UNISON Argyll & Bute Branch – Chair's Expanded Annual Report 2025/26

Chair's Introduction

The Argyll and Bute Council Branch continues to proudly represent members across Argyll and Bute Council, Live Argyll, ACHA, AHFA, and a wide range of third-sector organisations—particularly within the care sector. As one of the largest and most geographically diverse local authority areas in Scotland, our branch faces unique challenges in communication, travel, and maintaining connections across remote and rural communities. Despite these complexities, our commitment remains the same: ensuring every member feels supported, informed, and valued. Over the past year, we have strengthened our visibility, deepened our engagement with members, and expanded opportunities for involvement—helping to ensure the branch remains responsive and resilient in an ever-changing landscape.

Communication, Visibility and Engagement

Communicating effectively across a region as vast as Argyll and Bute remains one of our biggest operational challenges. Many of our members work in isolated locations or services with limited digital connectivity, making it vital that we use a range of communication tools. Through our Branch Communications Officer, we continue to strengthen communication networks by encouraging stewards and members to share updates across their workplaces. Our refreshed digital platforms—including the updated Branch Website, Facebook page and push notifications—have played a key role in improving the speed and reach of information sharing. Member engagement with these platforms is essential; the more you interact, the more effectively we can inform, support and represent you. We also cannot overstate the importance of keeping your contact details up to date—without accurate information, we may not be able to reach you when you most need our help.

Recruitment and Growing an Active Membership

Our membership remains our greatest strength. As we look ahead to the challenges facing public services, recruiting new members and encouraging more individuals to take on active roles within the branch is essential. We continue to have vacant Branch Officer positions, and succession planning is becoming increasingly important to maintain the stability and long-term sustainability of our branch. Becoming an active member is not only beneficial for the union—it offers individuals the chance to develop new skills, gain confidence, and influence meaningful workplace change. UNISON's training programmes provide comprehensive support for new stewards and activists, equipping them to represent colleagues, stand up for workers' rights, and advocate for safe, fair and well-managed workplaces. We strongly encourage anyone interested to step forward and contribute to building a stronger, more resilient branch.

Recent Pay Awards – The Multi-Year Approach

This year, members experienced significant developments in pay negotiations, particularly through the introduction of the multi-year settlement approach. While this method can offer financial predictability for members and greater stability for long-term service planning, it also limits opportunities for yearly renegotiation—especially during periods of economic uncertainty or rising inflation. It is therefore essential that we gather feedback from members to understand your views on whether multi-year settlements should continue or whether annual negotiations would better reflect the financial realities our members face. Your feedback directly influences our bargaining priorities and helps ensure we are representing your interests as effectively as possible.

Branch Work and Representation

Throughout the year, our Branch Officers and Stewards have continued to demonstrate their unwavering commitment to supporting members across all sectors. The branch has represented members at a wide variety of meetings and hearings, including attendance reviews, investigations, disciplinary hearings, standby exemption appeals, job evaluation processes and health and safety meetings. This essential work takes place quietly and consistently behind the scenes, often at short notice, and plays a crucial role in safeguarding members' rights, ensuring fairness in workplace processes, and promoting safe working conditions. Representation is at the heart of what UNISON does, and we are proud of the dedication shown by our stewards and officers.

Current and Live Issues

The branch continues to engage with a number of ongoing issues affecting members across services. These include restructuring consultations, formal

discussions aimed at avoiding potential redundancies, and consultations on key employment policies as part of Trade Union Liaison Meetings. We remain firmly committed to defending the terms and conditions of our members, ensuring changes are implemented fairly and transparently, and challenging proposals that may negatively impact workers. The year ahead is likely to bring further challenges, and we will continue to update members as these issues progress.

Member Benefits

UNISON membership continues to provide significant value through a wide range of practical benefits, financial savings, and professional support services. Members can access discounted car insurance, holiday clubs, dental treatment, eye care offers, and numerous high-street and online discounts—often saving far more than the annual cost of membership. In addition to these financial benefits, members also have access to free legal advice covering work-related issues, personal injury claims and certain non-work matters. UNISON's welfare support services continue to provide emergency financial help, wellbeing support, school uniform grants and fuel assistance for members facing hardship. Practical workplace support—from representation at hearings to assistance with job evaluations—remains one of the most valued aspects of membership, ensuring members are never alone when facing difficult situations.

Call to Action

We are asking all members to play an active part in strengthening the branch. Staying engaged with updates, keeping your contact details current, encouraging colleagues to join, and considering becoming an active member all help build a more resilient and effective union. Your views on key issues, including pay and service changes, are vital in shaping our priorities. Together, we can continue to protect workers' rights, improve working conditions, and ensure our collective voice remains strong.

Thank You

Finally, I want to extend my sincere thanks to every one of our members across Argyll and Bute. Your dedication, professionalism and resilience during challenging times are the backbone of this branch. I would also like to thank our stewards, activists, Branch Officers and regional UNISON colleagues for their tireless work, expertise and ongoing commitment to supporting members. Together we continue to build a stronger, fairer and more united branch. Thank you for your trust and continued membership.

Kevin McIntosh
Branch Chairperson