

# Stop wholesale sell-off in Suffolk

## Trade unions unite to fight cuts in jobs and services

**P**RIVATE COMPANIES in East Anglia must be rubbing their greedy mitts with joy at the prospect of buying up the entire public sector in the county of Suffolk!

**Roger MacKay,**  
*President, Ipswich and District TUC*

At a recent full county council meeting the council leader, Tory Jeremy Pembroke, proposed outsourcing all public services currently provided by the council. This will put Suffolk in the forefront of the Con-Dem coalition's cuts programme.

Suffolk county council currently employs 27,000 people and, even by their own figures, they estimate 4,000 jobs will go in the 'restructuring'. Of course, this doesn't take into account the jobs that will go when the privatised services do their own 'restructuring'.

All this in the name of efficiency and making the 'big society' stand on its own feet! As we know, when private business takes control of public services, the price goes up and both the quantity and quality of the service goes down. Look at the billions already squandered on PFI and PPP privatisation schemes across the country.

Knowing these proposals were coming, Ipswich and District Trades

Union Council organised a meeting of affiliated public sector trade unions on 9 September. The first item of business was a motion, passed unanimously, calling for these undemocratic measures to be withdrawn (privatisation had never figured in any party's election manifestos). The unions also agreed to work together to defend jobs and save public services.

### Debate

AS PRESIDENT of the trades council I put forward this new grouping's points of view on local radio a couple of days later in a live debate with local Tory MP Ben Gummer and Sandy Martin (leader of the Labour Group on Suffolk county council). The programme was actually extended by 15 minutes because of the number of listeners phoning in.

Sandy and I agreed on a number of issues, particularly that the bankers had created the financial crisis and they should be the ones to pay. Ben Gummer had no answer for that! The idea that cancelling the Trident nuclear weapons project could save the country £78 billion provoked a stunned silence from everyone else!

Our newly-formed Suffolk Coalition FOR Public Services picketed the county council meeting on 23 September and we handed letters

to councillors demanding their resignation if they supported the outsourcing proposals. We told them they should be standing for re-election on a clear manifesto that spelt out the demise of public services in Suffolk!

We had no replies from the 55 Tory councillors who control the 75 seat council, although a number of the others have replied saying they support our stand. Employees entering and leaving the building also gave us their vocal support. Members of Unison Suffolk county council branch demonstrated at lunchtime later in the day.

Two days later we did a Saturday morning stall in Ipswich town centre, with a petition and information to hand out. 100 signatures were collected in a short time and many were those of people under threat from the first round of the proposed cuts, particularly carers, library workers and pensioners.

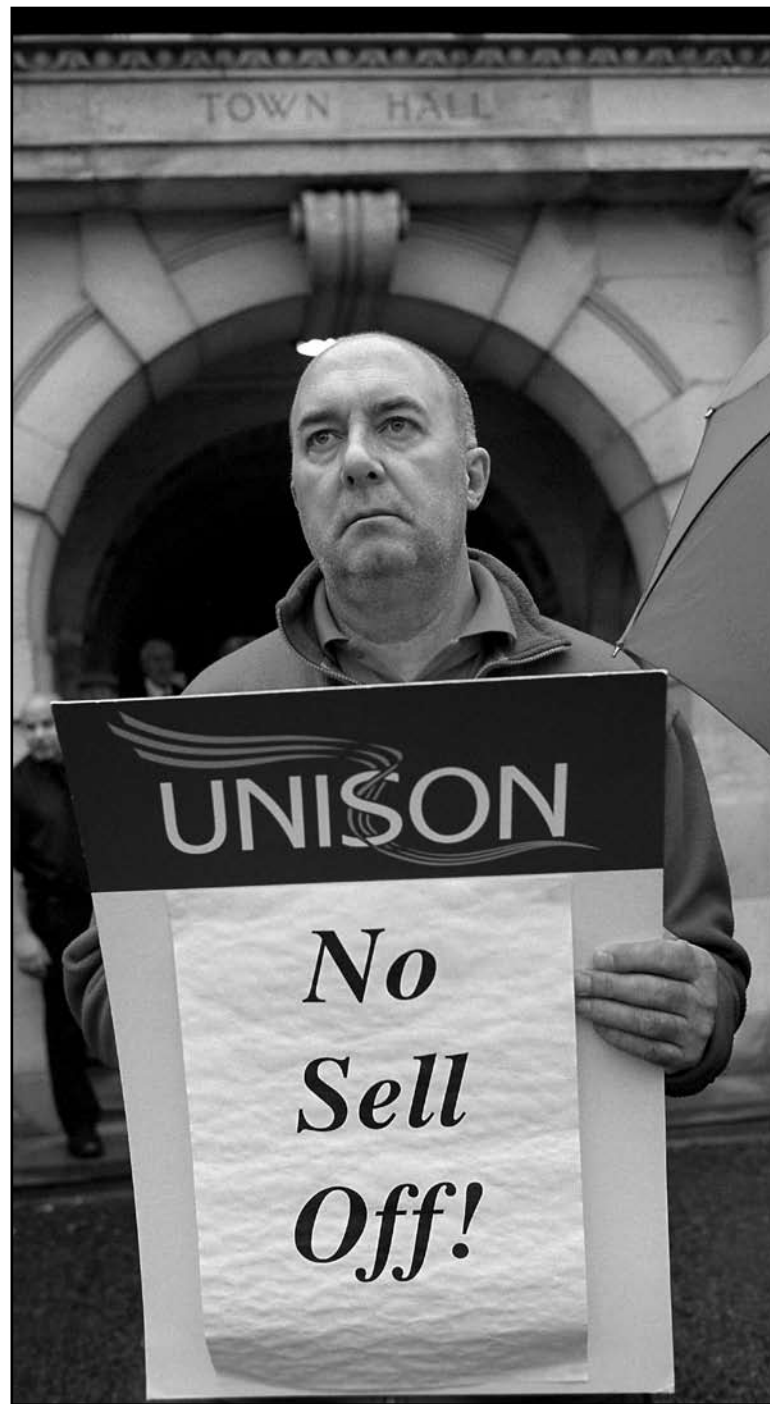
### Campaign

IN SPITE of the politicians and media continually telling us that cuts have to happen, it's becoming more and more evident that the bankers' scam is still in peoples' minds and that people are not happy with the public sector being made the scapegoat for the financial mess created by the banks.

So Suffolk Coalition FOR Public Services has a clear goal for the battles ahead. Not only must we recruit more active public sector workers to our ranks and take the message out to the public, making them confident enough to stand up for their jobs and conditions.

We want to widen the campaign with public meetings across the town's estates, mass picketing of council meetings and a demonstration through the town.

Further ahead, we'll be looking for people to stand on an anti-cuts programme at the next local elections in May 2011 and making a huge dent in the Tory majority on the county council.



Taking the message to the public.

photo Paul Mattsson

## Suffolk Unison member speaks

**"T**HE COUNCIL has decided to outsource nearly everything. The first thing we heard about it was in the local media a few days before the main council meeting that voted this through.

They want to reduce the workforce from 27,000 to a few hundred managers who will oversee the contracts. If we get outsourced we have no idea what will happen to our jobs, but it probably won't be good.

Once these jobs are gone they are gone. If they privatise these [services] they won't be coming back any time soon.

It seems there is a cabal of six or seven people in the council headed up by the chief executive Andrea Hill, (who is on over £200,000 a year) and Tory council leader Jeremy Pembroke. They must have been planning this for years.

When Hill arrived at the council she said people had to 'get real' and they were 'with her or out'."

## UN fails to meet development goals

**T**HE UNITED Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals were set amid much fanfare in 2000. There were eight anti-poverty goals ranging from ending poverty and hunger to universal education and child and maternal health.

A target was set for these goals to be reached by 2015. In September the UN met to review progress towards these targets and what is needed to be done in the next five years.

The UN verdict was that progress "falls far short of what is needed" and the targets are unlikely to be met. Between 1990 and 2008, the mortality rate of children under five in developing countries declined only from 10% to 7.2% - far from the

target of a two-thirds reduction by 2015. Maternal mortality declined only from 480 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 450 deaths in 2005. The 2015 goal is closer to 120.

The developed capitalist countries agreed in 2000 to contribute 0.7% of GDP to development assistance but so far the United States, Germany, Italy and Japan have fallen far short of this. The US contributed 0.2%, the average was 0.3%; in total £20 billion short of what was promised. The effects of the recession and the threat of a further "double dip" recession in the US and Europe mean there can be no expectation that these figures will improve.

The background to the failure to meet these meagre attempts to re-

duce poverty has been the increase in food prices. According to the Economist prices have risen 17% in the last year and this is having a devastating effect on the poor.

Larry Elliot in the Guardian argues that these massive increases are due at least in part to hedge funds and financial speculators buying up farms in poor countries to profit from China's increasing reliance on imported food.

Far more progress would be made tackling poverty if these crooks and gangsters were brought to justice. Despite all the fine words from the world's most powerful politicians in New York, the UN is silent on the real causes.

John Sharpe

## Housing bosses' pay goes through the roof

**T**HE AVERAGE pay for a housing association chief executive is now £153,353. Some of them get much more; the Anchor Trust boss gets £290,000, for example. They also get big employers' pension contributions. The Places for People boss gets £263,663 plus £68,552 employers' pension contribution (Inside Housing 24/09/2010). No 'pensions affordability crisis' for them it seems!

Recently, housing minister Grant

Shapps attacked their pay as "immoral". Apparently he is shocked that 52 housing association bosses are paid more than the prime minister who gets £142,353.

Of course the PM gets lots of perks and all of this millionaires' cabinet are rich enough to see their parliamentary and ministerial pay as merely icing on the cake.

It is also true that senior bankers or bosses of building firms are paid many times the pay of an associa-

tion boss. For social housing tenants though - about half of whom are now housed by housing associations - these figures will seem truly obscene.

Housing associations, which have received huge amounts of public money in housing grants over the years should be taken into public ownership and put under the democratic control of workers, tenants and local communities.

Paul Kershaw

## Unison elections Socialists stand for a fighting and democratic trade union

**A**S COUNCILS announce savage cuts and council workers are given 90-day notices to prepare for the sack, trade unionists will be looking to their leaders to mount a determined battle to save all jobs and services.

Unison, which represents over 1.3 million workers, needs determined fighting leaders. The ballot to determine who should fill vacant seats on the union's national executive committee has started. Two members of the Socialist Party are standing.

Hugo Pierre is standing for the local government male seat. This seat is vacant because the previous incumbent, Glenn Kelly, has been banned from holding any positions in Unison following the witch-hunt of himself and three other Socialist Party members.

Many activists understand that Glenn and others have been attacked because they have opposed the strategy and tactics of the Unison leadership and argued for a fighting democratic union. The campaign to 'defend the four' has received huge support and is widely recognised by trade unionists in many other unions.

*Hugo Pierre is standing for the local government male seat.*

Glenn says: "I have known and campaigned alongside Hugo for many years. I am confident that he would be a fighting NEC member."

Hugo is the school members' convenor in Camden Unison and has organised successful industrial action against poverty pay amongst nursery nurses and teaching assistants. He has recently prevented the council from closing a school for deaf children. He has been involved with anti-racist campaigns locally and nationally.

John Malcolm is standing for the Northern region male seat. John is branch secretary for the Tees and Wear Valleys Healthcare branch.

Socialist Party supporters are also backing Kit Leary who is standing for the young members' seat.

**The ballot started on 27 September and ends on 22 October.**