

BRANCH LINES

Retired
Members
edition

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk

Our very own newsletter!

Hi everyone and welcome to the first edition of our new look newsletter. I'm hoping it will be easier to read, more interesting and most of all that it will encourage you to come along to our meetings and get involved. The next one will be held at County Hall in Chichester on Monday 1 June between 12 and 2 and a sandwich lunch will be provided. The agenda, which will contain further details, will be sent out towards the middle of May.



In the meantime, if you want to stay in touch with the branch and with other retired members I would encourage you to join the branch Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/groups/152845861489032/

where you can keep up to date with all the news, add comments and start your own discussion if there is something you think the branch ought to know about.

200,000 people say "Save Our Bus"

On Wednesday 11 March a delegation of bus pass campaigners from the National Pensioners' Convention and Campaign for Better Transport presented their "Love the Bus Pass" petition at 10 Downing Street. Among them was Pat Turner, Secretary to the South East Region Retired Members' committee (3rd from right).



The petition to maintain the free universal elders' bus pass had gathered 200,000 signatures: many of them after politicians such as Nick Clegg had made noises indicating that the future of the pass was in doubt.

Martin Abrams of the Campaign for Better Transport said, "For many people on the lowest incomes the free bus pass is the only way they can afford to get around. It is a vital lifeline which allows people to get to the shops, to visit family and friends and to access healthcare."

Original article on Campaign for Better Transport website <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk>

5 YEARS OF
COALITION
GOVERNMENT!
—
A GENERAL
ELECTION
LOOMING!



20 April 2015
Crawley Town F.C.
7 to 9pm

CRAWLEY FACES...

THE CHOICE

'The Future for Public Services'

A Question Time style event featuring local parliamentary candidates, community leaders, campaigners, and experts on public services.

"What is the future for sussex hospitals?"

"How will our elderly and vulnerable residents be cared for?"

"What is the long-term impact of closing services for our young people?"

"How safe are we in the face of cuts to the fire and police services?"

THE CHOICE

'The Future for Public Services'

WHERE?

Executive Suite,
Checkatrade.com
Stadium, Crawley Town
Football Club, Winfield
Way, Crawley, RH11 9RX.

WHEN?

Monday 20 April 2015
7pm Refreshments
(Tea and coffee, biscuits,
iced water)
7.30pm - 9.00pm

WHO?

Henry Smith
MP for Crawley
Chris Oxlade
Labour Parliamentary
Candidate for Crawley
Margaret Guest
Chair, Don't Cut Us Out
The Bishop of Horsham
More to be confirmed

HOW?

Book a free place by
emailing your name to
dontcutusout@gmail.com
or visit: www.dontcutusout.org.uk
or www.facebook.com/dontcutusout
and follow the links.
Entry will be permitted
without reservation
but places are
limited. Booking in
advance will avoid
disappointment and
guarantee you a seat.
Send your question
in advance by
emailing our Chair
at TheChoiceQT@hotmail.com
Our roving microphone
assistants will also
be on hand to take
questions and
comments on the night.

For four years Don't Cut Us Out has been speaking out for the vulnerable and campaigning for better public services in West Sussex.

We have opposed day centre closures, exposed scandals in privately run care homes and held demonstrations at County Hall.

More recently Don't Cut Us Out has been joined by groups in health, social care, education and the voluntary sector to campaign against cuts to these services in West Sussex. This has included a recent successful campaign to stop the privatisation of NHS services at St Richards's hospital in Chichester.

Our group includes public service professionals, journalists, church leaders, and ordinary residents who are passionate about public services in West Sussex.



Stop Sussex Police cuts

Sussex Police have announced that up to 1000 jobs could go by 2020 as they struggle to meet the funding cuts imposed on them by government. Figures reveal there will be 700 fewer officers and support staff, with another 300 staff to go from elsewhere in the force. UNISON South East has set up a special page to help you campaign against these changes http://www.unionsoutheast.org.uk/stop_sussex_police-cut

Although parliament is currently dissolved, you can still write to Katy Bourne, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, by following the link on the page. You will also find a short video explaining exactly which staff will be affected by the cuts and how it will impact on the level of policing which the Force can provide and hence the degree of safety on our streets.



Andy Stenning, UNISON Branch Secretary for Sussex Police said, "Whilst we have sympathy with the situation Sussex Police find themselves in as a result of government-imposed cutbacks, UNISON is opposed to these plans and will continue to fight to protect jobs and services. These cutbacks will reduce the workforce beyond a safe margin and lead to a serious and fundamental loss of service. They will also have a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of our members as they struggle with excessive workloads and try hard to continue to serve the people of our communities."

Petition launched to reverse cuts to county fire service

Campaigners have launched a petition calling on West Sussex County Council to reverse cuts of £1.6m to the fire service. It was initiated by retired firefighter Tony Morris who said that new figures showed that for the second year



running West Sussex had more fire-related deaths and injuries per head of population than any area in the South East, including London. If the petition is signed by at least 3,000 West Sussex residents, workers or students, the Council will have to debate the issue, so add your signature here:

epetition.westsussex.public-tv/epetition_core/community/petition/2982

Pat Turner interview

Pat Turner, Secretary to the RM regional committee was interviewed in The Guardian on 18 March re her reaction to the budget. She said, "There is little in the budget for Britain's poorest pensioners and I am concerned that the government's plans to allow older people to cash in their annuities might backfire." She added that she would have liked to have seen a big increase in the basic state pension, currently set at a maximum of £113.10 a week, as this simply isn't enough. According to the National Pensioners' Convention the minimum that anyone in retirement should be expected to live on is £178, and I am sure that the majority of you reading this newsletter would agree.

New NJC pay claim

RM may be aware that there was recently a vote on whether to accept the employers' offer of a 2.2% pay rise over two years and that this offer was rejected by West Sussex branch but accepted nationally. As a result of the concerns expressed by some branches, including West Sussex, on the way the ballot was conducted, a special conference was convened on Tuesday 24 March to debate the lessons of the pay campaign and agree a set of proposals to increase member engagement and democratic participation in the future. This was only the second time such a conference had been called in the history of UNISON.

Feelings ran high throughout the day but eventually a range of composites and motions were agreed. Our branch secretary, Dan Sartin, spoke at the conference on the importance of recruiting and organising new members if pay campaigns were to succeed. Dan outlined the view that branches are best placed to do this work and for it they require increased resourcing within the union's overall structure.

As a result of the conference, the union will lodge an additional pay claim for 2015/16 with a settlement date of 1 April 2015 to include a Living Wage rate as the minimum pay value of the NJC pay spine and an equivalent flat rate pay increase to be applied to all other scale points. If you would like more information, then go to the branch website:

unisonwestsussex.org.uk



Your input needed!

Retired Members' Conference 2015

This year the Retired Members' conference takes place in Brighton on 6/7 October, so there has never been a better opportunity to take part! All the information is on this page <http://www.unison.org.uk/about/events-and-conferences/national-conferences/retired-members-conference-2015> so have a look and see if you would be interested in getting involved. I'll make it an agenda item for our next meeting.

**And finally...don't forget to
register to vote!**

<http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

I've never produced a newsletter before so I'd really like to hear from you how you think it could be improved in the future and what you would like to see included. What interests you, what articles would you like to see? Do you want to write something yourself? I don't care if it's a recipe or a knitting pattern, if you think someone else might find it useful then please send it to me! And could you please note that this newsletter is only available by email (due to the high cost of postage these days) so if you know a retired member who hadn't given us an email address yet it would be great if you could print off a copy and give it to them.

I'll try to send these out in between meetings so we can have a bit of continuity, and as I said on the first page, our next meeting is at County Hall in Chichester on 1 June and yes, there is car parking available if you give me your name ahead of the meeting. See you there!

