Bleak financial outlook as Council Leader says £1 billion more cuts in West Yorkshire to come

The Government is planning to take £1 billion more out of public funding in West Yorkshire over the next four years.

That was the warning from Bradford Council Leader Susan Hinchcliffe when she addressed the Branch Committee meeting on October 3.

She said the government wants to remove all central funding for local authorities, leaving them to provide services from what they raise in Council tax and business rates.

That will hit Bradford much harder than neighbouring Leeds or York because they will be able to raise far more from both income streams.

She said: “We have to be honest about it. This is a Tory attack on local government even though we are the most efficient arm of government and deliver top-quality, well-run services.

“Aademisation of schools is trying to take everything off local government and transfer education to a system the government hasn’t even worked out properly.”

Susan warned that the Government would cut a further £100 million from the Council’s funding in the next four years.

The Council has already lost 2,000 jobs under government “austerity”, although only 127 of those were through compulsory redundancy.

She said: “It is a tragedy for those people but we are proud of that record.

“I don’t think most people are aware of how serious things are in Bradford because of these massive cuts. We need to fight it politically and I don’t think we have done enough campaigning on this issue.

“I intend to get local campaigns going and make sure people get the message about what is really happening.”

UNISON’s Regional Head of Local Government Steve Torrance said Bradford was one of the worst places in the country for the number of workers who are paid below the real living wage.

The district suffered from high levels of social deprivation and there would be more suffering inflicted by central government over the next four years.

Steve said: “Things will become more unstable but what we don’t want to see is an increase in race-hate crime.

“We will be working with Hope not Hate and do all we can to counter that threat. Such attacks have no place in a civilised society.”
UNISON wins concessions but Affinity Trust goes ahead with cuts to pay and conditions

Voluntary sector company Affinity Trust have imposed new terms and conditions on staff who provide care for people with adult learning difficulties.

The employers say a cut in central government funding this year of £180,000 has forced them to find ways of meeting the shortfall.

The cuts will affect members who were TUPE’d over to the Affinity company on Bradford Care Trust’s pay and conditions. Affinity want to reduce their terms and conditions to the same level as their employees who were not transferred from the Care Trust.

UNISON Branch Convenor David Wright said: “UNISON did manage to get some concessions. We pushed for compensation which they initially were not prepared to provide.

“It was a small amount and we went to the director to seek more money, in light of the millions of pounds they make in profits from the care sector.

“A revised offer, again relatively small, was put to members individually which some accepted. With the new terms and conditions about to come into effect, the members who had not signed the revised offer were forced to sign under duress to protect their jobs.”

UNISON is now awaiting a review of the cases by Thompsons Solicitors of members who signed under duress.

There are fears that this could be just the start of the erosion of more terms and conditions in the Affinity Trust.

David said: “It is very important our members stand together – and encourage new members to join – as we stand up to attacks on pay and conditions.”

Members urged to fight for care homes

UNISON has won its fight to save a Bradford care home which was earmarked for closure.

Bradford Council reversed the decision after pressure from UNISON.

But with massive central government cuts to come in the 2017/18 budget, the closure of at least one other Bradford care home is back on the agenda.

UNISON has gathered information from the Care Quality Commission which proves there has been no improvement in standards in the private sector. The number of private residential homes failing CQC inspections is rising.

UNISON Branch Convenor David Wright said: “This means that any home closure would be about saving money from the Council’s budget rather than to provide a good standard of care for the residents of Bradford.

“UNISON will look to fight, in any way available to us, any proposal to close Council homes at this time and I would urge members to help us in that fight.”

Date for your diary

BRADFORD UNISON
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
7th MARCH 2017
A word from the Branch Secretary

Council leader Susan Hinchcliffe made no bones about it when she spoke to our Branch Committee – the Government is stepping up its attack on local government.

Under their cruel and unnecessary cuts to funding, Bradford Council has already lost 2,000 jobs (although only a small number of them were compulsory redundancies, of which Susan is rightly proud).

But the trouble which lies ahead is unprecedented. Already £100 million has been taken away from the Council and by 2020 its one-time annual budget of £580 million will have been halved.

This is a very grim outlook. There will be more job losses as a result and Bradford’s already struggling economy will be damaged even more.

Of course there is the hope of political opposition changing this nightmare scenario at some stage in the next few years.

But there is no guarantee and, as things stand, we know we have huge challenges ahead.

However, our membership is still strong, despite all those we have lost because their jobs have been axed.

Amid the gloom, our members give me cause for optimism. As you will see in this edition of UNISON News, their support for the Bradford Metropolitan Foodbank continues as strongly as ever.

The scandal that this Government has created this grinding poverty would make most people ashamed to be seen in public, but of course the politicians responsible simply look the other way or change the subject.

We were grateful to the Council Leader for addressing our meeting, even if the news she brought was depressing.

And the Branch continues to fight for members in every part of the Council as well as those workplaces where members have been outsourced.

As always, if you have a friend or colleague who hasn’t yet joined us, please encourage them to do so.

Your Convenors are out and about on a concerted drive to recruit members in care services, schools and academies and social services during Autumn.

Look out for them if they come to your workplace and join in helping to maintain our strength and bringing as many new members into the fold as possible.

Because we know from recent bitter experience, when the government has us in its sights, times are going to be very tough indeed.

The best way to weather this storm is to stay strong, organised and united.

Best Wishes,

Linda
Ashley for challenges ahead

New Branch Regional Organiser Ashley Harper says close co-operation in UNISON is the only way to meet the challenges caused by massive government cuts.

Ashley takes over from Rob Demaine who has moved to Kirklees Local Government branch.

Ashley said: “I am under no illusions about the effect on our members of even more Government cuts in the coming years.

“But I am committed to working with the Branch to achieve the best possible deal for our members. These are very bad times for public services with a government ideologically committed to destroying them.

“But the Branch is strong and we will make sure we are prepared to deal with whatever challenges that are put in front of us.”

Branch Secretary Linda Crowther said: “I want to thank Rob for all his hard work as our RO and wish him the very best for the future.

“And we welcome Ashley into the role as we gear up for more challenges ahead.”

Make sure you’re on our global e-mail list

Increasingly the Branch is trying to cut down the amount of printed information we send to members.

In a bid to cut costs, the branch wants to send most documents relating to the union via e-mail.

But if any member isn’t getting information regularly this way, they are asked to ring the Branch as soon as possible and make sure they are on the global e-mail list.

Branch Secretary Linda Crowther said: “We realise some members are not on the list and we want to be able to communicate with all of them.

“So we are asking them to help us get up to date and get as many members as possible on the list.”

The Watson-Rogers Trophy Annual Golf Day was held at East Bierley Golf Club in July

Congratulations to John Major who returned with the trophy itself!
Holiday Pay - update

As you may be aware, UNISON has been taking the lead in pursuing Holiday Pay claims for our members across the region to ensure that those of you who receive pay enhancements such as overtime payments do not lose out financially when you are on annual leave.

A large number of employers across Yorkshire and Humberside have now signed up to holiday pay agreements because of the work UNISON has been doing. This can mean a difference of hundreds of pounds per year for those affected.

Locally, UNISON will continue to engage in negotiations with Bradford Council about the issue and we are hopeful that we will reach a settlement in the near future which would avoid the need to pursue Tribunal claims against the authority. However, as this is not yet the case, it is important that, if you are affected and have not already contacted us, you do so as soon as possible to request a Holiday Pay case form.

This issue does not just affect our members within the Council and we also want to hear from anyone who believes that they are not being paid correctly when they are on holiday, regardless of employer.

If you work on commission, work overtime, receive a bonus, shift premium, or any other regular payment that is not paid during holiday periods you may have a legal claim. In order to give the union the best possible negotiating position, it is important that all our affected members contact us.

You will need to raise a grievance with your employer (a template will be provided when you contact the branch), complete a Holiday Pay case form, and begin collecting evidence to back up your claim which includes 12 months’ payslips and a list of dates of holidays you have taken over the last two years.

You must act quickly. Most tribunal claims must be submitted within three months less one day from the date you were incorrectly paid for your holiday. This will be your pay date following a period of holiday. Once we receive your completed form and supporting information we will contact you to advise whether your case has reasonable prospects of success.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the branch.

Ethical Care Charter and the real Living Wage

Government cuts have left the social care service at breaking point in the district.

There are several reports, including one from the King’s Fund, which confirm the dire position Bradford and other Councils find themselves in.

Bradford Council sees UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter as the way to improve services and working conditions for our members.

They have pledged to adopt the Charter and are currently implementing some of its detail.

However, there is one sticking point over the commitment to pay the real living wage, which is currently £8.25 an hour.

This has yet to be agreed by Bradford Council.

Branch Convenor David Wright said UNISON was working with Councilors and he hoped a breakthrough can be made soon so the whole Ethical Charter can be implemented.
General or Affiliated Fund member?
The choice is yours

A number of members have contacted the branch to ask how they can become contributors to UNISON’s Affiliated Political Fund.

UNISON offers members a choice between paying a proportion of their subs either to the General Political Fund or the Affiliated Political Fund which supports the Labour Party.

Branch Secretary Linda Crowther said among members making inquiries, one had been paying General Political Fund subscriptions for 20 years but wanted to switch to the APF.

She said members had expressed a desire to have an influence on the recent Labour leadership election and on policies developing in its aftermath.

If any member wants to change their membership of either the GPF or APF, please contact the branch office.

Foodbank collections are vital as demand grows in district

Branch members continue to support the work of the Bradford Metropolitan Foodbank as demand for its service grows.

As endless government cuts to the Council’s funding are still being made and planned for the future, more and more citizens are struggling to afford even the basics of life such as food.

At October’s Branch Committee a collection from members raised £130 for the Foodbank and parcels and boxes of food were stacked in the office for collection.

The charity wrote to thank the Branch for its support in the past, saying they were dismayed at the way people were “demonised” for being out of work and struggling to cope.

And they identified government cuts, benefits sanctions, the bedroom tax, and changes to disability benefits as the cause of the rise in Foodbanks.

In 2014 the volunteers at the foodbank distributed around 11,000 parcels, up from 3,000 just five years ago and demand continues to rise.

The Charity says latest research showed that 1.1 million people nationally depend for their survival on foodbanks.

The Trussell Trust runs a national network of foodbanks and has warned that foodbank use could become the new normal – with the state structurally dependent on their existence.

Meanwhile the We Shall Overcome campaign, which wants to raise awareness of the need for foodbanks and gain public support for them, held a music event to raise money at Glyde House, Little Horton Lane on October 8.

All donations of food and money will go to the Bradford Metropolitan Food Bank.
Health check for “under pressure” social workers

Bradford Council is conducting a survey of social workers to find out about their health and safety concerns at work.

One of the main areas they will focus on is how big the workloads are for individual social workers.

UNISON has urged members to take part in the survey as it will help to create better working conditions, improving the work-life balance and reducing stress.

Alongside this survey, UNISON is currently conducting a survey with Community care which aims to take a snapshot of the working day of a Social Worker. It will give evidence of the pressure members are under so ways can be found to tackle the issues raised. The results of the survey will be published in November.

Disciplinaries for using social media continue to rise

Members are still facing disciplinary action – including the sack – for things they have posted on social media.

Stewards and Convenors are regularly called on to represent members who have got into trouble with their employer for social media activity.

Branch Secretary Linda Crowther said the Branch regularly made members aware of the dangers of using networks to criticise employers or colleagues or the way an organisation is run.

She said: “These are the main dangers although there are many other objections which an employer can have, even if the information doesn’t relate to your employment.

Linda said: “I sometimes feel like I am nagging about this but it really is an issue for people.

“Even if employers don’t personally trawl people’s social media accounts (and many of them do) there is always someone out there who is happy to make them aware of what you have posted.

“Employers are often looking out for a quick way of getting rid of staff and posting on social media is just that.

“It is very difficult to defend because it is there in print and/or images.

“What you post on social media is legally comparable to when the media print or broadcast stories.

Coronation Street actor Marc Anwar hit the headlines recently when he was sacked from the show for posting a racist message. His employers were immediately alerted to it and announced his sacking.

It is not just in public services that people must be careful what they post, but it is a problem that UNISON will not apologise for reminding members about at every opportunity.

Linda said: “One rush of blood to the head or too much to drink, or just a bad mood, can lead to disaster for employees. I urge members to be extremely careful.”

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UNISON members struggling through an unexpected crisis can get help from ‘there for you’ by:-

- Contacting your Branch on 01274 513170
- Calling us on 020 7121 5620

You can also find out more information by visiting our website www.unison.org.uk/get-help/help-with-problems-at-home/there-for-you/

Registered charity number 1023552

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**Lighthouse Financial Advice**

**GENERAL FINANCIAL SURGERIES**

**Tuesday 22nd November 2016 & 17th January 2017**

Lighthouse Financial Advice can offer UNISON members advice and find the most appropriate* products in all aspects of financial planning. These surgeries are free to UNISON members.

- Financial Protection for You and Your Family  
- Pension Advice and Planning for Retirement  
- Savings and Investments  
- Tax Planning**  
- Mortgages

At: Bradford UNISON, 21-23 Neal Street, Bradford, BD5 0BX 10am to 4:15pm

To take advantage of this invaluable opportunity and book your initial 30 minute consultation with an adviser please contact: Lesley Godley on 01273 523706 or email lesley.godley@lighthousegroup.plc.uk

If you are interested but are unable to attend, please let us know and we will arrange for the adviser to contact you.

*We have chosen to avoid products we consider to be too high risk for the majority of our clients  
** Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority except for Tax advice which contains no investment element.