



In defence of Jobs and Services

Glasgow City Council has made spending cuts of £250m since 2010 including huge cuts in learning disability and mental health services, home care support, supported education for children, community work, cleansing, library services, frontline office support and grants to voluntary organisations. At least 4,000 council jobs have been lost.

Voluntary organisations providing care services in the city have cut hundreds of jobs due to reductions in funding from the council. In the last five years charges for many council services have gone up or been introduced for the first time. These charges often hit the poorest families most. The council has stated it intends to make further cuts of £133m in 2016 and 2017 and plans 3,000 job cuts, this is over 10% of the remaining workforce. This will be a disaster for vital services in the city and hit future employment opportunities for our young people. In addition, attacks on staff Terms and Conditions have already been proposed.

Alternative NO CUTS budget and campaign to win more money

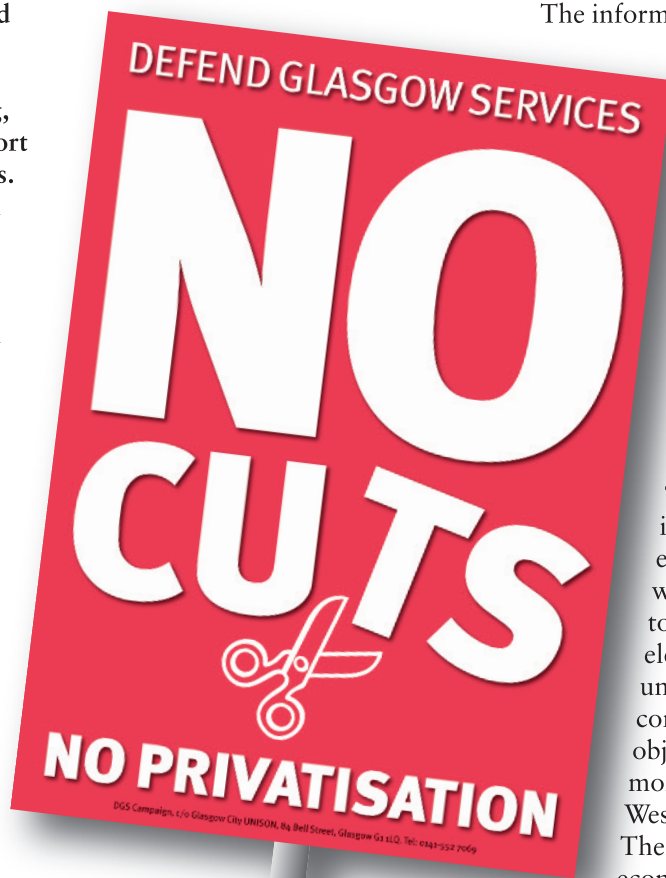
The city's trade unions, along with various community organisations and anti-cuts groups, have been campaigning

against these cuts from the start. Glasgow City Council politicians have a choice – make the Tory cuts or do not.

The information enclosed in this brief

pamphlet explains in more detail the unions' call for the elected politicians in the city to use all available financial mechanisms to hold-off any further cuts whilst leading a fight to win more money for the city. The council could use some of its reserves and borrowing powers, supported by the legal financial process of "capitalisation", to fill the immediate 'budget hole' expected in April 2016. This would allow time and space to build a mass campaign of elected councillors, trade unions, user groups and local communities with the objective of winning more money from the Holyrood and Westminster governments. There is plenty of money in our economy – it is just in the wrong hands or lying in the bank

accounts of big business. The trade unions will support any council politician or council political grouping who adopts this strategy of "No More Cuts".



Defy Tory austerity – Set no-cuts budgets – Defend Jobs and Services

All Scottish councils and the Scottish government are drawing up budgets that threaten devastating cuts to jobs and services over the next two to three years. At least £1 billion is being slashed from council budgets in 2016 and 2017 alone. The consequences will be tens of thousands of job losses, attacks on staff conditions and ruinous attacks on community services. Glasgow City Council have recently produced a ‘budget consultation’ document entitled ‘a world class city, focused on economic growth and tackling poverty and inequality’ which explains Glasgow’s budget and the £133 million of cuts being demanded by Tory and SNP government’. Also contained in the publication is an outline of a cuts plan. In this leaflet the trade union addresses this document and outlines what elected councillors and MSPs could be doing to defend the services in the city rather than carrying out Tory cuts.

1. Glasgow Council and Scottish Government politicians claim they can do nothing to stop the cuts as budgets have been slashed by the Tories. Is this true? It’s



certainly true that the Tories have stolen more than £3 billion from public spending in Scotland since the austerity offensive began in the summer of 2010.

Austerity, we should remember, is an attempt by many politicians to make ordinary people pay for the economic crisis of the bankers and super-rich, particularly acute since the crash of finance capitalism in 2007/2008.

But that does not mean MSPs and councillors are powerless to do anything about it. Collectively, the Scottish parliament and councils have real powers to begin a campaign of defiance and a refusal to implement any more cuts.

2. So how can councillors and MSPs refuse to make the cuts? Trade unions representing tens of thousands of



council workers in Glasgow are calling on councillors to refuse to make the cuts and set ‘balanced’ ‘no-cuts’ budgets. As they have explained, “politicians have a choice: make the Tory cuts or stand up and defend local jobs and services. We call on elected politicians to use all available financial mechanisms to hold off further cuts whilst leading a fight to win more money”

3. What are these “financial mechanisms”? Under the rules and as stated in the GCC document, councils have a legal duty to set a “balanced” budget. The no-cuts budgets would meet those rules. No-cuts budgets can be set by a combination of drawing on council reserves, using the borrowing powers that councils have as well as “creative accountancy”, for example capitalisation. In addition, negotiation over huge historic PFI/PPP debt repayments could also help, albeit temporarily, to allow the setting of a no cuts balanced budget. The Scottish parliament now has borrowing powers, regular under-spends and will also have enhanced tax powers from 2017. These could all be used to set no-cuts budgets.



4. Would Council Senior Officers not refuse to support such a strategy? No-cuts budgets would certainly be described by officers as “unorthodox”, and they would be unlikely to recommend them. However, and this is the crucial point, it is the councillors and MSPs that take the decisions – not the finance officers – as to what budget is passed. All that is required is the political will to use the powers the councils have to refuse to make the cuts.
5. OK, but this is surely only a short-term tactic. You can’t keep using borrowing powers and reserves to set no-cuts budgets? Yes, that’s true. But the setting of a ‘balanced’ no-cuts budget by a council or the Scottish government would allow time and space for the building of a national campaign to win the money required to fully fund jobs and public services. This would involve mass protests, demonstrations, strike



action by councils and other public sector workers in support of a 'no-cuts' policy.

6. **But I've been told by Glasgow Council and Scottish Government politicians that it's illegal and that they could be removed from office for setting a no-cuts budget?** As explained previously, it is not illegal to set a 'balanced' no-cuts budget and there are no sanctions that can be used against those who back such a position. If a council or the Scottish government set a deficit, "unbalanced" budget, then there are potential consequences, but the sanctions no longer involve the threat of jail, nor do they involve the surcharging of councillors.
7. **Wouldn't an increase in the council tax be a way to avoid councils making the cuts?** The Glasgow document explains that 'an increase or decrease of 1% changes income by around £1.7 million' and due to the Scottish Government Compensation Scheme, any increase would need to be 'higher than 4.2% before any income could be invested in services'. As a result increases involved would be of the order of around 80% – almost a doubling of council tax over the next two years – in order to avoid making any cuts. The only way to end all cuts is to build a mass campaign involving trade union members and communities to win back the billions robbed from jobs and services under the austerity programme. That requires implacable political will on behalf of councillors and MSPs who are prepared to fight.
8. **What do I need to do as a trade union member working for Glasgow City Council?** The Glasgow City UNISON branch along with EIS, Unite the Union, GMB, UCATT unions is involved in joint campaigning against the cuts through the 'Defend Glasgow Services Campaign' and has produced an alternative 'balanced no-cuts budget' strategy as outlined previously. As a union member we need you to engage with UNISON by attending workplace meetings and reading material on this crucial issue produced by the branch. If you do not have a local steward then please consider becoming one. This campaign could ultimately involve members of the council's trade unions taking industrial action to defend jobs, services and staff conditions of service.



If you are resident in the Glasgow area we urge you to visit the Glasgow City Council website where the Council are consulting the citizens of the city on what services they want cut ... see link below. We urge you to select the option that GCC do not do the Tories' 'dirty work', but instead set a legal 'No Cuts Budget' for 2016/17 and launch a mass campaign to win more money for our city as outlined previously.

Glasgow citizens can vote for the trade unions "Legal No Cuts Budget" idea by visiting <https://glasgowcc.dialogue-app.com/ideas>



What to expect from your steward

A steward's role is an important one. They organise, recruit and inform. They offer advice and support; talking to members about issues affecting them at work. It is a steward's job to organise their colleagues into an active and robust membership.

As a member, there are certain things you should be expecting of your local steward. For example:

- Your steward should be visible in the workplace and easy to contact.
- They should be keeping notice boards up to date with UNISON information.
- They should hold regular workplace meetings/walk rounds of their workplace in order that issues can be raised with them.
- Stewards should be highlighting the work we do and encouraging members to become more active in UNISON by having regular conversations.
- They should be attending their stewards and branch committees and sharing any relevant information with their members.
- They should be using materials such as branch leaflets, the Voice, etc. to engage members in discussions about the work UNISON is doing in campaigning for better working conditions.
- Your steward should help you to become politically informed and involved.
- They should be putting the case forward for the joint trade unions Alternative No Cuts Budget approach.
- Most importantly, they should be putting the case across for industrial action.

Remember: your steward has a lot of responsibility in your workplace. You can help them by becoming more involved. Start by reading the newsletters and emails we send, try to participate in our activities and come to your steward if you have a question. Simple steps taken by members will make the union a more powerful vehicle for advancing our efforts in the fight against the cuts. UNISON is only as strong as its members. Get involved. YOU are the union!

