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ROCHDALE UNISON AGM Wednesday 28th February 2018

7.00am Green Lane, Heywood
and

12.00 noon Rochdale Town Hall
and

6.00pm Phoenix Centre, Heywood

All Members are welcome to attend a meeting

If you wish to attend the meeting, please email unison@rochdale.gov.uk or
telephone 01706 925951/52

Refreshments will be available at the start of each meeting
If you have any special dietary requirements please let us know

UNISON National & Local Government Conference

We have Delegate Positions to attend each of the above conferences

Local Government Conference 17th & 18th June	National Delegate Conference 19th — 22nd June
1 Female Young Member— Under 27	1 Female Young Member— Under 27
1 Low paid Female (less than £9.72)	1 Low Paid Female (less than £9.72)
1 Female seat	

If you are interested in attending any of these conferences, please contact the
Branch for further information.

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Rochdale UNISON, Branch Office, 46 Richard Street, Rochdale, OL11 1DU

Social Workers Struggling to Cope

Commenting on figures published on Friday 12th January 2108 by the Local Government Association, which show that last year a child was referred to local authority children's services every 49 seconds.

UNISON Head of Local Government Heather Wakefield said: "Social workers are struggling to cope with unprecedented caseloads and are working long hours without breaks, as they try to protect the vulnerable children on their patch. Their jobs are becoming even harder as referrals soar, and budgets are squeezed. This understandably is causing huge stress and anxiety as staff worry that cases are slipping through the net".

"Children can't be protected from abuse on the cheap. The government must give councils the cash they need to recruit more child protection staff and keep all children safe."

UNISON is concerned that despite the surge in demand for children's social work services, at a time of major budget cuts for councils, the government has seen fit to waste £11m on new tests – the national assessment and accreditation system – that social workers say will make their jobs even harder.

Although the £11m is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed, it reflects how out of step ministers are with the wishes of social workers, says UNISON.

43% of School Kitchen staff in debt because of low pay

Four in 10 (41%) school kitchen staff are worried about their pay, with one in five (21%) earning the minimum wage, a new UNISON survey published has revealed.

The survey of more than 1,200 school catering employees found that four in ten say they are weighed down with debt (other than a mortgage). A quarter (25%) of the staff responding say they've had to take out loans from banks, credit unions or payday loan companies simply to make ends meet. One in five (21%) have had no choice but to borrow money from friends and family.

At the same time, almost half the respondents (46%) said that it's impossible to do their jobs within their allocated hours. A third of kitchen staff (33%) regularly do between two and five hours of unpaid overtime every week to keep their school's kitchens operational. Almost one in ten (9%) school catering staff regularly work five or more hours unpaid.

Stress also has a significant impact on the catering employees, with one in four saying they feel stressed all or most of the time. One fifth (20%) of kitchen staff say they've had to take on a second job to try to cover their monthly outgoings.

The lack of training and the feeling that kitchen staff aren't seen as a valued part of the school team were also cited as issues that troubled them.

One third (33%) say they've not received any training in the past year, and 35% of respondents felt excluded as a member of the school as a whole.

UNISON National Officer for Education and Children's Services Ruth Levin said: "It's disgraceful that some of the lowest paid employees in our education system are doing hours of unpaid overtime every week just to keep our school kitchens running and the nation's school children fed. Many school kitchen staff said they were the main breadwinners for their families and have fallen into debt as the result of the freeze on their already low wages. As a country attempting to tackle the growing childhood obesity crisis, it's imperative the government and head teachers place a greater value on their role in keeping children healthy.

"UNISON is calling on all employers to provide both fair pay and ample training to all school kitchen staff."

UNISON launches campaign to divest pensions from carbon

A campaign to encourage local government pension funds to divest from carbon was launched on 10th January by UNISON.

UNISON's step-by-step guide is designed to help members of local government pension schemes push for changes in the investment of their funds. The aim is to explore alternative investment opportunities, allowing schemes to sell their shares and bonds in fossil fuels and to go carbon-free.

Chair of UNISON's Policy Committee James Anthony said: "Pensions are meant to safeguard our future, but that future is threatened by the burning of carbon in fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. This campaign empowers people to hold their pension funds to account. If you contribute to a pension then it's your money that's being invested, and so it's only right that you should have a say in where it's invested."

Figures published last year revealed that £16 billion was invested in the fossil fuel industry by local government pension funds*. At its annual conference last year, UNISON made the decision to campaign for divestment from these companies because of the devastating consequences that a changing climate will have on people, societies and ecosystems.

In addition to the threat of climate change, the UNISON campaign highlights other reasons why continued investment in carbon threatens the value of pension funds. For example, new government regulations for fossil fuels have raised the costs of high-polluting industries and reduced their investment appeal. Equally, emerging clean and green technology has created new and lucrative business opportunities for funds.

With five million members of local government pension schemes, and over 13,000 different employers paying into them, UNISON believes its campaign will resonate with a wide audience and is in a strong position to influence the pensions agenda.

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Return to: UNISON Rochdale, 46 Richard St, Rochdale, OL11 1DU

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