



Cleansing Cuts: why they matter

Local man Barry McAreavey, vice-convenor of GMB Glasgow cleansing, was interviewed by the Glasgow Times a week before the cuts.

'Past cuts have had a serious effect on the workforce. We have an ageing workforce because there has been little recruitment.'

The guys have wear and tear injuries, musculoskeletal injuries are common, with knee, shoulder and hip injuries and arthritis from pulling heavy bins all day every day." He said the bins have become larger, and with less frequent collections, they contain more waste, making them heavier.

Mr McAreavey, who has more than 25 years of service, has witnessed the changes in cleansing and wants it to be better. We are so short-staffed that we are not able to sweep the channels and drains, so they get blocked, and you have more flooding.

"We know managers don't have the resources and because of that, we haven't got the right equipment. The workers want to be able to do a better job with the street cleaning than what they are delivering but time to spend in each area is limited."

"We worry about further cuts. We worry they could privatise some services. It's wrong that public money is going to private industry. We're not getting the recruitment we need and the guys are being worked to the bone. If we don't maintain these services it will lead to vermin and disease."

Reproduced with acknowledgement to the Glasgow Times

Staffing cuts announced this February

Waste: Total reduction of posts = **43** (23 in this budget year)

Parks: total reduction of posts: **16**

Associated Services: unspecified reduction in School Crossing Patrollers; 8.5 fte from CCTV monitoring team at Eastgate; **7.34** fte from Graffiti removal team; **14** from Community Enforcement Officers (almost a 50 percent reduction in current staffing levels); Unspecified reduction of posts in Trading Standards; **10-15** from City Development.

Govan Community Council needs more members

Community Councils were set up in the 1970s as the third tier of our democracy. They exist to represent the views of people locally and to ensure their voice is heard. All those living in the Central Govan area, from Drive Road to Broomloan Rd, aged 16 and over, are eligible for membership – and we especially need young people.

The Council meets once a month in the Elderpark Workspace, usually the first Monday at 7 p.m.

Campaign for publicly-owned bus transport

From Danny O'Neill, GCC Vice Chair

Over recent months the community council has continued its long running campaign for better public transport.

Profits of £30m

A report carried out last year for Glasgow City Council estimated that before the pandemic private bus operators in the west of Scotland received annual public subsidies of £112 million, almost half their income, on top of £120 million from fares. This produced profits of £30 million a year, yet taxpayers and passengers have no control over the buses. If the buses were publicly owned, like Lothian Buses in Edinburgh, any profits could be reinvested to improve services.

Public control of fares, routes, timetables

In November 2022 we took part in SPT's consultation on the Regional Transport Strategy, which will decide transport priorities in Glasgow and the west of Scotland for the next ten years. We urged SPT to use the full powers now available to take the buses back into public ownership.

This would enable councils in the area to control fares, routes, timetables and service standards, and to integrate bus services with the subway and railways that are already publicly owned. We also argued for extended opening times on the subway.

Get Glasgow Moving

Members of the community council recently attended the AGM of Get Glasgow Moving, a volunteer organisation that campaigns for improved public transport in the Glasgow region. Founded in 2016, it is not affiliated to any political party but welcomes support from anyone who shares its ambitions for better public transport. This campaign is supported by Govan Community Council.

More information is available at <https://www.getglasgowmoving.org/> and resources, including videos, can be found on their Facebook page.

Its meetings are open and anyone is welcome to come. Over the past half century Govan Community Council has waged many campaigns – against cuts, unfair taxes (the poll tax) and harmful developments (waste disposal). – and FOR development, more housing, more jobs and facilities for youth.

If you are interested phone our Secretary, Esme Clark 0141 425 1318 or come along to a meeting.

THE GOVAN LETTER

Published by Govan Community Council

March 2019

GOVAN'S LIVING STANDARDS & SERVICES

Our living standards and services are under attack as never before. Consumer Price Inflation is running at over 10 percent. Food inflation is over 17 percent – and energy even higher.

At the same time the social services on which we depend are crumbling.

The hospitals and health services are still overwhelmed a year after supporting us through Covid. Those waiting more than two years for elective surgery – such as knee and hip replacements – exceeded 7,000 this January (four times the comparable English number). In December only 59 percent of those attending A&E in Glasgow were seen within four hours – the worst figure ever.

This is the result of staff shortages – in turn the result of the government's decision to cut nurse training in 2011 combined with low wages – with nurses earning more as contract nurses in the private sector with much less stress.

Council Cuts

We know the headline figures from the newspapers. Council Tax up 5 percent, increased charges for garden waste and sports facilities. Cuts in opening times for libraries and museums.

More insidious are the less publicized cuts in staffing. Some are listed on the back page. Just one example. Community Safety Officers numbers, already inadequate, are to be cut by half – making impossible most attempts to stop anti-social behaviour.



Mrs Barbour looks at Govan today

In 1915 Mrs Barbour led a revolt of women in Govan against extortionate rents and, along with the workers in the yards, forced the government to intervene to freeze rents. Later, as a councillor, she fought for decent public housing, for public baths and medical services.

What would she say about Govan today? The services she fought for are crumbling – and living standards have taken the biggest hit for over a century.

This is why Govan Community Council is holding a public meeting on Wednesday 5 April in the Pearce Institute to rally our community to defend its services and to demand protection for those who are particularly vulnerable.

Govan and East Govan Community Councils joint public meeting on cuts and public services

Speakers will include Danny O'Neill and Annie Morgan

Wednesday 5 April

7 p.m. in the Pearce Institute

Our young people are too often cold and hungry

Youngsters are 'seeing it'. That's the assessment of Kevin Burke, Co-ordinator at Govan Youth Information Project, on how the cost of living crisis is affecting young people across G51.

"Can't always afford to heat homes"

They know their parents can't always afford to heat their houses and sometimes don't have sufficient food on the table. Their call: "We want somewhere safe and warm with wi-fi where we don't bother other people and other people don't bother us."



Outside the GYIP premises at 9 Water Row in Central Govan

GYIP now opening for longer hours

In response the project has opened its premises at Govan Cross for longer hours and invested in equipment that enables them to provide hot food, partly courtesy of Asda. They do this at a time when previous council-led schemes are reducing — and when there are fewer facilities available for young people. Hiring private sports facilities is prohibitively expensive.

GYIP does its best to make up the difference. But its own funds are limited. They also engage with young people in the evening via their street work programme.

Lack of job opportunities for local youngsters

On employment and job opportunities staff are also noticing a difference. 'It was not good before. Now it's worse.' Central Govan Housing's Modulus Scheme was helpful — but only for those who had got on the wrong side of the law. There's precious little for the rest.

The team, Kevin, John and Gina, are hopeful that GYIP will be able to overcome funding hurdles and continue through to 2024, their 30th anniversary. 'The community came together during Covid. We need to do the same in this new period'. For contact: 0141 445 4505



Social Care Workers Rally at Govan Cross

Social Care workers, members of Unite, came from across Scotland to lobby Health Minister Humza Yousaf at his surgery in Govan on 6 March. Senior Unite officer Mary Alexander said they were there representing 75,000 local government care workers.

'The £1.5 billion allocated to the proposed National Care Service ought to be used now to provide decent pay and conditions for the workers who saw us through Covid. We have a 45 percent vacancy rate because skilled qualified staff are leaving to work in supermarkets. That's why there is a crisis.' Councillor Matt Kerr said that the real scandal is that 60 percent of the Scottish social care budget already goes to private companies mainly based in tax havens overseas. 'They are about profit not care. We don't want even more of this. We want local democratic control properly funded.'



Glasgow's Action for Pensioners is based at 11 Harmony Row in Central Govan. Iain McLeish has been a volunteer there for over ten years and works with half a dozen others to provide help for local pensioners.

The project is entirely volunteer-based and deals with up to 500 requests for help a year (more if telephone requests are included).

'Scared to put on the heat'

Over the past nine months Iain has noticed a significant increase in requests for help. Benefit forms and payment demands from energy companies are the biggest worries. People are often confused and then get really frightened.

He mentioned the case of one lady who had been sitting in the cold because she was scared to turn to the heating. Existing benefit forms are over 40 pages long and the new one coming from the Scottish government is almost double that.

'Somebody to talk to'

Much of Iain's work consists of patiently going through these forms, particularly for benefits, and, if necessary taking cases up to Tribunal (where GAP has a 90 percent success rate).

Pensioners are often isolated. Having somebody to talk to is a boon. The 17 percent jump in food prices, more for some essential items, has seen people skimping. Food banks are a key resource but even these are limited. Iain says buy what you need. He is hopeful that the project will get more volunteers to assist over the next year.

For contact: 0141 440 0963

Next meeting of Govan Community Council is on Monday 2 April at 7 p.m. in the Elderpark Workspace, Elderpark Street

Meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to attend



Govan Help - which runs family support services and, as part of this, the Pantry in the Pierce Institute

Govan Help was formed in 1996 and currently runs six projects covering the G51 and G52 areas. Viv Sawyers has been Chief Officer since 2019 and Steph McFadden, Development Lead from 2020. The project provides family support including counselling on debt, housing and parenting — and as an increasingly key part of its work food supplies through its Pantry [for contact 0141 445 6481].

'During the first months of Covid, April-Nov 2020, there was a huge demand for food and we decided to shift to the pantry model (enabling users to choose — instead of parcels). Initially we made provision for about 100 people a day. There was a big increase in June last at the same time the increased in energy prices were announced. Even those who had gone back into employment after Covid now returned. Numbers have increased to 150 a day.'

'No food at all'

Every week they get one or two people with no food at all, starving. Poverty is off the scale. The situation is much, much worse than during the pandemic.

Those using the pantry pay £2.50 for ten items and it is run in partnership with the Govan Community Project. Users are asylum seekers (35-40 percent), pensioners (20 percent), Students (5) and In work poverty (40).

Collapse in support for children with special needs

Govan Help also runs play groups and additionally delivers autism support and seeks to supply help for all neurodivergent children. Here there has been a big increase in children needing such assistance since Covid with little or no support from Social Work as a result of staffing cuts. Schools have been similarly hit by reductions in the supernumerary staff able to offer specialist help. Some schools provide only one hour a day and then children have to return home.

Project running out of funds

A number of Govan Help's services are having to be limited or halted altogether as a result of a lack of funds and the whole project facing a funding hurdle at the end of the year.

Currently it provides play therapy for three G51 primaries catering for 30 children a year. This is now running out of funds. Children's befriending services are currently in abeyance.

Volunteering Opportunities

At the same time the project is building its team of volunteer workers — particularly among those from other countries along with the Govan Community Project with training for those with non-English languages to act as interpreters. It now has 21 interpreters having taken a four week programme and two qualified volunteers with Pantry training.



Govan Community Project volunteers in the Pantry

Govan Community Project

Traci Kirkland is director of the Govan Community Project, our local organisation for assisting asylum seekers and refugees [0800 310 0054]. Traci explains its work.

'Previously known as Govan Integration Network, the Project has had to expand its geographical across the City as the Government contractor, Meers, has increasingly shifted locally-based asylum seekers into hotels elsewhere.'

Traci defines the key challenge facing all Asylum Seekers as financial. It is how to survive on £45 a week to cover food, travel to official or medical appointments, clothing and over-the-counter medicines. This sum includes the £4.50p increase at the end of December, 10 percent at a time when the cost of food was increasing by 17 percent.

The plight of those transferred to hotels is in many ways worse. Rudimentary food is provided. On top of that they get just £8 a week. This has to cover any special dietary requirements (such as Halal) and all other necessary expenses including travel and clothes.

Clothes for the Glasgow winter

Most asylum seekers won't even have the clothes needed to equip them and their children for Glasgow's cold winters. Many also will be suffering from trauma and associated problems that require medical help. And once refugee status is granted, their circumstances often get even worse. Accommodation and financial support is withdrawn in a city where there is now no easily available homeless provision.

These are the challenges which Traci and her team have to try to face. Food banks/Pantries are one key resource — though even here the subscription is £2.50.

Probably the project's most important response is that of support and friendship — as well as the informed advice on health, education, social and legal needs that the centre's staff provide.