



UNISON  
Scotland

Local  
Government  
Network

for people who care about local government

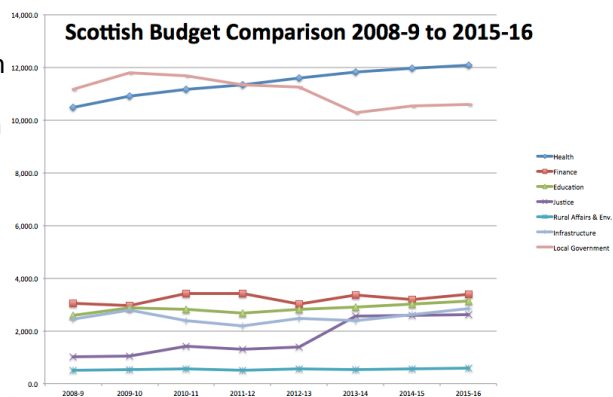
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Draft Budget

## Councils bearing brunt of cuts

Local government is bearing the brunt of the UK government cuts in Scotland. £637m since 2008/9 and as a consequence over 30,000 jobs have been lost. This is having a significant impact on the local economy, services and in particular, the living standards of council and voluntary sector staff through job losses and cuts to pay and conditions.

The General Resource Grant to councils is being cut from £7.189m this year to £6.971m next year and £6.809m the year after. In real terms the cut is even larger - £6.841m and £6.564m. As the chart here shows, local government is the only major portfolio to show an overall reduction in spending. More on this in our [evidence](#) to the Local Government Committee, including a reminder that equal pay is not resolved. Councillors should be asking how much their council has spent on failed legal challenges.



No one disputes that the Scottish Government has to manage a difficult budget imposed by Westminster. But within that budget there are choices to be made and councils are clearly the losers.

Charges and the Council Tax

## Audit Scotland confirms increasing charges

Earlier this year UNISON Scotland published [research](#) that showed increased charges for local services since the council tax freeze was introduced. A recent Audit Scotland [report](#) confirms that the income that councils raise from charges has risen over the last decade and is estimated at some £1.3 billion, or approximately 7% of a council's overall expenditure. That's equivalent to over 50% of the amount councils raise through council tax.

The council tax freeze has now cost £2.5bn and is only the latest sticking plaster on long overdue reform. UNISON Scotland has published a [discussion](#) paper for our branches on reforming the council tax and we would welcome views from others. We would like to promote a cross party agreement on local taxation, to break the policy logjam. Not just for financial reasons, but to return a degree of local democratic accountability to councils.

## PENSIONS & PAY

### Deal on pensions but not on pay

Agreement has been [reached](#) on a long-term reform of the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme. Despite an unwarranted interference in the scheme by the UK Government, it has been possible to protect benefits without increasing contributions. That would simply have driven even more low paid workers out of the scheme.

Sadly, the constructive approach to pensions negotiations was not [replicated](#) over pay. CoSLA reneged on their one-year offer after UNISON members accepted the deal in a ballot. Councillors were told that UNISON was dragging its heels, when the facts show the opposite.

## NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE GROUP CHAIR

### Mark Ferguson steps up as UNISON Chair

Mark Ferguson is the new Chair of UNISON Scotland's Local Government Service Group. Mark, who works for Renfrewshire Council, takes over from Stephanie Herd who is retiring. Mark said:

"Local government in Scotland is facing huge challenges with budget cuts and centralisation. We need a constructive approach from everyone who cares about local democracy. We see that over pensions and CoSLA's Local Democracy Commission, but sadly not over pay."

## PUBLIC BODIES (JOINT WORKING) BILL

### Will Bill deliver better care integration?

UNISON shares many of CoSLA's concerns over the extensive array of ministerial powers in the Bill, which could be used more widely to further centralise services and undermine local democracy. In our own verbal and written evidence to [Parliament](#) we also highlighted the inadequate staffing provisions and a totally unrealistic assessment of funding requirements. A key issue is how we fund social care. It is a national disgrace at present with a race to the bottom in quality and quantity. Care workers, barely above the minimum wage, are delivering a reduced service on zero or nominal hour contracts.

## PROCUREMENT

### Using procurement to create a fairer Scotland

Public procurement, particularly at a time of financial constraints, has the potential to do much more than just deliver goods and services. UNISON Scotland is part of a massive civil society coalition that has come together around [ten 'asks'](#) on the Procurement Reform Bill. They include stronger employment standards, sustainability and fair trade. If we place sustainable and ethical considerations at the heart of the procurement process, it could promote positive social outcomes for us all.

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UNISON's Local Government Network is for councillors and others with an interest in local government. Our regular e-newsletter, Council Connections, brings all of the latest news and information on what's happening across local government in Scotland. If you are receiving this in error, or your email address is changing, please contact UNISON Scotland's Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2850. If you wish to unsubscribe to this email please reply to this email with 'unsubscribe' in the subject heading. Want more information? Visit our [website](#) for comprehensive news, information and updates on what is happening across Scotland's public services or contact [Dave Watson](#). UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G2 6RX. Tel: 0845 355 0845.



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