

Welcome!

P1: Serco members settle dispute
P2: Local Government pay
P3: News and offers
P4: Support in tough times

County Council elections

On Thursday 2nd May the County Council is up for election. This only happens once every four years and the outcome will have a profound effect on anyone who lives, works or studies in West Sussex. UNISON nationally is affiliated to the Labour Party. Here in West Sussex the County's Labour Party is standing on a platform of outright opposition to any further outsourcing and the devotion of staff time to outsourcing. It is also supporting the Living Wage, and pledged to work to restore the devastating cuts to Youth Services and Adult social care services. Whatever you do this Thursday, don't forget to use your vote.

Gove threatens TAs

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, has written to the 'School Teachers Review Body' asking it to review the rules around what teachers are responsible for in schools. Currently some tasks such as short term cover for teachers and admin tasks are reserved for teaching assistants. Removing this work could lead to these staff losing their jobs. UNISON is warning that plans to sack teaching assistants and ask teachers to pick up their work would turn the clock back on the improvements that have been made by TAs over recent years, and will only add more women to the UK's growing dole queues. UNISON is seeking an urgent meeting with Michael Gove over his potentially damaging plans. Read 'The Evident Value of Teaching Assistants' at unison.org.uk/acrobat/B6172.pdf

West Sussex Serco members settle pay dispute

UNISON West Sussex represents two thirds of staff in the West Sussex Contact Centre. The Contact Centre is the first point of contact for residents and businesses wanting to get in touch with the County Council. It deals with thousands of calls from the public each year, ranging from the reporting of potholes to enquiries over the allocation of school places. Serco plc run this service for the Council.

Protracted pay negotiations, ongoing since autumn 2012, between UNISON West Sussex and Serco plc failed to make a breakthrough. Serco's 'offer' to its staff for most of the negotiating period was 0%. A last minute offer by the employer was decisively rejected as insufficient by members.

UNISON members do not take industrial action lightly, but when all other avenues to make progress are closed it has to be considered. Members were balloted and on a 78% turnout the majority in favour of strike action was 90%.



This led to our members going on strike on 2nd April, which at that time was one of only two examples of industrial action being taken in the UK by UNISON's 1.3million members.

The strike itself was solid, with Branch members enthusiastically joining the two picket lines and enjoying a good-humoured morning, explaining to passers-by and Council staff what the issues at stake were. Council staff showed solidarity with the

/continued on page 3



Local Government (NJC) pay latest

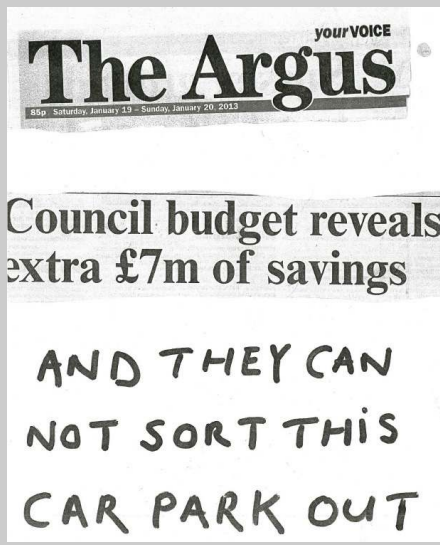
Members at our March AGMs heard detailed reports on the 0.6% pay offer, or 1% 'with strings' which UNISON had rejected. The employers have since come back with a pay offer of 1% across the board 'without strings'. UNISON's NJC Committee meets on 7th May to agree its recommendation on the offer for a Branch-led consultation with members which will follow. We will be in touch with all our Local Government members in the coming weeks.

Higher education - UNISON rejects 0.5%

Unions representing university workers, including UNISON, have rejected a 'disappointing' 0.5% offer and called on the employers to come back with a more serious suggestion. The unions said the offer is especially insulting given the recent pay increases that university bosses have enjoyed. The two sides are due to meet again on 8th May.

Horsham parking review

WSCC Managers are reviewing parking in County Hall North, Horsham due to the increasing difficulties the lack of spaces is causing staff. Local Rep Jeremy Webster is taking part in negotiations with management. Jeremy said, "The Branch is determined that a fair solution will be found to a problem which is not of staff's making. A survey will be issued by the Council to staff soon and we urge our members to take part in it."



News in brief

Facility cut confirmed

In the last edition of *Branch Lines*, we reported that the Conservative Cabinet were proposing to cut UNISON Branch facility time by 30%. Arguments put by Branch Officers that these cuts would not save money and were putting ideology before the evidence of what works fell on deaf ears. The cut took effect from 1st April, and the Branch office has been adjusted to allow us to meet the increasing needs of our members for advice and support.

Branch holds successful AGM

The Branch held its Annual General Meeting across three venues in March. Eighty members attended despite the snow which affected two of the meetings. Members heard presentations from workplace reps on a range of issues and discussed and took votes on the work of the Branch. The presentations included one from Sarah Maynard, a parent involved in West Sussex Academy Watch—the education campaign group.

Living Wage update

After meetings with Branch Officers and the local UNISON rep, Grace Eyre Foundation, which provides a range of support services to people with learning difficulties has agreed to become a fully accredited Living Wage employer. This means that the lowest rate of pay in the organisation is £7.45 and annual rises are determined by the Living Wage Foundation after the cost of living is properly accounted for. The latest living wage rise was 25pence—equivalent to 3.5%. Staff earning more than the Living Wage will receive a 2% rise.

United Learning pay claim

UNISON's national negotiators have submitted their cost of living pay claim to United Learning (which runs a number of Academy schools in West Sussex) for 2013/14. The claim is for 'a substantial increase to all support staff salaries...' and an 'increase in the UL minimum rate of pay to ensure that no member of UL support staff is paid less than the Living Wage - £7.45 outside of London. We have informed our UL reps and will keep members up-to-date with negotiations.

Basic Maths



UNISON WEST SUSSEX — RECRUIT A NEW MEMBER

If you recruit a new member to our branch, we will send you a £10 high street store voucher. Just make sure your name is included on the 'recruited by' section of the form/s we send you, and when your friends/colleagues return their completed membership forms to our office we will send the voucher/s straight to you. There's no limit to how many you can claim!

Please send me ___ [insert number] UNISON Application Pack/s to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Workplace: _____

Please return to: UNISON West Sussex, Central Attic, County Hall, West Street, Chichester PO19 1RQ.

Health, Safety and Welfare

The Branch is calling on its members to become Health & Safety Reps for their workplace. Increasing cuts to services ramp up workloads and stress on staff left behind. The Branch's trained Health & Safety Reps play a key role in tackling this agenda and preventing accidents.

200 jobs to go?

Newspaper reports suggest that up to 200 jobs could be lost from Central Sussex College in West Sussex due to financial mismanagement and funding shortfalls. UNISON Reps are on stand-by to support our members.

Kindle winners

UNISON West Sussex held a series of recruitment events in March. Joanne Brocken won our first prize of a Kindle Fire HD whilst Meridy Northcott, our runner-up, was sent £50 worth of shopping vouchers courtesy of Frizzell Car Insurance. Maggie Barker won the Kindle Fire HD at our AGM prize draw.

Join Octopus and win a car

UNISON's *There for you* charity (more details page 4) supports over 4,000 members each year. It helps to raise funds through its Octopus Lottery. If you sign up to Octopus before July 14th you could win a brand new car! And each month you could win cash prizes ranging in value up to £1,000. For details go to: unisonwestsussex.org.uk/latest-news

Don't like cricket? Or love it?

UNISON is pleased to offer a pair of first class County Championship tickets to a game of members' choice. This fantastic offer comes courtesy of LV Insurers who sponsor County Championship cricket. Go to the branch website for more details.

**ESSENTIAL
COVER IF YOU
WORK IN
PUBLIC
SERVICES**

West Sussex Serco members settle pay dispute continued from page 1

Branch's Serco members by visiting the picket line in their break, and passing lorries and cars honked their horns in loud support all morning, giving the pickets a real boost.

The day of action did not lead to a better offer immediately, so two further strike days were announced. At this point, Serco plc made an improved offer. Members were consulted and agreed to accept it. Details of the settlement are to be kept confidential at Serco's request and as part of the conditions of the settlement.

Branch Serco Rep Ian Harvey said, "I am proud our members have stood firm against a giant like

Serco. I am equally proud our union has stood with us and supported us so well. The last few weeks have demonstrated we are all in it together in our resolve to be treated fairly by these massive companies. Let's hope other groups like us can see what we can achieve when we stand together."

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin said, "Serco made a profit of £288million in 2012, up by 8%, and increased its dividends to stock market investors by 20% because it has been doing so well. The Chief Executive took home millions of pounds in salary, bonuses and share options. Yet our members, the majority of whom earn £14,600 for a 37 hour week, were expected to put up with 0%. That's not fair, and it pushes our members into 'poverty in work' and leaves them at risk of predatory groups like payday loan companies. When an employer refuses to be fair, our members do have other options, and our local experience here shows they can work."





West Sussex
Credit Union

safe saving sound borrowing

Support in tough times

No-one knows better than UNISON members that times are tough. And there are plenty of groups out there willing to take advantage of that, from loan sharks to pay-day loan companies who charge excessive rates of interest.

UNISON West Sussex is working with West Sussex Credit Union (WSCU) to encourage our members to kick-start a savings habit by opening a savings account and paying in regularly. WSCU is our recommended partner because it is working in our community of West Sussex to support people in financial difficulty by offering affordable loans. Money raised from savings is recycled in the local community, rather than contributing to profits in commercial banks. Many people have now made the decision to move away from the high street and save with the not-for-profit West Sussex Credit Union, knowing that their money is being used to save others from the clutches of loan sharks and other unscrupulous lenders.

Savers with WSCU have the benefit of an annual dividend—currently 1%, paid out on a six monthly basis—comparing favourably with high street instant access savings accounts. However, the dividend (or interest earned) is a drop in the ocean compared to the interest **saved** when you can deal with emergencies or sudden bills by dipping into savings rather than borrowing on your credit card, or even worse – taking out a pay-day loan.

Savings are 100% safe, protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. The credit union is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the PRA, just like any bank or building society. Savings accounts are accessible online or by telephone and you can withdraw money by asking for it to be paid into your bank account or just by requesting a cheque. To open a savings account, simply visit www.westsussexcreditunion.co.uk, and click on 'Save With Us'.

Saving with the credit union has benefits if you need to **borrow** money in an emergency too; existing savers attract preferential loan rates, competitive with mainstream lenders, meaning you don't have to be at the mercy of high cost lenders. Whether you are an existing saver or not, borrowers always save alongside their loan repayments. Everyone who takes out a loan pays a little extra and when the loan is paid off, hey presto – you have some savings!

Save As You Earn

If you work for West Sussex County Council you can set up regular savings directly from your salary. Because your employer can vouch for your ID, there is less paperwork to complete – just a simple online form, available from the credit union's website.

'There for you'

UNISON supports its members in a variety of other ways too, including through confidential advice and financial assistance in the form of grants. For example, we can help with sorting out finances, advise on benefits or put members in touch with another organisation that can help. A grant could be made, for example, to assist with household bills, ease debts or help with the cost of a much-needed break. If you are struggling through an unexpected crisis, or if the pressures of everyday life are getting to you, get in touch with the Branch Welfare Officer David O'Connor through the Branch office on 01243 777636. UNISON is the only trade union to offer a confidential advice and support service to its members and their families in the form of a registered charity.

there
for you
supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough



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