



UNISON Cymru/Wales

Local Government Manifesto 2016

For the quality council services we need

Wales needs world class council services and a local authority workforce that is properly rewarded for its contribution. The Welsh Assembly Elections are on 5 May 2016.

Use your vote to defend your public services.

The UK Conservative Government's brutal spending cuts have placed Welsh councils and their employees under terrible pressures. Each cut to local services damages our communities and many thousands of good public service colleagues have lost their jobs. It doesn't have to be this way; why shouldn't we demand world class public services that Wales can be proud of? Quality services would reduce inequality and help create the fairer and better Wales we want to live in.

This easy-to-read guide shows what UNISON Cymru/Wales is campaigning for at the Welsh Elections. You can do your bit too; read it and tell your friends and colleagues to read it too. Together, let's challenge the candidates in every Assembly seat to invest in the local public services we need.

FIGHT FOR FAIR FUNDING FROM WESTMINSTER

If Welsh public services are to survive the next five years of a Conservative Government, Welsh Government needs to receive adequate funding. Welsh Government must continue to call for a review of Welsh funding from Westminster and Local Government budgets must be protected.



NO PRIVATISATION, NO OUTSOURCING

We oppose privatisation and outsourcing of any public-provided services to private companies or to co-operative or mutual providers. Public services should be retained within the public sector and provided by directly employed public sector staff. Quality public services need to be adequately funded, accessible to all, efficient and democratically accountable.

Attempts to promote outsourcing to co-operatives or mutuals as a friendly, reasonable-sounding alternative to privatisation are dangerous and misguided. Outsourcing does mean eventual privatisation of services because contracts cannot be longer than three years; after this time private companies can bid for the work. Outsourcing means democratic control and accountability to the local community is lost. Outsourcing offers no protections to public service workers' terms and conditions, which would be the first thing targeted by a co-operative or mutual looking to make savings.

If services are in difficulty, in-house improvement plans should be initiated which place the quality of service and users at the core, not a profit motive.

Where services are procured by the public sector the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters 2014 (the Two-Tier Code) should act as a guarantor of consistent employment conditions for all staff. However, it is not currently rigorously applied or monitored. UNISON wants the Code underpinned by legislation so that it is enforceable in all public service bodies and is not merely a policy that employers look at but do not have to implement.

In addition, new tough public procurement rules should be introduced stipulating high employment standards including trade union recognition.



A REAL LIVING WAGE AND FAIRER WORKING CONDITIONS

An effective and efficient public service demands a well-trained, committed and reasonably rewarded workforce. Staff are the greatest asset of the public service in Wales. NHS Wales and Welsh Further Education Colleges are already Living Wage employers and UNISON wants a similar rate implemented in Local Government.

The UK Conservative Chancellor has deliberately confused what constitutes a living wage. UNISON is campaigning for a minimum level of earnings of £8.25 per hour as endorsed by the Living Wage Foundation (and not the Chancellor's lower figure of £7.20 per hour).

Welsh Government must do more for women at work. We want all Welsh public sector organisations to have equality-proofed pay systems, which are regularly reviewed and for equality considerations to be added to public procurement.

Additionally, Welsh Government should consider a period of unpaid leave for grandparents; paid adjustment and bereavement leave and for employers to advertise all jobs on a flexible working basis.

The ability of trade unions to champion these progressive causes will be harmed by the UK Government's proposed Trade Union Bill. This would damage existing good industrial relations and it has no place in Wales. We welcome the Welsh Government's strong statement that it will actively oppose this restrictive legislation.

In the context of severe budget reductions Welsh Government must prioritise the protection and support of staff working across the public sector including a commitment to avoid compulsory redundancy and unilateral changes to terms and conditions.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL CARE

Allowing the private sector a greater role in social care has not increased the quality and choice for all patients and has created an unregulated sector where there is little incentive for employers to invest in a well-trained workforce.

UNISON wants enforcement of our Ethical Care Charter which places the needs of care users, dignity of patients and investment in the care workforce above profit-making considerations.

Care users should have a real influence in the provision of their care and support, using their own experience to inform the care options that should be made available. This should be supported with appropriate funding.

UNISON believes the integration of health and social care would benefit all. We want to be fully involved in discussions for the future of the care sector and ending the two-tier workforce and raising the generally inferior social care employment conditions should be a priority. Care workers, including those whose work is informal, must be provided with professional support. Additionally, we seek formal registration of care workers paid for by the Welsh Government.

We need adequate protections for care whistleblowers and the confidence that their concerns will be acted upon. Staff should feel empowered to hold care companies to account over employment practices which have a negative impact on users.

The Welsh Government should immediately review the Child Protection Risk Register. At present councils lack sufficient staff, have heavy workloads and do not provide a universal service. In order for risk registers to work effectively, a review must be undertaken to decide the most beneficial system for the child and council worker.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Local Government reorganisation should only be progressed if the following principles are met:

- Clear evidence of financial and service benefits, including the optimum size of a council to ensure efficiencies and sustainability is maximised.
- Adherence to Health Board boundaries to facilitate health and social care integration.
- Restructuring costs should be centrally funded to avoid worsening the current local authority funding crisis which has seen services cut or dramatically reduced and thousands of staff made redundant.
- The involvement of trade union representatives is crucial and the Public Service Staff Commission should oversee any Local Government restructuring to ensure fair treatment and no detriment for staff. As part of this process the Commission should introduce a pan-Wales job evaluation scheme to ensure objectivity.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME FUNDS IN WALES

Merging the eight Local Government Pension Scheme funds in Wales would save money, streamline efficiency and create simpler delivery arrangements.

Research suggests a new single model for both Administration and Fund allocation would save £30 million per annum, purely based on merged and more efficient administration charges. A larger Welsh pension fund would produce higher investments and better returns. Such a fund could stimulate development and employment by investment in major infrastructure projects, helping to protect and enhance jobs and wages.

Welsh Government should lobby the UK Department of Communities and Local Government to create one all-Wales LGPS Fund.

UNISON Cymru/Wales has also produced a general manifesto as well as special mini manifestos for Health and Education. To obtain copies or further copies of this UNISON Local Government manifesto, please contact a.gittins@unison.co.uk