

Key Events from Unison Local Government conference 2017

In London on the 1st July there a March for an end to austerity. Assembling at 12 noon at the BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA. It's expected to set off at 13:00 hours and end at Parliament Square.

Supported by all major trade unions calling for an end to 1% pay cap, demanding a decent health service, education system, housing, jobs and living standards for all.

Crisis in Social Care

- UNISON has launched an Ethical Care Charter and is moving the concept on with The Residential Care Charter
- 1 in 4 care homes are facing insolvency therefore there has never been a better time for residential homes to be brought back for in house services.
- 900 care workers per day are leaving the profession. Due to low pay, low morale, lack of training and the lack of poor practices. Putting profit before people.
- We attended an excellent fringe around this issue.

We were, as many others attending were, moved to tears by one particular speaker named Maria who is a care worker in a residential home. She is obviously passionate about her role; she spoke often in tears, about the lack of compassion from management, the lack of time to socialise with residents, the lack of adequate training and importantly the lack of time to administer good care. All due to a lack of funding.

- We as a union need to campaign that everyone in need of care whether in residential or the community is able to speak out about poor practice and poor provision without the fear of repercussions. CARING SHOULD BE ABOUT PEOPLE AND NOT PROFIT

Cuts

- Motions on local government cuts centred on the fact that there has been a pay freeze since 2010 and the need to expose the falsehood of austerity.
- At the beginning of Columbo you now who committed the murder, because they show you – well we know the cuts are because we bailed out the bankers which in turn lead to austerity” May maybe strong and stable but so was the Titanic before it hit the iceberg.
- The anti-austerity mood was reflected in the general election with results such as Portsmouth having its first labour MP in a hundred years and the un-forecast support for Jeremy Corbyn.
- There was an emergency motion due to the disaster at Grenfell Towers.
- 3 TA's from Derby and Durham gave a presentation about their success in regaining their original terms and conditions. They were on strike for 72 days. They had a 24 hour vigil

outside the council chamber and they also conducted silent protests in the form of a human chain. 600 of their supporters marched on parliament. They concluded their representations by stating that UNISON membership was about collective strength.

- During a motion about the LGPS, delegates learnt that it is possible to join the scheme by 50% contributions resulting in 50% pension. This would be of benefit to low paid workers unable to meet the full cost.
- There were motions about mental illness in the work place which highlighted the need for compassion, understanding and support. We need therefore to remove the stigma about mental health. A branch secretary bravely told conference that he had been unwell for several months following a mental breakdown which he had previously hidden.

Food Standards Agency

- The motion about the food standard agency being undermined as there will no longer be any independent met inspectors, The meat industry will be self-regulated The delegate stated that meat inspectors had prevented in one year had prevented 3,000,000 tape worm infected pigs from entering the market.

Bullying and Harassment of Local Government Workers

- Disproportionately affecting black, women, disabled and LGBT members.