**Unison Retired Members Forum**

**How did the forum start?**

The Forum began with the setting up of the Unison Retired Members Committee over 10+ years ago. It was made up of 16 members and was jointly chaired by Victor Murphy and Annie Nicholl . Over the years the Committee’s membership has continued to grow in numbers and so the Committee went from being a Committee to the Unison Retired Members Forum. Currently there is no cap on the numbers that can sit on the Forum. The Forum is made up of a variety of retired workers from Nursing, Catering, Portering, Education, Admin & Clerical, Domestics, etc. and we have 3 meetings that take place throughout the year. Today Unisons Retired Members Forum has 35 – 40 members sitting on it and is a very strong self-organised group in the region.

**The work programme for the year.**

Unisons Retired Members Forum has its own unique active work programme which is set out for the year and it takes a look at a wide range of issues affecting retired members and older people. The membership of the forum are very enthusiastic to get on with the business contained within the programme. The various portfolios contained in the programme look at the following issues:

* **Health & Social Care.**
* **Education Cuts.**
* **Pensions.**
* **Energy/Fuel Poverty.**
* **Domestic Rates.**
* **Corporation Tax.**
* **Transport.**
* **Community Safety.**
* **Building Relations with Youth.**

Delegates are elected by the members on the forum to take on each of the portfolios and they keep up to date with what is going on and in due course report back at each of the meetings held throughout the year. Delegates get an opportunity to be elected to go to National Delegate Conference, Unison Retired Members Conference, The National Pensioners Convention Conference (NPC) and the ICTU Biennial Conference. Delegates also get an opportunity to be elected on to a number of committees and organisations such as The National Retired Members, Retired Members Standing Orders, NI Regional, ICTU Retired Workers Committee Age Sector Platform (ASP) and the National Pensioners Convention (NPC). Again Delegates elected to attend these various functions, committees and conferences also report back and update the forum on the business that was discussed.

**Elections to Committees and Organisations.**

During the year the Retired Members Forum holds its AGM and it is from that, the delegates are elected and nominated on to the various committees and organisations where Unison has the right of representation and an input into business.

**Small brief on Age Sector Platform (ASP) and the National Pensioners Convention (NPC).**

Two of the most important groups in which retired members of Unison are involved in are **Age Sector Platform (ASP)** and **The National Pensioners Convention (NPC)**. **ASP** is a Northern Ireland charity which was established in 2008 to provide a strong, unified voice for older people. Over the years the organisation has grown steadily in size and reputation and today has links to over 200,000 older people (age60+) across NI. Its objectives are to:

* **Engage with older people, helping them to make their voice heard.**
* **Enable older people to advocate on their own behalf.**
* **Empower older people to change their lives for the better.**

The trustees of the organisation are all older people who collectively represent the broad spectrum of our beneficiaries and share their lived experience across the main issues and challenges facing older people. The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament (NIPP) is a signature project of ASP and was developed in 2011. The Parliament empowers older people to address the challenges facing them through direct engagement with the policy makers. This active participation helps to enhance social inclusion of older people. The Pensioners Parliament holds 11 local parliaments across NI and information collected from the parliaments is developed into motions which are passed at the 2 day parliament in Belfast.

The **NPC** is the principal organisation representing pensioners in the United Kingdom. It is made up of around 1,000 bodies representing 1.5 million members, organised into federal regional units. Its objective is "to promote the welfare and interests of all pensioners, as a way of securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement". The NPC was founded by former Transport and General Workers' Union trade union leader, Jack Jones in 1979. He served as its President until 2001, when he was succeeded by Rodney Bickerstaffe, who had been general secretary of UNISON. Frank Cooper is the current President, with Neil Duncan-Jordan as National Officer. The NPC organises rallies and lobbies of MPs, leads delegations to parliament and makes submissions to government on policies affecting older people. The Convention also stages an annual three-day Pensioners’ Parliament in Blackpool, where up to 2000 representatives discuss issues of concern and share ideas in an atmosphere of genuine friendship. The NPC also features regularly in both the local and national media and uses every opportunity to raise awareness of the issues that affect older people. One of the Convention’s priorities is to therefore influence public opinion and where appropriate, secure changes in government policy.