

## North East Combined Authority Takes Shape - The funding sting in the tail of Devo 'Manc'

UNISON North West has produced an excellent policy statement on Devo Manc (link below). They are rightly concerned by the blurred lines of accountability, future funding and how services will be delivered or commissioned in the future.

**Should we across the North East also have fundamental questions and concerns regarding devolution and a democratic say before its rubber stamped- as Durham residents will have?**

When the fiscal policy of central government is one of cuts and on-going austerity government is always surprisingly keen to shift the blame to a local level for any negative impact of that policy. We only need to look at what has happened under the guise of the Localism Act. 'Power to the People' but Eric Pickles reserved himself no fewer than 122 separate powers of intervention. Because whilst a cuts led Government doesn't want the blame for the negatives they will always want the true control through the Treasury purse strings.

The funding crisis in the NHS will not be touched by the supposed £8 billion from Government. NHS England have identified a £30 billion shortfall by 2020. So what will happen to the devolved budget of Devo Manc when the health money runs out? No doubt the Devo Manc leaders have been assured of a fair settlement and up-rated budgets in line with what they should expect for health funding in the sub-regional area at current levels – and if not more. But the promised £8 billion extra funding for the NHS is only a little over 1% of the total NHS spending – it is small change in comparison to the scale of the problem.

The memorandum of understanding on Devo Manc points to estate rationalisation and better integration as being ways to generate efficiencies. However we should remember that properties can only be sold for a capital receipt the once. And ironically integration could be impeded by fragmented commissioned services rather than truly integrating public services with the ability to plan the NHS and social care strategically, whilst ensuring local accountability and governance. This leaves huge questions about the future viability of funding and who will ultimately be accountable.

Devo Manc as a concept is not at all a bad thing in itself. It seeks to address the obvious health inequalities that blight the region but many of these health inequalities stem from poverty. Fiscal austerity will sap up any advances in addressing health inequality by perpetuating the root cause. The pre-election Labour pledges allowed for better regional accountability and allowing for the whole of the NHS resources to be more effectively deployed – preserving the NHS in the NHS. This apparent RHS – a regional health service – will not enhance the ability of the NHS and social care to deliver national and local solutions.

With more cuts to councils there will be no hope of addressing the crisis in social care services. Whatever promises are made on the back of Devo Manc health inequalities can only truly be remedied by addressing the grinding and endemic poverty which blights whole swathes of the Greater Manchester region.

When the NHS and social care funding crisis catches up with the Devo Manc budget. You may see Greater Manchester leaders, dressing up as modern day Oliver Twists asking 'please sir can we have some more'. However, Osborne is unlikely to produce any more devolved gruel.

<http://www.unisonnw.org/unison-north-west-agrees-position-statement-on-devo-manc/>



**Gateshead UNISON News** December 15

Gateshead UNISON protecting Jobs, protecting terms and conditions. Proudly representing over 5000 members in over 130 employers in over 400 workplaces.

## Gateshead UNISON

### Annual General Meeting 2016

Friday 26th February, 5.15pm – 7.00pm, Bewicks Restaurant, Gateshead Civic Centre

Buffet from 4.30 - Bar - Refreshments - Free Prize Draw



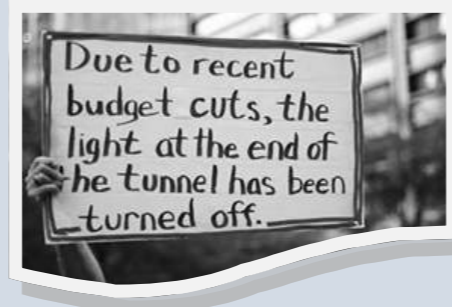
**Special Guest Speaker – Tom Watson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party - Member of Parliament (MP) for West Bromwich East**

**Tom played a significant role in bringing the News International phone hacking scandal into the open - Co-author Dial M for Murdoch - Describes himself as "an apprentice nerd"**

## Budget Update - Jobs at risk as Government continues to slaughter Council budgets

The council have issued 1946 at Risk notices across the council in reaction to the Government slashing a further £77 million from the budget. That is on top of the £100 million cuts forced on the Council in the last five years.

We will continue to work closely with the Council to do everything possible to protect and maintain jobs and services but the task is getting harder and harder as further huge front loaded cuts are imposed. These cuts will continue to have massive impact on every single service, some of which have already been cut to the bone and will have a huge impact on the residents of Gateshead.



UNISON will continue to work with the Council to minimise the impact of these cuts but it is getting very difficult to avoid further compulsory redundancies with such savage cuts.

**We have submitted an initial response regarding all 66 budget proposals. We will keep members informed of all developments as we get more details and as the consultation period develops. Please don't hesitate to speak with your convenor or your branch office on 4776638 or info@gatesheadunison.co.uk**

## Dave Prentis re-elected as UNISON general secretary

Dave Prentis has been re-elected as General Secretary of UNISON with 66,155 votes (49.4 per cent). Dave said: "I am honoured to be re-elected and I am delighted that UNISON members have returned me as their General Secretary. Everything I do will start with the concerns of our members around the country who need a union and a General Secretary who is on their side and puts them first."



## Update - Trade Union Bill campaign

Thanks to everyone who has put their time into the campaign against the Trade Union Bill. UNISON has won some important concessions and we have the chance to win more in the House of Lords. Proposals on publishing social media and campaign plans two weeks before a strike were withdrawn as were plans to criminalise minor breaches of a picket line code of practice.

The Bill will force union members in the public sector in England, Scotland and Wales to change how they currently pay their subscriptions. Many UNISON members have their union subscriptions taken straight out of their wages, this method is efficient and beneficial for both employers and unions. If all members are required to switch their payment method UNISON reps will have to spend time helping them doing this rather than doing what they should be doing: helping members with problems at work.

UNISON members spoke to their MPs about this and several of them agreed and spoke out on the issue in Parliament. As a result the transition period for implementation was extended from 6 months to 12 months, taking it to the second half of 2017. There is also still a chance that it could be amended or scrapped altogether in the House of Lords.

Public sector employers, like Councils and NHS Trusts, are continuing to speak out against all or parts of the Bill as interfering in their employment relations.

## Local government members to be consulted on 'paltry' pay offer

Local government members will be consulted in the new year on the employers' pay offer for 2016 and 2017, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Following negotiations with the unions on 9 December, the Local Government Employers made their final offer concerning a pay deal that would cover the two years from April 2016.

For the lowest paid (those on spinal points 6-17) this would mean a pay rise of between 6.6% and 1.01% the first year, and between 3.4% and 1.3% the second. Those on spinal points 18-49 would receive 1% in year one and the same again the following year. The increases at the bottom end of the pay scale are designed to meet the employers' legal obligations to comply with the Chancellor's 'national living wage' (that will be £7.20 an hour next April and £9 an hour by the end of the Parliament).

The employers also refused the unions' demand that other workforce terms and conditions such as annual leave and sick pay be protected. They did however agree to a joint review of term-time working for school support staff if their pay offer were to be accepted.

The NJC unions believe that negotiations are now exhausted and will be consulting their members. UNISON's NJC committee meets on 7 January to decide its recommendation on the offer and the nature of the consultation process. The NJC joint unions – UNISON, Unite and GMB – will meet in February after the consultations to decide their next steps.

**Local Government workers continue to be the 'poor relations' of the Public Sector - is doing nothing about our pay injustice not an option?**

## Housing and Planning Bill - The End of Social Housing?

The Housing and Planning Bill is another far-reaching piece of legislation whose true impact has been unreported in the mainstream press and is largely unknown to the people it will most affect. Far from addressing the so-called housing 'crisis', it appears to have been conceived to bring about the end of social housing in this country. If passed, the Housing and Planning Bill will:

- 1) Replace the obligation to build homes for social rent with a duty to build discounted 'starter homes' - in effect offering state subsidies for private investors, who may then sell their assets at full market value within five years of their purchase.
- 2) Extend the Right to Buy to housing associations without any provision for their replacement with like for like - effectively overseeing the further decline in the number of homes for social rent.
- 3) Compel local authorities to sell 'high value' housing - thereby exploiting exaggerated property values either to transfer public housing into private hands or to free up its coveted land for property developers.
- 4) Force so-called 'high income' tenants with a total household income over £30,000 in England and £40,000 in London to pay market rents - thereby targeting low-paid working families, those on the minimum wage or claiming disability allowances who cannot afford either to Pay to Stay in their existing homes or to exercise their Right to Buy.
- 5) Phase out secure tenancies and their succession to children and replace them with 2-5 year tenancies, - after which tenants will have to reapply, with such tenancies also being applied to tenants who have been 'decanted' for the purposes of the demolition and redevelopment of their estates.

**Rather than alleviating the housing 'crisis', either by building genuinely affordable homes or by increasing provision of social housing, the Bill seeks to use that crisis for political and financial ends.**