

In this edition:

Pay round-up—P.2
News in brief—P.2
Money saving benefits—P.3
Mutual concerns—P.4

Youth Services decimated

West Sussex Youth Services have been hit by a massive additional cut of £950K, on top of an already anticipated £700K. So £1.65M will be cut from April 2014, and this means 118 essential youth work jobs supporting our young people are to go. UNISON Branch Secretary Dan Sartin spoke against the cuts at the Select Committee meeting tasked with reviewing the proposals; this evidence is still available to watch at www.westsussex.public-i.tv

The cutbacks are short-sighted, damaging and will reduce opportunity and equality in the County. The cuts will cease all open access provision, so only youngsters already identified as vulnerable will be able to receive a service. Bespoke work done with minority groups such as travellers and gay young people has also been axed. The branch gave two media interviews to BBC South Today about the cuts.

Despite the evidence, Tory councillors at Select Committee voted together to push the cuts through, though one to his credit did unexpectedly vote against. Despite talk of listening to young people, it was noticeable that no young people were invited to give evidence, and a proper public consultation was refused.

UNISON has supported its members throughout the formal consultation on redundancies, securing some changes to the proposals and improvements for a number of individuals. To see the Branch's formal consultation response, please get in touch.

Capita: the first year

Multinational firm Capita plc won the contract to supply West Sussex County Council 'back office' functions for ten years from October 2012. Since then, the relationship with UNISON did not get off to an auspicious start. A number of consultations were started suddenly, some on redundancy, without warning and in UNISON's view three of them were in danger of being handled unlawfully. In each of those instances, Capita rode back and improved its approach after UNISON representations. However, UNISON members had experienced better when employed by WSCC, had no confidence in the processes Capita was using, and were under significant additional stress because of them.

UNISON has now completed negotiation on a set of 'best practice principles' for Capita and UNISON to work to which should improve matters. The company has promised to abide by this good practice unless there is an over-riding business need which makes it impossible. The Branch is not unrealistic or unreasonable, and knows there can be times when such circumstances occur. But we will look for objective evidence when this happens. Disorganisation will not be reason enough.

In the last year we have seen Capita redundancies in Health & Safety (3), HR & Payroll (5) and I.T Support (16). It was particularly disappointing to see so many jobs go from I.T. Support, 8 of which were jobs Capita moved from West Sussex to Derby. This appears to make a mockery of the Council's own commitment to support the local economy; exporting jobs does not help local people, families or businesses.

Recently the Branch concluded negotiations on the TUPE transfer of 7 staff from Capita to the new mutual, 'West Sussex Music'. A 'measure' proposed was to move the staff to a new office in rural Petworth, a journey which the four UNISON members were unable to make. The employers' first position was that there was no alternative for the staff but to move to Petworth. After UNISON support, pointing out the unlawfulness of this position, two UNISON members were redeployed to alternative posts in Capita, and two UNISON members who could not be redeployed received redundancy payments. The three non-members completed their move to Petworth.

The Branch has also been busy supporting disabled members who have not received the I.T. support they require to do their jobs in an acceptable timeframe. This support is called 'Reasonable Adjustments' in law. A grievance supported by UNISON has recently been upheld and our member received a full apology and a promise that processes would be improved.

In sum, it has been a tricky and challenging first year, but we hope for much better in the next 12 months. UNISON Reps Mervyn Sams, Ian Harvey, Abi Holdsworth, Jamie Thomas and Kim Unwin have done a great job supporting union members. If you would like to join UNISON's team of 'Capita Reps', please get in touch with the Branch office on 01243 777636.

Pay round-up

WORTHit

NJC Local Government

After discussion at its Branch Committee, UNISON West Sussex believed the most appropriate pay claim for 2014/15 would be for 'a minimum increase of £1 an hour on scale point 5 to achieve the Living Wage and the same flat rate increase on all other scale points'. Most other UNISON branches agreed with us, and this pay claim for 2014/15 has now been submitted by all three local government unions to the employers' side.

- Local government pay is the lowest in the public sector – from top to bottom of the pay spine;
- Council reserves have increased by 20% since 2010-11 while NJC workers' pay has fallen by 18%;
- Local government workers spend 50 pence of every £1 they earn in their local economies. A £1 an hour increase would boost the economy.

The union believes this is affordable and achievable. But it needs the support of its members. UNISON will be launching a pay campaign shortly and the Branch will be in touch with our West Sussex members so we can play our part.

Higher Education

On 31st October, UNISON members alongside UCU, the college lecturers union, took industrial action at Chichester University over a 1% pay offer by the employer.

The HE financial position is healthy, with a surplus of over £1 billion recorded in the last financial accounts 2011/12. The sector has the money to make an improved pay offer that fairly reflects the contribution of staff providing services to students. The need for fair pay for higher education employees is urgent—with incomes squeezed to breaking point through a combination of rising prices, high energy bills, increased housing costs, pay cuts, and reduced welfare benefits.



Capita—West Sussex Contact Centre

UNISON West Sussex retains collective pay bargaining rights for this group of staff. After their previous local strike over pay for 2012/13 which resulted in an acceptable settlement, after negotiation Capita made an offer of 2.5% to settle the 2013/14 claim. The Branch conducted a consultative ballot with members, who voted to accept the offer.

Individual supports

The Branch successfully resolved hours of working for a school-based member who needed to take unpaid leave so that she could also work as principal carer for a disabled child. We also challenged the refusal of a parish council to allow flexible working for a member returning from maternity leave by identifying that the statutory procedure had not been followed and the employer was potentially breaking the law. Suitable adjustments to working arrangements have now been made.

News in brief

DV advice

Did you know that some UNISON Reps are trained to advise on Domestic Violence issues? Since our last edition of *Branch Lines* we have supported a female member in this position. For more info, please contact the Branch office.

Insurance increase

UNISON's free personal accident insurance and death benefit cover has increased to £5,000. To take out yours, visit www.unisonprotect.com

Employment Tribunal (ET) change

In an attempt to stop ordinary working people from seeking justice in the workplace, the Government has changed the law so that it can cost you up to £1,200 merely to bring your case before an ET. UNISON members get this new fee covered free of charge. The union has taken the Government to the High Court by Judicial Review. Watch this space.

Councillors increase allowances (...for themselves)

Incredibly, West Sussex Councillors have voted to give themselves an inflation-busting 10% rise to their mileage allowances, along with a 2.7% increase to their subsistence allowances and a 1% increase to basic allowances. The Branch lobbied Councillors ahead of the increase, pointing out the insensitivity of such a move at the present time, and that scarce resources could be used instead to save jobs. The Branch Secretary gave interviews to the media also, but sadly the Conservative group voted it through.

Welfare support

The Branch has its own welfare fund, in addition to the national union's welfare fund. We support members who are having financial problems. This summer we have supported a retired UNISON member who had cancer, and a member who was left with no income when her employer Capita deducted an overpayment without warning. Our member was advised by her manager to approach the local Citizens Advice Bureau for an emergency crisis loan. Instead we rushed an emergency welfare payment to our member. We are supporting her with a Post-Employment Grievance now that she has left Capita.

Age of transfer

A public consultation on 'age of transfer' is now underway in schools in Worthing. UNISON will be in touch with its members shortly to advise and offer help.

The heat is on

UNISON members will have noticed an improvement in heating arrangements in the County Hall campus in Chichester. After problems last year that saw members wearing gloves and bring hot water bottles to work, Branch Health & Safety Reps have worked with facilities managers to secure an improvement.

A series of works were completed to the campus heating system. Boiler maintenance was deferred to later in the summer to ensure that they were ready for 'switch on'. The system was flushed and filters replaced, and a significant amount of sludge was removed, which would have prevented full flow of hot water through the radiators.

'Switch on' was undoubtedly smoother this year. Get in touch with the Branch office if you have any remaining concerns about the heating system.

Thank you my UNISON

Times are tough, but UNISON does make a difference. Here are a selection of comments the office has received since the summer:

"Thank you for the support during my sick leave episode. You were kind, patient and attentive at a time when it was very much needed; and the relationship with my manager benefited from your expertise."

"I am delighted with the outcome and would like to thank you/UNISON for the support offered with this."

"Thank you for all your help, I'm not sure where we would be without you."

"Thank you for all your help. A lot of Ex West Sussex staff are affected by this. I am proud to say that I am a member of Unison."

"I just wanted to thank you for your terrific support during the last few months. We couldn't have reached the successful outcomes we did without UNISON's backing. Definitely worth the subs!"

"It's such a help to have you and unison around, because I was desperate and on the point of resigning. Thank you again."

"Thank you all for the help I received in my recent case. The result could not have been better. I would like to thank X for her help and exceptional skills in dealing with my head office."

UNISON Plus

This edition of *Branch Lines* features a few of the ways you can save money through your UNISON membership.

Help with the weekly shop

One such scheme is the UNISON Prepaid Plus MasterCard. This is not a credit or debit card, it's a prepaid card, so you load it before you use it. And you can only spend the amount you have on it, helping put you in control of your money. There are no credit checks, and it's free to apply, though there is a £1.95 monthly administration fee. Top-ups over £200 are free by direct debit. There are charges for other methods. You receive between 3% and 6% cashback on purchases in shops such as Sainsbury's, Asda, Debenhams, Toys R Us, Halfords, Bella Italia and many, many, more. There is a £10 welcome bonus offer when you reach £25 cashback. For more information visit www.unisonprepaid.com



Online rewards

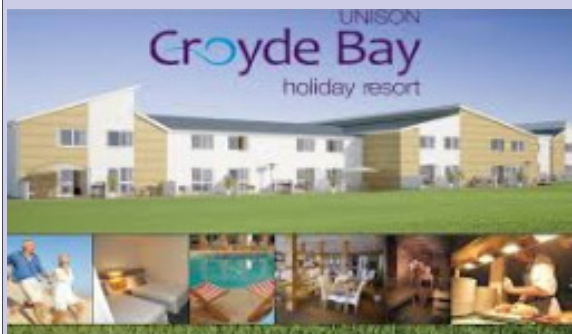
If you prefer to shop online a good alternative to the pre-paid card is 'UNISON Rewards'. This simple online service allows you to shop at thousands of online retailers and get cash back plus discounts and special offers. You can register for free at www.unisonrewards.com To use the service, you simply click through UNISON Rewards to the retailer and buy online as you would do normally. Cashback will then be added to your account and paid to you free of charge. Tesco, Vodafone, Play.com and B&Q are just some of the retailers signed up to the service.

Financial advice

Lighthouse financial advisers are on hand to give our members specialist advice on property, savings and public sector pension schemes. Call 0800 085 8590 for more information or visit www.lighthousefa.co.uk/affinity_groups/unison.aspx

Just want to get away from it all?

Did you know UNISON operates its own holiday resort in Croyde Bay? Situated on the beautiful north Devon coast, you can choose from a hotel, self-catering cottages or half board chalets. There's a huge 50% discount for low paid members of UNISON, and a 15% discount for all members. There are also



fabulous last minute offers at various times of the year to take advantage of. The resort won a certificate of excellence from Trip Advisor this year and is ranked in the top 10% of Worldwide

Traveller Feedback. Download a brochure today and you could WIN a FREE holiday! www.croydeunison.co.uk

Personal injury

Every UNISON member is entitled to use the union's free personal injury legal service through the union's solicitors Thompsons. They will often take cases that claim companies and 'no-win no fee' solicitors will not. Also, they don't take any cut of damages awarded. This is one of the many benefits of your membership.

Last month, a member of the West Sussex branch received £19,000 from the union's personal injury service. He was moving a service user on a vehicle without appropriate equipment. The employer's insurers refused to negotiate, so Thompsons started court proceedings for our member. After this vindication, our Health and Safety Reps are taking up the relevant H&S issues with managers.

Privatisation—who supports it?

Less and less of us. A YouGov poll published in October found more support than ever for publicly run services: 68% want energy companies renationalised, 66% want rail in public ownership, and 84% want the NHS returned fully to public provision. Sadly, the County Council's 'Future Council' programme is out of step with the times and commits the Council to finding 'partners' to work with whenever it can. UNISON will stand up to this madness and will advocate tirelessly for accountable public services run for public benefit, not private profit. If you agree with us, join us as one of our 100+ UNISON Workplace Reps.

Reasonable 'Reasonable Adjustments'?

If disabled UNISON members are having problems securing Reasonable Adjustments from your employer please get in touch with the Branch office so that we can take this up. If you do have a disability, such as a visual impairment, dyslexia and so on, your employer must take steps to ensure you have the correct equipment installed to enable you to fulfil your role at no cost to yourself.

Support for Adult Social Work members

Members working alongside health service colleagues in Mental Health teams are facing increasing workloads and pressures, so UNISON conducted a joint survey with our sister branch in Sussex Partnership Trust. We are now engaged in discussions with the Trust to ensure that our members are properly supported and not overwhelmed with work, and have secured some improvements to staff resources, with the promise of more to come.

UNISON Reps Wendy Wilson, Di Knight, and Karen Daubney have been working hard to put members' views forward on Adult Services Redesign. The first phase—change to the management structure—begins shortly.

Plans for mutuals should not be 'forced through'

Council plans to outsource public service provision to 'staff mutuals' should be subject to a ballot of employees and not be 'forced through' against their will, Co-operatives UK and the TUC have warned. The two umbrella groups – representing co-operatives and unions – say that the views of workers should not be ignored in any drive to mutualise services. TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said "The mutuals that are being formed often don't meet the democratic and open criteria of genuine co-operatives. In fact, many are simply privatised services under the cover of mutuals."

To date, around 70 public service mutuals have been formed, two of which are in West Sussex. The TUC and Co-operatives UK are concerned that not enough public sector mutuals offer employees a genuine voice in the formation or the running of the new business. This is a concern the West Sussex branch of UNISON would echo given our experience with 'Aspire' (Adult Education) and 'West Sussex Music' (Music tuition in schools).

The TUC and Co-operatives UK have signed up to a joint set of best practice guidelines setting out the conditions that should be in place to ensure that public service mutuals are based on employee support and offer genuine employee ownership and representation. West Sussex has similar in place, negotiated by the Branch with the Council. If you hear talk of a 'mutual' in your service, please contact the Branch office immediately for advice.

Negotiations with Aspire

Following organisational changes at Aspire Sussex, UNISON has been supporting individual members in getting the best out of a difficult situation, including changes from term-time only working to whole year, changes in location and changes to hours which have precipitated redundancies. Following the formal consultation, some additional staff hours have been put back into the organisation.

UNISON has been there from the beginning to ensure that members at Aspire can have their say about the future of the organisation, although we remain very concerned about the way in which outsourced services are set up as 'staff mutual' organisations, and will be having further discussions with senior Council officers.

Negotiations Officer Brian Walter and workplace reps Linda Wilson and Karen Polie are involved in supporting our UNISON members through this difficult time. Rep Christina Ruso has decided to leave the organisation following the changes, rather than return from maternity leave and we send our thanks and best wishes to her.

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 written clearly on the back 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: _____