

MORAY MATTERS

APRIL 2009

THE NEWSLETTER FOR UNISON MEMBERS IN MORAY

DESIGNING BETTER SERVICES?

Branch Secretary Irene Sinclair, on behalf of Moray UNISON, is a member of the Designing Better Services Board and can put forward the trade union position on the various themes and projects. The Board is chaired by Mark Palmer - Councillor Wright represents the Elected Members. Designing Better Services will have far-reaching effects on staff and services.

It is clear that changes are going to take place that will affect both staff numbers and methods of working throughout the workforce.

One way or another, the Council will be employing less people in a couple of years' time. There is an aspiration to effect this change without redundancies, but there is no definite commitment on the part of the Council to do so. Moray UNISON will resist compulsory redundancies and represent members' interests as a priority.

Some of the workplace changes may involve flexible working, home working and hot-desking. Various forms of consultation will take place with staff and trade unions throughout

this exercise – many of you will already have been involved in this.

Moray UNISON strongly urges you to make your views and ideas known at every opportunity. If something doesn't make sense, query it at the time.

Please contact the branch office if you have any comments or issues you want UNISON to raise with management. The more we engage with this process the more influence we can have.



Strong enough to stand up to any challenge...

Lealta Card Discount Happy Shoppers Corner: Discount Congratulations to:

Dougie McPhee, who made a fat 10% saving on meat products at Dawson's Butchers in Elgin.

Andrew Ingram, who saved 10% on some 'personal items'. Very intriguing Andrew!

WIN £25! Correctly solve the Sudoku puzzle below AND the crossword on p2, cut out your solutions and send them to:

Moray Unison Prize Puzzle, Moray Unison, 149 High Street, Elgin IV30 1DS.

JOB EVALUATION AT MORAY COLLEGE

All Staff in Moray College will have their jobs evaluated shortly as part of an exercise to put in place a fair pay and grading structure based on the value of each job as determined by an agreed job evaluation scheme.

If the Single Status programme in the Council is anything to go by, this is likely to result in some changes in the rank order of jobs, with some of our members benefiting and others unhappily not. A representative from UNISON will have a place on the steering group, and one can also undertake training to take part in the job analysis. In addition to this involvement it will be necessary for a UNISON member to represent any fellow member who wishes to appeal the outcome.

It is not feasible for Moray Council

members to carry out all of this work, if any, and therefore we need members from the College to come forward. You will receive training and support both from the Branch and from UNISON staff both locally and nationally.

I cannot emphasise enough how vital it is for members to take an active part in this as failure to do so may result in real differences to your pay which you have had no influence over.

A meeting of members at the College will have taken place by the time you read this Newsletter at which, hopefully some members will have agreed to be involved. If not, please re-consider.

Irene Sinclair
Branch Secretary

BIG CAT COLUMN

A fierce Unison lion dominated the front page of the last issue of Moray Unison Matters. This time your pin-up is a pussycat.

But don't be deceived. I may be soft and fluffy but, if provoked, Big Cat can bite.

However, there has been little need just lately. The RM officer has got a supply of dented tins of brand-name catfood to keep me contented. Of course I would prefer a diet of freshly-murdered furry creatures: but those are in short supply during the winter months; and what there is skulks about under the snow, as shy as a strike-breaker sneaking past a picket. So, for the time being, the claws are sheathed. Thank goodness for tin openers.

Winter is good for cats. At Christmas there are fires in all the grates for a Big

Cat to snooze in front of; and there is turkey gravy on all the plates for a Big Cat to lick clean. And last month the RMs enjoyed their final meeting of their year. Twenty seven sat down to lunch, and there was guinea fowl leftovers for the Big Cat doggy bag.

Then came the AGM. A quorate meeting. But where were the 1200-odd Unison members who stayed away? They missed a fine buffet, which meant ample leftovers (chicken and tuna sandwiches) for a Big Cat. Stay-at-home members also missed the excitement of an election for the post of Branch Secretary. It has been a few years since there was so much enthusiasm in the branch, with two members eager to take on a job which has often proved more of a poisoned chalice than a holy grail. The candidates were Eric Foley and Irene Sinclair. Each gave a short address. The meeting decided to vote by ballot and Irene was elected.

We are unused to such excitements. But arguably these excitements are welcome proof of the democratic dynamism of the Moray branch.

These excitements are far too stimulating for a Big Cat. Cats don't like excitement: cats don't like things to be different; cats like things to be the same. So it is just as well that the RMs have appointed my bloke (beardy John Barrett - as seen on television) to be RM officer for another year. His first task will be to negotiate something to satisfy the RMs' prandial predilections in the coming year. Then it's the Scottish RM conference in April.

But for the moment, with electoral and other excitements over, I can get back to my quiet life of catfood, purring, prowling, more catfood, sleeping, and murdering small furry creatures. The employers, meanwhile, will realise, as Moray Unison gets back to doing its thing, that the union is no paper tiger. And though it sometimes looks like a pussy cat, it can still bite.



UNISON PROMOTES LEARNING, LEARN SOMETHING NEW AND IMPROVE YOUR LOT

Why Union Learning?

Since their inception trade unions have always promoted learning. We know that in 21st century Britain still too many people do not get equal chances in life. Education means opportunity.

The UK government and the Scottish government recognise that if we are to have a healthy economy we need a skilled workforce – we cannot rely on bankers! In Scotland 23% of the labour force have literacy and numeric needs. Research has shown that workers are more likely to improve their skills if they are supported by their trade union.

UNISON wants to promote opportunities to learn. Too many of our members are confined to low paid work because they had bad experiences at school or simply did not have the opportunities/ circumstances/environment in order to do well.

So we are pushing the Learning Agenda forward. We want learning to be open to everyone and not just for work – for fun too.

How does it work?

We begin by asking trade union members who have an interest in learning to support their colleagues by becoming a Union Learning Representative. They do not need to hold any other union positions. We then organise a short training course to equip them to identify and access the courses their co workers want to attend and find out about funding. The next step is to secure a Learning Agreement with the employer. The learning agreements commit the employer and the trade union to encourage a culture of learning in the workplace. Union Learning Representatives are entitled by law to have time off their work to assist colleagues in deciding what they might want to study. If this is work related they will, in line with the learning agreement negotiate some time off from the employer for the learners. At a time when so many workers are fearful for their jobs it can become harder to recruit union reps – however this is precisely the time that promoting learning pays off. For individuals it is important as the job market becomes a much tougher place. Equally UNISON is reminding councils that this is also precisely the time they need to be improving the skills base of their employees.

So Union Learning is a “win win” situation!

There are lots of courses out there. Basic computing is popular – sometimes to help the kids or grandkids with their homework or keep in touch with people far away. Learning to speak Spanish is another frequently requested and digital photography is fast becoming a favourite..

Fancy becoming a UNISON learning representative? For more information

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Learning at Work Day 2009 is Thursday 14th May

