



UNISON: the public service union
Central Attic, County Hall
West Street, Chichester
West Sussex PO19 1RQ
Tel: (01243) 777636
Fax: (01243) 382195
E-Mail: office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk
Branch Secretary: Dan Sartin

If calling ask for:

or email:

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

February 25th 2015

Dear member,

UNISON West Sussex – Branch Annual General Meeting

I would like to invite you to the Branch's Annual General Meeting for 2015. This year we will be holding our AGM over three dates and venues, and I hope you will be able to make one of them.

Thursday 19th March, Conference Room 4, Centenary House, Worthing, BN13 2QB
Monday 23rd March, Bodiam Room, County Hall North, Horsham, RH12 1XH
Tuesday 24th March, Committee Room 3, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ

Our guest speaker this year, at all three AGM meetings, is Andy Holt. Andy is an independent researcher the Branch has contracted to investigate the West Sussex Capita contract, its service quality and impact on staff.

We will have a sandwich buffet available. Please let us know which AGM you plan to attend by emailing office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk or calling 01243 777636 as it will help us judge the catering order.

Enclosed with this AGM mailing are the following:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of 2014 AGM
3. List of your Branch Officers and Workplace Reps for 2015/16
4. Honoraria payments
5. The branch Annual Report for 2014/15.

I look forward to seeing you in March.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dan Sartin' with a long, sweeping underline.

Dan Sartin
Branch Secretary

UNISON West Sussex

Annual General Meetings

**19 March, Worthing
23 March, Horsham
24 March, Chichester**

12.30-2.00pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome from Branch Chair
2. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 10, 17 and 24 March 2014, and matters arising (ENCLOSED)
3. Approval of Branch Officers and Workplace Representatives for 2015/16 (ENCLOSED)
4. Branch Finance and Accounts for 2011/14
 - 4.1. To approve the accounts (TO BE TABLED)
 - 4.2. To agree honoraria payments (ENCLOSED)
5. Annual Report (ENCLOSED)
6. Question and Answer Session (Questions can be asked at the meeting, or if you prefer you can email/post them to us in advance.)
7. Presentation by Andy Holt, independent researcher, on the Branch's project to examine the West Sussex Capita contract.
8. Question and Answer Session
9. Close of meeting.

UNISON West Sussex

Minutes of the Aggregate Annual General Meetings held on Monday 10th, 17th and 24th March 2014 in Worthing, Horsham and Chichester.

Present: Graham Anderson (Branch Chair), Ian Harvey (Deputy Chair), Daniel Sartin (Branch Secretary) and 94 members in total.

In attendance: Sarah McGreal (Regional Officer), Steve Brazier (Regional Manager) [Worthing only], James Smith (Regional Officer) [Chichester Only], Margaret Guest (Guest Speaker).

Apologies: Heather Massey, Malcolm Spiers.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Regional Officers and guest speaker.

2. Minutes of the Aggregate Annual General Meetings held on 11th, 12th and 13th March 2013

Resolved: The minutes of the AGMs held on 11th, 12th and 13th March were approved as a correct record.

3. Approval of Branch Officers and Representatives for 2013/14

It was noted that there were current vacancies for the positions of Equalities (Women), Equalities (LGBT), Lifelong Learning and Education. Any interested members should contact the Branch Secretary, Branch Chair or Office.

Resolved: Nominations for Branch Officers and Representatives were approved.

4. Branch Finance and Accounts for 2013

4.1 The Branch Secretary presented the Treasurer's report and it was noted that at the end of the year there was a surplus of income over expenditure of just over £12K, due to a vacancy gap – the Membership Administrator could not be replaced due to the rollout of the new national UNISON database. This increased the amount held in Reserves but it would be spent down over the next two years with planned expenditure on Branch staff in order to maintain support for individual members and during the many collective reorganisations anticipated in the coming three years.

Resolved: the accounts for 2013 were approved.

4.2 The AGM was asked to approve an honoraria payment to Jennie Barrett for the sum of £2988 in recognition of the work she does in her own time. Also a sum of £250 to Heather Massey in recognition of the hard work she did prior to the removal of the Senior Schools' Representative facility time by WSCC.

Resolved: Honoraria payments were approved for Jennie Barrett and Heather Massey.

4.3 The AGM was asked to approve the move of £7,500 to the Branch Industrial Action Fund as it was anticipated that there would be an increased need for this to support individuals taking action in support of pay claims, and if members decided on industrial action as a result of outsourcing and changes to terms and conditions.

4.4 A member asked if the funding was unused if it could be reallocated. The Branch Secretary said this can be done at future AGMs.

Resolved: It was agreed to move £7,500 to the Branch Industrial Action Fund.

5. Annual Report

The Branch Secretary referred to the written report which had been sent to all attendees.

Membership has increased by 1.8%, despite reductions in employers' staffing due to public sector cuts, and the impact of outsourcing. The Branch Secretary emphasised that it was essential to keep recruitment high and he asked all present to encourage non-members to join and that he would be happy to attend any team meetings to explain the benefits of UNISON membership.

It was noted that there had been a 30% cut to consolidated facility time made by WSCC. The number of Workplace Representatives had increased. The Branch Secretary asked for anyone interested in becoming a rep to let him know as there is always a need for more workers to fulfil this role, particularly at the present time.

The Branch Secretary showed the AGM the new website which had been launched in February.

He reported that there had been a considerable amount of Collective work undertaken by the Branch in 2013, such as supporting staff through the restructuring of Youth Services and Adults' Services, as well as continuing to support a large number of individual cases, both formal and informal. The Branch had been involved in a number of media campaigns, and had won an award in recognition of this work.

The Branch Secretary reported that that there was very likely to be a ballot on NJC pay this year and Steve Brazier confirmed that the Employers' side had not yet made any offer.

The Branch Chair endorsed the Branch Secretary's thanks to Workplace Representatives and Branch staff for the work they had undertaken during 2013.

Resolved: to approve the Annual Report.

6. Question and Answer Session

A question was raised about facility time and the Branch Secretary explained the difference between *Consolidated* and *Unconsolidated* time.

A member wished to know how the industrial action hardship fund worked in practice. The Branch Secretary explained the process and confirmed that this would be advertised to members in advance of any industrial action, if use of the fund was approved by the Branch Committee. If the Branch's funds run out, or indeed at any time, we can make a request to the South East Region's Industrial Action Hardship fund. This was done during the West Sussex Contact Centre SERCO strike.

A member wished to thank Mervyn Sams for all his hard work as a Capita Rep.

7. Presentation by Margaret Guest, UNISON Retired member and Chair of the *Don't Cut Us Out West Sussex* campaign.

Margaret Guest explained the organisation's role which campaigns on behalf of vulnerable people, including for the jobs of those providing services, and the impact of continuing cuts on services.

The Branch Chair thanked Margaret for an informative and thought provoking talk.

After questions from members the meeting was drawn to a close.

UNISON West Sussex 2015/16

Branch Officers

Position/Officer	Name and Service	Telephone
Chair	Ian Harvey, Capita	01243 642330
Vice Chair	Sarah Cawston, Children's Services	01903 839987
Branch Secretary	Daniel Sartin, UNISON Office	01243 777636
Deputy Branch Secretary	Karen Daubney, UNISON Office	01243 777636
Treasurer	Jennie Barrett, Adults' Services	01243 777636
Welfare	David O'Connor, Children's Services	01243 642446
Equalities, Women	Vacant	
Equalities, LGBT	Vacant	
Equalities, Disabled	Robert Hayes, Children's Services	01243 642459
Equalities, BME	Jules Wilson, Youth Offending Team	01293 610718
Health and Safety	Clive Coleman, Democratic Services	033022 22527
Health and Safety	Chris Barrett, Infrastructure	01243 777516
Health and Safety	Karen Daubney, UNISON Office	01243 777636
Lifelong Learning	Mervyn Sams, Office Services	033022 27965
Education	Mervyn Sams, Office Services	033022 27965
Environment	Julie Bolton, Strategic Planning	01243 756888
Communications	Vacant	
Membership	Vacant	
Labour Link	Sarah Cawston, Children's Services	01903 839987
Young Members	Taome Gardner, Children's Services	033022 23580
International	David Hammond, Chichester College	01243 786321
Retired Members	Ruby Cox	01243 777636
Pensions Champion	Mark Taylor, Strategic Planning	01243 777636

Workplace Reps

WSSC Children's Services		
Heather Andersson	Littlehampton Children and Family Centre	01903 276840
Mike Behan	Referral & Assessment Team, Crawley Library	01293 572404
Joanna Bish	Stepping Stones Children and Family Centre	07710 494360
David Bloxham	Disability and Specialist Services, Cissbury Lodge	07919 883770
Sarah Cawston	SEN Team, Centenary House	01903 839987
Alison Collins	Children's Services, Centenary House	01903 270129
Glenys Creese	Horsham Nursery School Children & Family Centre	033022 28841
Karen Johnston	Fostering Recruitment Team, County Hall North	01403 229577
Wendy Jones	SEN Assessment Team, County Hall	033022 25145
David O'Connor	Older Children Looked After and Care, Durban House	033022 27209
Sean O'Donnell	Parkfield Children & Family Centre	01903 270412

Jules Wilson	West Green Youth Centre	033022 28841
Paul Windsor	Children's Safeguarding Unit, County Hall North	033022 23764
WSCC Adult's Services		
Melanie Campbell	The Pines, Durrington	07985 224267
Lorna Cornett	Coastal Enterprises, Worthing	01903 239460
Karen Daubney	The Rowans, Worthing	01903 218022
Mary Davies	Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	01293 582202
Matt Fairclough	CTPLD Western, Durban House	033022 28776
Annie Flack	Glen Vue, East Grinstead	01293 885156
Carole Hillier	The Chestnuts, Bognor Regis	01243 841708
Diana Knight	Independent Living Team, East Row	03302 228292
Penny Marks-Billson	Regaining Independence Service, New Tyne	033022 28087
Gary Matthews	Older Person's Mental Health, Horsham	033022 24286
David Randall	Burnside Centre, Burgess Hill	01444 232786
Miranda Shute	New Tyne Resource Centre	01903 277414
Annie Thorndike	CTPLD North, County Hall North	033022 28748
Nadia Weston	Coastal Enterprises, Worthing	01903 239460
Wendy Wilson	Older Person's Mental Health, Crawley Library	07515 052331
WSCC Other		
Chris Barrett	Parking Strategy Team, Northleigh	01243 777256
Julie Bolton	Environment & Heritage, Northleigh	033022 26446
Clive Coleman	Legal and Democratic Services, County Hall	033022 22527
Jo Cooke	Volunteer Development Team, County Hall	033022 23891
Vanessa Cummins	School Organisation & Development, The Grange	033022 23046
Tina Green	Goring Library	01903 244300
Paula Herbert	Legal Services, County Hall	033022 22719
Robert Mcleod	Caretaking & Premises Support, Workplace at Home	03302 222829
Julia Osborn	Regulatory Services, Crawley Register Office	01243 642122
Stuart Parrotte	Transport, Drayton Depot	01243 771787
Clare Snoad	Records Management, Chichester Record Office	01243 753613
Tim Stanton	Crawley Library	01293 651744
Judith Taylor	Public Health, The Grange	033022 23601
WSCC Schools		
Karen Anssari	St Andrew's CE Boys' High School	01903 237259
Chris Armstead	St Anthony's School	01243 785965
Samantha Arnold	Felpham Community College	01243 785965
Patricia Barrett	Kingslea Primary School	01403 254282
Jan Blagden	St Margate's CE Primary School	01903 719263
Alexandra Blanchard	Chesswood Middle School	01903 204141
Tracey Clift	Heene CEP School	01903 201386
Nicky Cooksley	St Paul's Catholic College	01444 873898
Marilyn Cox	Field Place First School	01444 873898
Petra Davies	Maidenbower Infant School	01293 408887

Chris Digan	Holy Trinity Secondary School	01293 423690
Carole Doherty	Turners Hill Primary	01342 71660
Stella Hamilton	Manor Green College	01293 520351
Heather Massey	Lyndhurst First School	01903 235390
Polly McDonald	Oathall Community College	01444 417945
Becky Roberts	Manor Green College	01293 520351
Deborah Sanders-Fox	Fordwater School	01243 782475
Amanda Shortiss	Oakmeeds Community College	01444 241691
Gary Stepney	Glebe Primary School	01273 592163
Peter Thompson	The Forest School	01403 261086
Clare Weare	Palatine Primary School	01903 242835
Academies		
Jackie Bean	Chichester High School for Boys	01243 787691
Barbara Black	Ormiston Six Villages Academy	01243 546800
Sue Chant	The Littlehampton Academy	01903 711120
Laura Child	Thomas Bennett Community College	01293 526255
Joanne Dicaprio	Broadfield East Infant School & Nursery	01293 406182
Angela Elliott	Shoreham Academy	01273 274100
Natasha Ellis	The Oaks Primary School	01293 527473
Gary Fletcher	The Littlehampton Academy	01903 711120
Debbie Gillies	Bewbush Primary School	01293 527473
Kenneth Mitchell	Chichester High School for Girls	01243 787691
Diane Paquette	Midhurst Rother College	01730 812451
Lorraine Solti	The Regis School	01243 871010
Sue Sykes-Little	The Academy Selsey	01243 602558
Amanda Tattersall	The Globe Primary Academy	01903 854970
Debra Thompson	The Littlehampton Academy	01903 711120
Further Education		
Keith Faber	Central Sussex College	084515 50043
Karen Fisher	Northbrook College	08451 556060
David Hammond	Chichester College	01243 786321
Harry Vine	Central Sussex College	08451 550043
Brett Walford	Northbrook College	08451 556060
Higher Education		
Chris Anderson	University of Chichester	01243 816000
Aileen Arthur	University of Chichester	01243 816000
Neil Bryant	University of Chichester	01243 816000
Felicity Taylor	University of Chichester	01243 816000
Tracy Vine	University of Chichester	01243 816000
Other Employers		
Stephen Bell	NViro, University of Chichester	01243 774094
Anne Bone	South Downs National Park Authority	030030 31053
Kenneth Godfrey	Stonepillow	01293 551627

Catherine Goldsmith	Grace Eyre Foundation	01273 201900
Ian Harvey	Capita, Durban House	01243 642330
Julie Hawkes	Essex Cares	01243 642427
Abigail Holdsworth	Capita, Durban House	01243 642330
Catherine Hughes	Aspire Sussex	01243 871010
Ian McConnell	South Downs National Park Authority	030030 31053
Karen Polie	Aspire Sussex	01243 850710
Stuart Robertson	Outreach 3 Way	030030 39032
Mervyn Sams	Capita, County Hall Chichester	033022 27965
Briony Stilliard	Aspire Sussex	01243 850711
Kim Unwin	Capita, County Hall North	033022 29112

Agenda Item 4.2

Honoraria Payments

UNISON's procedures require Branches to approve honoraria payments at their AGMs. The payments are then made direct to the individuals concerned by Head Office, with deductions made for National Insurance and tax. The first step is for any payments to be discussed at a Branch Committee meeting and those approved are then submitted to the AGM for final approval.

Our Branch's practice over many years has been to agree a percentage of subscription income (currently 2.25%) which is included in the branch budget and allocated by the Branch Committee to those Officers and Reps who have made a significant contribution to branch activity in their own time. Last year payments were made to the Branch Treasurer Jennie Barrett (£2,988) and to Heather Massey, former Senior Schools Officer (£250).

In the case of the Branch Treasurer it has been the practice to regularly pay an honorarium as this officer is not provided with facility time and has to complete the accounts and other associated work at evenings, weekends and lunchtimes. With a branch budget in the region of £150,000 this is a considerable workload.

Proposals for 2015

In order to conform with the rules, the Branch Committee, having discussed the matter at its meeting on 14 January 2015, recommends to the AGM that the following honoraria be paid in recognition of extensive input to Branch activities in the individual's own time (in respect of the Branch Treasurer) and recognition payments for their outstanding contribution to two Workplace Reps who have left the Branch due to working for another local authority:

- Jennie Barrett, Branch Treasurer, a payment of £3,054.
- Keir Fuller, Workplace representative, a payment of £150.
- Jeremy Webster, Workplace representative, a payment of £150.

Dan Sartin
Branch Secretary
February 25th 2015

Membership

Membership has again made another welcome net gain. This is very good news considering the staff headcount of the major employer, West Sussex County Council, has fallen as public sector cuts continue to bite hard.

Full members:	5,348 (net gain of 2.0%)
Unemployed members:	20
Retired members:	751
Total members:	6,119

This net gain of 2.0% follows last year's net increase of 1.8%. UNISON is the largest trade union in the country when measured by the number of paying members, and UNISON West Sussex is the largest branch of any trade union in our county.

Retired membership shows a decrease of 53 members, though this is due to our increased activity with Retired members (see below). This activity results in further discovery of deceased members' records on our database which are being removed.

The reduction of unemployed members from 47 to 20 is due to an administrative clean up. Members take out unemployed membership usually because they have been dismissed and require our support in a subsequent appeal or Employment Tribunal. Unemployed membership of UNISON lasts two years, and we have removed longer-standing unemployed members accordingly.

Our total membership has increased, but the key membership figure is that for Full members. This figure reflects our health as a branch and there is a correlation between that figure and our ability to bargain for members successfully. The more members we have, the more we can achieve for you. Please encourage non-members to join.

2014 has been notable for the number of non-members who have joined with pre-existing issues they want support with. Trade unions are not cheap solicitor services for individuals who suddenly find themselves in trouble at work, and the Branch office deals with such enquiries appropriately and within the rules of the union in order to protect the position of loyal members who do pay their subscriptions.

Communications

Our new Branch website was launched on February 4th 2014 at www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk and has received a total of 21,132 visits from launch to December 31st 2014. It works across tablets and smartphones, and 29% of all visitors use those platforms to view our website.

The Branch was successful in applying for Regional funding to re-vamp and re-launch our newsletter 'Branch Lines'. Electronic copies are archived at: <http://unisonwestsussex.org.uk/category/pdf-newsletters/> Feedback from members has been positive, and we hope it will inform, educate and entertain our members about the wide range of work the Branch undertakes for them and their families, as well as recording our successes for members in what are undoubtedly the worst times ever in local government.

The project was undertaken because the Branch Secretary does not have the time required to do justice to the communications we need as a Branch to keep our members up-to-date. If the project proves useful over the course of the year we will seek an extension, prior to considering how best to mainstream the activity into business as usual.

Reps

We have 118 workplace Reps and they continue to do a sterling job for the Branch recruiting new members, distributing information, supporting members with their issues or signposting them to the Branch office, and acting as a spokesperson within their workplace. 21 new Reps joined the Branch in 2014, many of these at the time of the NJC pay dispute. We welcome them all. Branch Officers also play an important role either through their stewardship of the Branch or by developing and utilising their expertise in particular areas. Thanks go to them for their hard work throughout 2014.

37 Reps undertook 57 training courses during 2014, ranging from 'Reorganisation & Redundancy' to 'Developing Representations skills'.

If you could be a Rep for your workplace, contact the Branch office to find out more.

Retired members

Our Retired Members Secretary has re-launched our Retired Members group successfully during 2014 and it has now met a number of times. The group no longer has a social focus, but has been set up avowedly with a political purpose – to assist UNISON members in work by campaigning for public services and against the failed austerity agenda. Retired members have been involved with a number of local campaigns and have seen letters published in the press this year. Any retiring member of the Branch can join the Retired Members' group, whether they wish to be active or not, by paying a one-off lifetime fee of £15. This entitles you to continue to receive the non-work benefits that the union offers, and keeps you in touch with the union through Branch emails and national newsletters.

The wider union

The Branch has engaged in the Regional South East tier of our union and a number of Branch Officers have been successful when seeking election to various Regional Committees. We therefore exert influence on the strategies adopted by the regional union and how it prioritises work and allocates resources. The Branch has continued in 2014 to exert influence on national agendas. The 2014 Local Government Conference in Brighton was notable for our Branch in that our Motion on facility time was passed unanimously. The Branch Secretary also participated in the National Delegate Conference debate on Branch Resources, speaking from the platform in what eventually saw the national leadership position defeated on a knife-edge vote where less than 1% of the vote determined the outcome. The Branch is engaged in the wider politics of the union and is seeking to improve how the union responds to the challenges before it. As such we will be attending the 2015 Conferences with a similar intention to speak to our own motions.

Collective work

As ever, UNISON works hard behind the scenes to secure the best outcome for members prior to formal consultations. Consultation machinery and processes differ by employer, but to give an example, UNISON Branch Officers and Reps are involved in the following regular and ongoing forums to represent your views within West Sussex County Council: Chief Officer meetings; Cabinet member meetings; Children's Services meetings;

Adults' Services meetings; Meetings with the Head of Human Resources; Staff Joint Committees (six Councillors plus UNISON Reps); Health & Safety Steering Groups.

Alongside all this 'machinery' for negotiation and involvement, the Branch is involved in specific redesign projects and pre-consultation meetings, giving us an opportunity to shape proposals where this is possible. When there are specific proposals for reorganisation, the Branch is involved in supporting its members from the outset during those formal consultations. The Branch has been involved in a huge number of service redesigns, redundancy situations, location changes, grade changes, TUPE transfers, and other changes to terms and conditions during 2014, impacting on many hundreds of members. At any one time we have around 20 collective situations to deal with.

We have seen significant changes made by employers after making representations for members during collective reorganisations. We support individuals with particular issues arising from collective consultations. In 2014 we have successfully challenged redundancies at appeal and seen our members' jobs reinstated. The value of UNISON membership is self-evident at such times.

Individual work

The Branch dealt with 235 formal cases during 2014 where a Rep or Caseworker was assigned to represent a member in an individual case (an increase of 5% on 2013, which was in itself an increase of 7% on 2012). In addition to formal casework, in 2014 the Branch dealt with 228 requests for advice which were resolved over the phone and did not lead to formal cases (a fall of 13% on 2013, which was in itself an increase of 32% on 2012.)

That 463 members, 9% of the Branch membership, required formal or informal individual advice and support in 2014 shows the pressures there are in the modern public service workplace. This figure excludes other non-casework 'once and done' enquiries (e.g. about membership or subscriptions), pieces of advice dispensed direct by Branch Officers and staff when members contact them directly, and all collective work undertaken on behalf of members. Many hundreds more members received support from the Branch through collective re-organisations which are not recorded in the 'individual support' statistics.

The Branch also had 57 active personal injury claims for members during 2014. We have used Branch Lines to keep members aware of the value of the UNISON personal injury service, and in 2014 many tens of thousands of pounds were won for members who had accidents inside or outside the workplace, and members' partners when outside the workplace.

Pay

2014 saw the Branch participate in national strike action over Local Government pay. This did not achieve the outcome West Sussex members wanted, after the second strike date was called off at short notice. A national consultative ballot took place in which a majority of members across the country voted to accept the 2.2% pay award plus lump sum/s. However, in West Sussex NJC members voted by 80:20% to continue their industrial action. This at least is welcome, as West Sussex County Council NJC members may need to show that spirit again in the next few years, pending what plans come forward from their employer. We do know that Pay and Reward is high on the Council's agenda. Hardship funding of around £3,000 was paid to 125 Branch members, to enable them to

take industrial action, though the cost of this was shared between the Branch and the South East Region.

The Branch has supported local pay claims for members in 2014 in a number of employers where we are 'recognised'. In the Capita Contact Centre, where we maintain local pay bargaining rights, our pay claim was settled favourably at 2.5%.

Campaigns

As services are cut unnecessarily in order to fit with the increasingly broken austerity ideology, the Branch has maintained its campaigning profile. We have continued to work with community partners and the most politically-engaged sections of our membership to advance the cause of public services. Most notably our Branch has been involved with the community campaign to prevent the privatisation of £235million of NHS musculoskeletal services to BupaCSH. The Branch received press coverage in 2013 for our condemnation of Bupa's disgraceful mismanagement of Oakhurst Grange care home in Crawley. So it was particularly pleasing to see Bupa forced out of the running to take over these vital NHS services in coastal West Sussex, due to a well-run and high-profile campaign. We expect to see these services maintained within the public sector. Our NHS is not for sale, and when we fight, we can win! Any member who wants to get more involved in this side of the Branch's work can get in touch with the Branch office.

The Branch made a number of interventions in the local media during 2014. Notably the Branch Secretary was interviewed in the studio for the BBC TV South 'Politics Show' in July, the weekend after our NJC Pay strike.

Capita research

In 2014 the Branch bid for £16,500 from the South East Regional (funding) Pool to pay for a high-quality, independent research project to look into the Capita service which WSCC has contracted for ten years. We initiated this due to both the large number of complaints we were receiving from our members who were *customers* of the newly outsourced support services, and also the alarming experiences many of our members were relaying to us as *employees* of Capita. The bid was successful and the research commenced in December 2014. It should be concluded by May.

I hope you will join us at our AGMs in March to hear an interim update on the findings from the researcher, Andy Holt. We look forward ourselves to hearing about this important project and hope it will be a useful contribution to the debate on public services both in West Sussex and nationally.

Dan Sartin
Branch Secretary
25th February 2015