

DUBLIN DISTRICT COUNCIL

A VISION FOR DUBLIN 2020 - IMPROVING OUR CITY

A trade union manifesto for action in Dublin aimed at increasing employment, protecting jobs, providing accommodation, enhancing local public services and securing a decent wage and a living income.

The Dublin District Council was established as part of the restructuring of SIPTU into an organising union. It is comprised of representatives drawn from the members of the five divisions of the union in the city; Health, Manufacturing, Public Administration and Community, Services and Utilities and Construction. Nationally almost 200,000 are members of SIPTU with circa 70,000 working in the Dublin Region.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The intention is to present the case for an increased local and national Government focus on these priority concerns, advocating for an adequate State response targeted at the Dublin region and encouraging increased investment from public and private funds to address the problems identified. This will entail developing a coherent public campaign expertly advised, supported and resourced to be undertaken collectively with other trade unions and non-Government and Community organisations actively involved in these areas. Campaign strategy and tactics will be agreed jointly.

1. INCREASING EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The economic collapse and continued austerity has impacted greatly on employment, resulting in the highest levels of unemployment that Dublin has endured since the foundation of the State. At December 2013 there were almost 95,000 workers in Dublin on the Live Register, with almost 45% long term unemployed and 15,000 under twenty five years of age. There is a jobs crisis in the city, some communities are again unemployment 'black spots'. As the capital city, Dublin has a strategic advantage in relation to job creation. However, the Government has failed to prioritise and secure new jobs for the city. Attracting new inward investment and a concentration on the expansion of indigenous small and medium enterprise would result in much needed employment.

The District Council will lobby for the introduction of a stimulus investment package to build sustainable industries and services, thereby enhancing job opportunities; increased investment in Apprenticeship and Specific Skills training to improve employability, especially among the young unemployed, and the expansion of part and full time community employment programmes to provide new services and increased income at local level.

The purpose of the District Council is to provide a forum for members to pursue strategic objectives and local campaigns that will improve conditions for all workers, citizens and residents of Dublin. This will be achieved by setting priorities for collective action that will be pursued in conjunction with union members, civil society, community and voluntary organisations and by engaging with political parties and their activists.

The District Council has recently consulted with members in order to determine initial priorities for action. Five areas of concern were identified as relevant both to workers, their families and communities, and to the wider population, particularly those experiencing increased poverty and hardship. The five priority areas are:

- Increasing employment and skills training opportunities;
- Opposing privatisation and protecting existing jobs;
- Actively campaigning for decent wages and a living income;
- Providing adequate housing and rented accommodation to tackle the crisis in the city;
- Protecting and maintaining community based services and jobs in Dublin.



2. OPPOSING PRIVATISATION AND PROTECTING EXISTING JOBS

The Government agenda to enforce privatisation in a wide range of public and community sector activities is presenting a real and immediate risk to maintaining quality public services. In recent years there has been a concerted attempt by Government agencies, including the HSE, Dublin City Council, Dublin Bus, Public Employment services, Local and Community development, Dublin universities and increasingly in large private employers, to replace and outsource direct labour in order to undermine the decent terms and conditions of employment won by unions over recent decades. The embargo on public recruitment has been used to justify this trend despite the terms of the public sector agreements that seek to prevent outsourcing and privatisation.

SIPTU is unequivocally opposed to privatisation. The union has been successful in a number of challenges to outsourcing. However, it is necessary to campaign publicly to raise awareness among the public as to the threats to services and proper jobs from the 'the race to the bottom'. Where public services have been privatised the intention is to seek to organise the workers employed in order to protect existing wages and conditions. The trend to privatisation will be actively opposed.

3. ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING FOR DECENT WAGES AND A LIVING INCOME

One of the direct consequences of the economic collapse and austerity budgets has been the significant increase in part-time, insecure and zero hour contracts in Dublin with a resulting steep decline in pay and working conditions. The trade unions campaigned successfully to restore the minimum wage and to reverse the decision to remove Joint Labour Committees that set the wage scales for low paid workers in specific sectors, affecting over 10% of workers. However, in terms of household income over 60% of households are now below the average income and deprivation rates have doubled in the past five years. Among single parent families and the individual unemployed almost half are experiencing severe deprivation.

In these circumstances, it is essential to increase the level of income available to those working in low paid jobs and those dependent on social

protection. This will be achieved by supporting the new trade union campaign to challenge low pay in order to secure a decent wage for all workers and by advocating for adequate increases in social welfare to provide a minimum Living Income.

4. PROVIDING ADEQUATE HOUSING AND RENTED ACCOMMODATION TO TACKLE THE CRISIS IN THE CITY

It is widely acknowledged that the property 'bubble' contributed significantly to the collapse of the banks and the consequent downturn. The subsequent lack of public investment in social housing has resulted in a crisis of accommodation in Dublin and a growth in overcrowding and homelessness. Nationally, in April 2014, there were 96,000 households on social housing waiting lists, including over 16,400 on the Dublin City Council waiting list. But the Government estimates only 5,000 new social housing units will be delivered nationally in 2014. In Dublin, the number of homeless people in emergency shelters or temporary beds on a nightly basis has climbed to more than 1,600. Affordable accommodation in the city has also become scarce, with rent increases of about 8% last year. In addition, living conditions in subsidised private rented accommodation have deteriorated. There is a severe housing crisis in the city affecting workers, young couples, the unemployed and those who rely on

social housing and subsidised rented accommodation.

A range of responses are necessary in order to lift the current burden on families including rent control and security of tenure in the private sector, increased rent allowances, mortgage and debt relief, increased provision of emergency accommodation and a major housing construction programme. A robust and sustained campaign will be necessary to highlight the scale of the crisis and to mobilise and maintain pressure on central and local government to seriously address the problem. This will be undertaken in conjunction and collaboration with the key non Government and community based organisations involved in responding to the crisis.

5. PROTECTING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES AND JOBS IN DUBLIN

In the most disadvantaged communities in Dublin the main providers of local services and activities are community based organisations employing local people and usually managed by local residents. These operate to complement and enhance provision by statutory agencies. These community projects emerged in the most disadvantaged communities in the city, through concerted action by local residents, in response to the State failure to address mass unemployment, acute poverty, poor service provision, inadequate community and youth facilities and to tackle serious social problems such as drug and alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour and youth alienation. In recent years under continuing austerity budgets central government has continuously slashed funding for these activities resulting in the closure and reduction of essential community services.

The current economic crisis has impacted most severely on the poorest communities. It is vital that their services are protected and expanded through targeted public investment. Independent local management and control must also be maintained and respected to ensure that this provision can continue to respond to acute local needs. The District Council will support these communities in tackling increased poverty and hardship by protecting their essential services and jobs.



STATEMENT OF STRATEGY AND TACTICS

As an organising union SIPTU intends to engage with progressive interests willing to cooperate in order to address the crucial issues identified as priorities for action by the union. In Dublin, the District Council will lead the Union approach in seeking to secure sustainable responses to the five key areas set out. This will involve providing a considered analysis of the difficulties to be overcome and the best means to resolve them. A coordinated campaign advocating significant policy change and substantial investment will be mounted in conjunction with other relevant organisations. The tactics adopted will include participation in networks and single issue campaigns established to tackle the problems; raising awareness among union members and the general public in relation to the acute needs in the city; endorsing policy positions and proposals for action aimed at resolving the issues involved; advocating for change with central and local government; engaging with the political parties and elected representatives with a view to promoting new solutions.

Organising for
Fairness at
Work & Justice
in Society



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Professional &
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SECURING INCREASED PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Each of the five areas identified for intervention require additional funding, investment and policy change from central government, public agencies and, in some cases, the private sector. The key areas of intensified job creation, increased housing provision and expanded public services require public and private investment. Reversing privatisation and providing a living income require a fundamental change in direction in terms of how public services will be maintained and delivered in Dublin in the future and how wage increases and the reversal of cuts in welfare payments will be achieved. It is clear that a major programme of public and private investment is necessary in Dublin to address the employment and housing crisis. The series of austerity budgets has impacted massively on the poorest and most disadvantaged individuals and communities. In particular, the poor prospects for our young people and those dependent on welfare payments must be tackled urgently. To enable increased public investment new sources of taxation will be required, as previously identified and proposed by SIPTU.

MOBILISING THE RESPONSE

The greatest challenge for the SIPTU Dublin District Council is to ensure that the needs of Dublin workers are prioritised by increasing the focus on addressing low wages and maintaining existing jobs and public and community based services. As a first step the five Divisions in SIPTU will be encouraged to become involved in campaigning for the priority issues affecting workers in their sectors. This SIPTU response will be developed in conjunction jointly with other unions and collectively through the ICTU and Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

With regard to funding cuts to local communities, the housing and homeless crisis and continuing reductions in social welfare, the District Council acknowledges and respects the efforts that NGOs and Community and Voluntary organisations have made over many years to address the serious social and economic problems that beset the poorest communities in Dublin city. The intention is to seek to complement and enhance this work by supporting their advocacy activity and by forming strategic alliances to pursue these objectives.