



Local Government Manifesto 2017

Strong local government services are the beating heart of healthy communities.

Investing in Local Government services is not a choice. They are integral to the economic, social and environmental health of our communities in Wales and must not be cut.

Local Authority services are preventative and supportive in their nature. They help keep people in good health. They ensure our streets are clean. They provide care for your elderly neighbour who wants to live independently. They ensure communities have access to books and parks, and provide young people with youth centres.

All these services and more are essential tools in our armoury against inequality, poverty and ill-health.

We all expect good quality, accountable local services. But the financial situation has never looked so bleak.

Welsh Councils are under severe pressure from the UK Government austerity agenda, but decisions made now will affect us for generations to come.

Local Government is at crisis point. It is vital that we have elected Councillors who are opposed to cuts and committed to delivering quality public services.

We call on you to support and sign up to the UNISON Cymru/Wales Local Government Manifesto.

Fair Funding

UNISON is well aware that fair funding for local government remains an issue. The trade union movement continues to campaign for an end to the UK Government's austerity programme as well as ensuring a fair funding mechanism for Wales. We have also called on the Welsh Government to implement a number of strategies that will help alleviate the pressure on Local Government, detailed in our recent Audit of Austerity 2016.

However, Local Authorities need to ensure they offer competitive services and seek more opportunities for income generation through the services they provide.

In addition, UNISON believes more progressive council tax rates are not only fairer, but would generate additional income for local services.

Outsourcing

UNISON has a clear position against outsourcing. 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. Transferring a service to the private or third sector does not mean that overall responsibility for that service is also transferred. Where services are already outsourced we seek an ethical procurement process ensuring staff are paid the Living Wage and have decent terms and conditions negotiated through a recognised trade union.

Efficiency savings should not be at a cost to the workforce or detrimental to the quality of service provided.

Local Government Workforce

Public services can only be as good as the workers who deliver them. Public service workers deserve fair pay and conditions but instead they are experiencing long-term pay restraint and many who work in outsourced services suffer low pay and poor conditions.

Job security is an ongoing concern. There are 24,000 fewer people employed by local authorities in Wales compared to 2010. With more cuts expected, many workers feel vulnerable. With demand on services growing whilst resources remain stretched, people are working harder than ever, so workplace stress is a growing issue that needs addressing.

Local Government workers deserve to be paid at least the Living Wage Foundation rate of **£8.45 per hour** and **we are calling on local authorities to become Living Wage Foundation accredited employers.**

UNISON is also calling for minimal and strictly limited use of no guaranteed hours contracts and agency staff. This must apply to those employed directly by the council and within outsourced services.

A well-motivated, committed and sustainable workforce requires investment. Local authorities must promote workforce development and create training opportunities.



Social Care

The marketisation of social care has failed. Any moves to further outsource social care, in any form, must be opposed. Care services need to be delivered by the Local Authority. Where outsourcing has already occurred, we urge Local Authorities to take steps to bring services back in-house at the earliest opportunity.

It is well recognised that many social care services are at crisis point and, with an aging population in Wales, demands on services will only increase in the future. With this in mind, it is essential that services are sustainably funded and staffed.

UNISON is calling on all Local Authorities in Wales to sign up to our Ethical Care Charter. The Charter places the needs of care users, dignity of clients and investment in the care workforce above profit-making considerations. This is particularly relevant within the context of homecare, which has been a victim of outsourcing.



Housing

With the implementation of the Bedroom Tax, good quality and appropriate affordable housing is in short supply. All Local Authorities should have a housing stock. **UNISON is calling on Local Authorities to build thousands of new council homes to meet housing needs, which will help create jobs and boost the economy.**

Libraries & Leisure

Non-statutory local authority functions such as library and leisure services are fundamental to the health of communities in Wales. Once services such as these are lost, they will never be recovered. It is essential **that library and leisure services remain in-house and staffed by a directly employed local authority workforce.**

Refugees

A caring and compassionate response to the refugee crisis requires Wales to receive more asylum seekers. **Each local authority should seek funding to appoint at least one refugee coordinator** whose role addresses: hate crime; community tension; asylum seekers, refugees, and immigration; human trafficking; anti-poverty; future generations and cohesion; gypsy traveller communities.

Local authorities must participate in resettlement programmes and deliver integration programmes to their communities.

Education

The success of schools is dependent on the entire schools workforce and so school support staff should receive the same conditions as teachers – full pay for 52 weeks of the year, as opposed to current term-time contracts in place for most school support staff.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) perform a vital role in schools but they need training and ongoing support to be able to do it. Many are not offered professional development, workplace support or career opportunities.

TAs should be properly utilised and recognised. It is unacceptable for TAs to work outside of their job description, at a higher level, with no financial reward, but this is a situation that occurs all too often.

UNISON has embraced the professional registration of TAs but, as low paid members of the workforce, they should not be expected to meet the cost of registration. **We are calling on local authorities to cover the cost of EWC registration for their staff.**

Use of Consultants

The amount of public money being spent on private consultants is a national scandal.

We are calling on councils and council candidates to pledge not to use private consultants to advise them on how to make cuts in services and jobs. Efficiency savings are best delivered when the consultations are with the workforce and not a private contractor.

Where external advice and support is required, councils should seek to utilise APSE – a not-for-profit organisation based on promoting the excellence of frontline services. **Taxpayers' money should never be spent on employing private consultants to advise on service cuts.**



UNISON's Priorities

Whilst we want you as a future councillor to work with us to achieve as much of this manifesto as possible, we believe that it is essential for you to commit to at least the following three UNISON objectives:

- **No to any form of outsourcing**
- **The payment of at least the Living Wage Foundation rate for all staff providing local government services**
- **Tax payers' money should never be spent on employing private consultants to advise on service cuts.**