Social Workers and discussions are ongoing regarding this. UNISON intends to work closely to monitor implementation. Please continue to email me should you have any outstanding issues of concern.

Within Homelessness there has been a delay in moving forward with any proposals regarding service redesign, as the consultation regarding Supporting People Funding has been extended, and proposals regarding funding are not due to go to the Council until the end of September.

In the meantime, members are working very hard to cover the gaps that have arisen from allowing people to go under the VER/VS scheme, while not being able to press on with reorganization. The Branch re working with members and stewards in statutory areas, such as assessment, to gain management agreement for short-term arrangements to assist in alleviating some of the pressure until the redesign plans are presented for consultation.

Evelyn Doyle

The March in March...

Did you march in March? Joy Thompson, a UNISON Steward in Children's Services did. Here's her take on what proved to be a heartening day, and an event that showed the Government the massive support for an alternative to cuts, cuts, cuts...

Saturday, 26 March 2011... A day in the sunshine, in London, strolling past Parliament and Downing Street.

Publicity being what it is, I was not surprised but disheartened at how the media depicted the march for an alternative budget. This was a peaceful march, apart from a tiny minority.

There were easily 500,000 people on this march. When I say 'people,' I mean of all ages; parents with their children in pushchairs, public service workers, civil service, local government, community groups, different ethnicities, firemen and women, ambulance staff, ex servicemen/women, voluntary/charity groups, actors, the list was endless.

UNISON Manchester laid on transport, but I went down with my husband who is also involved in union activities. We went, as invited by the TUC, not just as union members but as a family unit. We walked with the civil service union, arriving in our setting-off point at 10.30 am.

I was able to obtain a UNISON tabard from one wonderful member who stood handing them out. As a group of people, representing different unions, we jointly united and walked side by side in solidarity.

There was nothing but concern for our fellow man/woman and a shared feeling of disappointment at how people were being badly affected

by the cuts across the country. I was with trade unionists from Devon and the North East who were in the same position of being concerned about the future of public services, their jobs, and their pensions.

Everyone was peaceful, happy, sharing out food and sweets etc, taking care that children and elderly were ok. We saw absolutely no trouble. Considering the number of people, everyone was considerate of each other. There was no jostling, there was no nastiness, there was no violence, there was no untoward behaviour. However the noise that we generated with vuvuzelas, shouts, whistles and drums as we passed by 10 Downing Street had to be heard to be believed.

Peaceful marchers, rows upon rows, rank upon rank of civilians and I use that correctly as civil tempered people showing their solidarity in their

disagreement with how things are being done and their concern at how Government policies of cuts and reduction will affect us all now and in the future.

For those I walked with, we had a really enjoyable day. A day well spent in conveying the seriousness of the situation and the concern that we all share. It was well worth our efforts to travel to London and spend our Saturday in the sunshine... oh, and, of course, the rain.

There are lots of other ways for people to make their voices heard. Don't wait until public services have gone to defend them...

- Contact your local councillor, and write or better still, make an appointment to see your MP
- Support UNISON in its fight for fairness
- Find out who your workplace steward is or stand up to be elected for steward.
- Look on the UNISON website for updates and information.

Due to a technical hitch, the Branch banner only got as far as Trafalgar Square!





A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL SECRETARY DAVE PRENTIS: PENSIONS STRIKE BALLOT

Vote yes for industrial action on pensions...

On behalf of our national union I have announced that we will be balloting for industrial action over the threat to your pension.

If you're eligible for the local government pension scheme, NHS pension scheme or civil service pension scheme then in the next month you'll receive a ballot paper and I urge you to vote 'yes'.

You pay into your pension throughout your career so that you can have security and dignity in retirement.

However, your pension may be under threat. In brief, ministers want you to pay more if you earn over £15,000 a year, to work much longer and at the end of your working life, to receive a worse pension.

Did you know that relevant government ministers, without agreement, have already changed for the worse the way in which those receiving a public sector pension get an increase each year to take account of inflation?

They have stopped using the Retail Price Index which has been used for decades and, from this year, pensions will only increase in line with the Consumer Price Index - a much worse index.

This change alone has reduced the overall value of the pensions by over 10%. Now, they want to increase your pension contributions

by an average of over 50% if you earn above £15,000. It's the equivalent on average of a 3% pay cut.

Not a penny of this major increase in your contributions will go towards improving your pension schemes. Instead it will go to the Treasury.

This is an additional unfair tax on public sector workers and is deliberately disguised as money for the pension schemes, which they falsely claim to be unaffordable.

The truth is public sector pension funds are cash rich and affordable.

On top of this, they want you to work longer before you can take your pension in full.

Even if you have a protected pensionable retirement age of 65, this will be torn up. You will be expected to work until 66, then to 67 and 68 as the state retirement age increases.

They then want us to agree to new pension schemes, but we have no idea what the value of any new scheme would be or the transitional arrangements to it.

UNISON working together with other TUC trade unions has opposed this attack on our pensions.

I want to assure you that we have negotiated with ministers in good faith. But we also know that public sector workers like you are already enduring pay freezes, the threat of

privatisation, reorganisations and cuts in services.

It's not fair to target you any further. You deserve the pension you are already entitled to.

And so we have decided to ballot for industrial action. We only take strike action as a last resort.

We will do everything in our power to ensure no harm occurs to clients, patients and users of services but we need to send a message that we will stand up to protect our pensions.

We need your support and your help to send this message.

When you receive your ballot paper I urge you to vote 'yes'.

Talk to your colleagues and get them to join UNISON to strengthen our voice.

Talk to your local branch and your local MP and for more information look at our website: unison.org.uk/protectourpensions

Vote 'yes' and together we can send a powerful message to protect our pensions.

*Dave Prentis,
General Secretary*

STOP PRESS - PROVISIONAL BALLOT DATES:

- **BALLOT STARTS - 11 OCT**
- **BALLOT CLOSES - 3 NOV**
- **RESULT DECLARED 17 NOV**
- **IF A YES VOTE AND NO SETTLEMENT, FIRST STRIKE DAY: 30 NOVEMBER.**