

BRANCH LINES

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

ALL CHANGE AT WSCC

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
LEAVES BY
'MUTUAL CONSENT'

SEE PAGES 4-5

**BRANCH
AGMS AND
ELECTIONS**

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A very happy new year to all our members. We hope for significant improvements in industrial relations this year as new political and officer management takes over

at the council. We outline some of the problems we've been tackling in 2019 and report on early evidence of improvement in some areas. The election of a Conservative majority government is unlikely to see significant changes to local government spending, so

we anticipate a challenging few years ahead. However, we will be there to support you throughout. And don't forget our AGMs in March – we hope to see as many of you there as possible. All members welcome.

Dan Sartin,
Branch Secretary



Branch AGMs will take place around the county at the end of March. There will be three, short AGM sessions consisting of half hour business reports and annual elections to the branch committee, then questions to the branch secretary, treasurer and other committee members.

Two take place from 1 to 2pm as follows:

- **Wednesday 25 March**
County Hall North/
Parkside,
Park Street, Horsham,
RH12 1XH
- **Thursday 26 March**
Conference Room 4,
Centenary House,
Durrington Lane,
Worthing, BN13 2QB

Followed by:

- **Friday 27 March**
Martlets Restaurant,
County Hall,
Chichester, PO19 1RQ:
5.00pm-9.00pm.

The quiz and curry night immediately follows the shortened AGM in Chichester, with free dinner and wine for all members. There will also be a free raffle with some great prizes.

All members from any employer (and retired members) are welcome at any of our AGMs. We'd love to see you there. There are only 80 places available at the quiz and curry night in Chichester, so you must book your place or quiz team's places via www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk as soon as possible.

COULD YOU WORK FOR THE BRANCH?

Our brilliant administrator Cathy Leng is retiring at the end of April. Could you replace her?

We have a busy branch office, and familiarity with databases would be an advantage for this role. We pay £19,554-£20,344 for a 37-hour week, plus excellent holiday and pension.

We will be advertising the vacancy on our branch website from Monday 27 January with more details on how to apply.



LOCAL PAY

Around 500 staff are on local pay arrangements at WSCC. Although UNISON previously secured two consecutive pay awards of 2%, without performance strings, we are seeking to establish formal collective bargaining arrangements for local pay. 96% of members want us to do this.

We were on the cusp of resolving this with the previous chief exec when he pulled the agreed plans because we had stood up for members working in children's services.

But UNISON has sufficient membership in the local pay group to insist on full recognition. UNISON has now come to agreement with the county council's officers on a 'recognition and facility time agreement'. This would sort out the local pay issue by ensuring the branch is recognised for full collective bargaining. It would also provide a modest increase in facility time for the branch, restoring and going a little further than what was cut in 2013.

This is now awaiting final sign off and HR officers are awaiting advice on the right governance for that. If we can secure this agreement it will resolve a long-standing issue for staff on local pay, and it will mean that the 2020-21 pay award will be negotiated through UNISON. We will be writing directly to members affected.

BUDGET PROPOSALS

The financial situation at West Sussex County Council was described as 'rocky' by the director of finance at a meeting of the cabinet in December. The council had, for the first time, announced plans to use more than £7million of reserves to cover an overspend.

This overspend was caused by, amongst other things, significant extra spending required in children's services and fire and rescue given their poor statutory inspections and the need to remedy both services. UNISON has called for the judicious use of reserves to protect against cuts for many years and so supports this decision.

However, UNISON members will have felt for some time that finances have been rocky at the council due to the seemingly unending need to cut and restructure services since 2010. The general election result put paid to hope that austerity's days were numbered. It looks set to be with us in local government for some years to come.

A full council meeting scheduled for 14 February will be where any further cuts for 2020-21 are finally decided. UNISON remains concerned about cuts identified for the library service (opening hours and mobile library service), residential and day care services and the post-16 service.

The post-16 service does excellent work with vulnerable young people who are identified as being NEET (not in education, employment or training). The select committee for the service rightly identified that cuts to the post-16 team would be entirely incongruous with the council's stated intention to improve its children's services after its Ofsted rating was published in May 2019. The select committee has recommended to the cabinet member that no cuts are made to the post-16 service at all.

UNISON has been working hard behind the scenes on this. We also will continue to highlight unnecessary spending like chief executive bonuses and senior executive expenses. Where restructures are unavoidable due to government cuts, UNISON will support members so they get the best possible outcomes.

ALL CHANGE AT WEST S

2019 will be remembered in West Sussex for a long time. Although the situation had been getting progressively more difficult at WSCC over the last two to three years, the speed with which things unravelled for the former chief executive was still a surprise.

To recap: the chief executive, Nathan Elvery, was said to be 'away from duties' though the Local Government Chronicle reported he had been suspended. He has now left WSCC by 'mutual consent'. The leader of the council, Louise Goldsmith, has resigned. The director of HR, Heather Daley, resigned her position but was absent from work for her notice period.

This will mean three changes absolutely critical for staff and UNISON. Cllr Paul Marshall has been elected leader of WSCC. UNISON has its first meeting with Paul at the end of January. And current East Sussex CC chief executive Becky Shaw has been asked to jointly manage both councils. We look forward very much to meeting Becky and working in close partnership with her. The director of HR position will need to be recruited to – another key appointment.

Problems at WSCC do go back a long way. The previous leader followed all the ideological innovations of the coalition government

– with disastrous consequences. Council services were mutualised, outsourced, and cut. Council tax was frozen, which undermined the tax base. The council under her leadership championed academisation and the little-lamented 'Big Society'. Trade union facility time was cut.

But it was in the last two to three years that the slide was really felt by staff to have accelerated. UNISON was publicly taken to task by the former chief exec because we objected to the expansion of the 'culture board' and staff groups without involvement of UNISON or robust terms of reference. 'Lanyardgate' followed and was an object lesson in how not to communicate with staff, as a library assistant was upbraided on a public forum for challenging a decision to purchase lanyards.

Controversies came thick and fast: on parking, on increments, on performance-related pay for managers, on retention payments, on executive turnover, on the staff appeals panel, on the



chief executive's £47,500 relocation payment for a property he did not relocate to. A staff survey highlighted an organisational culture where staff were fearful to speak up. The trade unions were marginalised and excluded from some of the key decisions we would expect involvement in. Then 2019 saw dire statutory inspection reports of both children's services and fire & rescue. Services desperately needed improvement and felt to staff like they were at breaking point.

If this was not enough, bullying was a major problem. It was mostly identified at senior levels

SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL



forward to a better future for staff, and normalised industrial relations as part of that. UNISON wishes to acknowledge the large contribution Lee Harris made to steadying the ship whilst the previous chief executive was 'away from duties.' Lee stepped up as acting chief executive and into a very challenging situation, probably none worse in local government. Important decisions were taken in regard to increments and the single 'formal action policy', which are explained further in this Branch Lines. The groundwork was also done for what we anticipate will be significant positive progress on local pay, and for meaningful work to be carried out with UNISON involvement to address organisational culture including the bullying problem.

UNISON looks forward to working with Becky Shaw on these matters, and continuing the positive relations with Lee Harris and others, in the new year ahead of us.

UNISON members can take heart that, through thick and thin, we will always be there to support you at work even in the toughest of circumstances.

within the organisation by UNISON and in the commissioner's report. UNISON has dealt with seven grievances for very senior staff. These are only the cases we have supported. Some very senior staff do not join unions, and we are aware of several other cases of alleged bullying where UNISON was not involved. UNISON did support our members. We did advise cabinet members and the executive leadership what was going on, but action was not taken. So we told the public and the press by speaking out at two public select committee meetings. The first of these

was on 10 July 2019 and is still available to view via our branch website.

The children's commissioner's report following the Ofsted inspection was delayed, but was finally published just before Christmas. This also confirmed what staff and UNISON knew.

The previous few years have been incredibly difficult for staff. They have also been difficult for your trade union. What went on at West Sussex was not normal. Nor was it acceptable. We now have, all of us, a huge and urgent opportunity to put things right.

UNISON is looking

IAN'S SECONDMENT SUCCESSES

In February 2019, Capita employee and UNISON West Sussex branch chair Ian Harvey began a secondment as union convenor to increase the number of UNISON members and representatives within Capita West Sussex.

Ian, a trainer in the customer service centre, was released by Capita for the role. "It was an exciting opportunity to be able to step out of your workplace and try something different," said Ian. "We wanted to:

- increase the number of members;
- let people in Capita know UNISON is here for them; and
- increase the profile of UNISON within Capita, and I feel we have done that."

One of the project's aims was to recruit more reps in Capita West Sussex. Ian has successfully recruited two new reps so far, one in Crawley and one in Chichester.

Activities and events

Activities and initiatives were introduced through the year, starting with 'The Great Capita West Sussex Recruitment Race'. UNISON Capita members could earn gift cards for every colleague they recruited. There were star prizes for the top three recruiters including a luxury hotel break.

Later in the project, 'lunch and learn' workshops were organised, covering important, topical subjects such as the menopause, mental health, stress



management and a CV and interviews workshop. Tutors were supplied by UNISON and feedback was very positive.

Ian regularly attends Capita workplaces in West Sussex with recruitment stalls, or can visit if colleagues are looking for advice and guidance.

Representation

He has led negotiations with Capita and handled a high number of sickness meetings, disciplinaries, grievances and flexible working requests.

He represented the pensions administrators who were transferred from Capita to Hampshire County Council (HCC): "Unfortunately, there were some redundancies as the work relocated to Winchester," said Ian.

"We were there for our members when they needed us, and that was important. Members were in limbo for months, so it fell to UNISON to ensure members had someone fighting their corner."

Conference

In June, Ian represented the branch and Capita employees at UNISON's local government and national delegate conferences in Liverpool. He spoke on our branch's motion about funding, which we're delighted to say was passed.

"The year has gone by in a flash," said Ian, "I have enjoyed the opportunity and am pleased we've had success with the project. I am sad it is coming to an end."

Since Ian's secondment began, to date there has been a 25% increase in membership, which is a great result. The branch will be discussing the results with the national officer to determine appropriate next actions.



CONSULTATIVE FURTHER EDUCATION PAY E-BALLOT

On 24 May the joint unions formally submitted the 2019/20 pay claim to the Association of Colleges (AoC).

The claim was:

- £1 extra per hour for all staff.
- The foundation living wage to become the minimum wage for all staff.
- An additional 5 days' annual leave.

The recommendation from the AoC was:

"In light of no additional funding for the current year we are making a pay recommendation for 2019/2020 of 1%, or £250 (whichever is the greater). We advise that those colleges who can afford to award staff more should do so, whilst we acknowledge that a number of colleges will be unable to do so."

The AoC would expect to make an improved recommendation for 2020/21 as soon as possible after allocations are made and would hope to meet earlier than usual in order to begin discussion for 2020/21. The AoC will continue its campaign with trade unions, students and stakeholders to push the government for additional investment in the sector and to allow colleges to properly reward staff.

On 25 November 2019, UNISON's further education committee decided to consult members on this and recommended members reject it. A consultative e-ballot for members opens on 6 January and closes on 24 January. We would encourage any West Sussex FE members to take part. Please look out for your e-ballot!

NJC PAY LATEST

The campaign in support of the union's pay claim for 2020/21 continues.

The full pay claim was submitted to employers at a formal meeting of the NJC in July. Employers finished consulting local authorities in October. We were initially advised to expect a pay offer towards the end of the year, and the NJC's deep frustration at the employers' likely timetable was made clear. However, we were then told the offer would not be made until at least after the general election: practically, this meant the new year given the election was so close to Christmas. The unions have made it clear they expect the employers' side to engage in proper negotiations, rather than them giving (or just sending) us a 'first and final offer'.

Our pay claim and campaign have stated clearly that the Westminster government will need to deliver better funding for local government in order to fund this claim.

We have also briefed UNISON's member liaison unit (ballots section) and legal advisers about the campaign timetable so background preparations can be made in case we move into a formal dispute and potential industrial action ballot.

Watch this space as we suspect the offer will be made imminently in the new year.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE

UNISON has held three separate weeks of member meetings across the council's office hubs since the Ofsted report was published. We visited different offices each day from Monday to Friday in July, October and December.

This amount of direct contact has really helped branch negotiators to understand members' views and concerns, to prioritise these and to represent them to senior management.

Serious concerns

We retain a number of serious concerns. UNISON

does not believe that political scrutiny of the service is yet up to scratch, despite this being singled out for heavy criticism by Ofsted. Councillors only hear from executive leaders, and not from UNISON. We established positive relations with scrutiny councillors

in 2019, only to see those councillors moved off the committee in a reshuffle. We do not believe that the contact we have had with the now executive director for children's services has been sufficiently deep or meaningful. Three recent negotiation meetings were cancelled by the service in 2019, with only one meeting being rescheduled. This must be improved in 2020. We have had some successes however and these are

worth reflecting on:

- Recruitment and retention hotspots have been addressed;
- Incremental progression has been de-linked from appraisals;
- Wording on the £10,000 loan offer has been changed to protect staff on maternity or sick leave;
- The approach to forced redeployments has been amended;
- Environmental issues in Durban House were addressed.

That said, there is still a range of 'big ticket' items remaining to be addressed by the council, which we will continue to raise for members. These include:

- Lack of career progression for CFWs;
- Lack of wellbeing strategy (we are told work will begin on this in 2020);
- Audits and sudden demands for data.

It is clear after our December UNISON member meetings that:

- Instability within the service continues;
- A short-term culture and excessive use of 'interims' contributes to this;
- The long-hours culture prevails;
- There is not yet a culture where staff can safely challenge;
- HR processes feel oppressive rather than supportive.

Members also felt that bullying was an issue within the service, often resulting because staff are treated as a resource rather than people, and there is not a culture where it can be reported safely or with confidence. UNISON will be taking this up with the council, particularly as part of its bullying review (see pages 4–5).

Children's Trust

UNISON will also be involved closely in the process of establishing a children's trust. This will be a complex endeavour and take up a lot of branch time in 2020. But it will be vital to get it right, so that terms and conditions of staff are fully protected.

We have been advised that meetings between the children's commissioner John Coughlan and UNISON will be established in 2020 and we look forward to those.

UNISON service reps are in close contact with the branch secretary and

deputy branch secretary. A team of four attend meetings for UNISON with children's service's executive officers and HR. We will be involving early help reps directly within this team in 2020. If you want to be more involved, or to feedback on any issue, please get in touch. You can check for your local rep via our website.

Do also encourage colleagues to join UNISON. Most service staff are members, but there are still staff not in a union or remaining in British Association of Social Workers (BASW). It will not be a BASW or any other trade union rep conducting negotiations either with WSCC or the children's trust. BASW are not recognised and have no role, and nor does any other union. Ask colleagues to join UNISON so we have the maximum strength of numbers and unity of purpose to further your interests at work.



Membership Form

Please fill in the form and send to UNISON West Sussex,
Central Attic, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ

We use this address to send you information core to your membership such as your membership pack, UNISON election information and any information relating to ballots if relevant

We use this to contact you about trade union activities and services

This information helps us find the best UNISON branch to support and represent your needs

This information helps your employer and us confirm your identity

Your subscription rate is determined by how much you earn

1 Tell us about you

| | | |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| Title | First name | |
| Last name | | |
| Home address | | |
| | | Postcode |
| Email | | |
| Phone | | Date of birth |

2 Tell us about your job

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Employer's name | |
| Your job title or occupation | |
| Workplace name and address | |
| | Postcode |
| Payroll number | NI number |

3 What you will pay each month

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions

| Annual pay | Core subscription | £14,001 – £17,000 | £9.70 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| £0,000 – £2,000 | £1.30 | £17,001 – £20,000 | £11.50 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £2,001 – £5,000 | £3.50 | £20,001 – £25,000 | £14.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £5,001 – £8,000 | £5.30 | £25,001 – £30,000 | £17.25 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £8,001 – £11,000 | £6.60 | £30,001 – £35,000 | £20.30 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £11,001 – £14,000 | £7.85 | £35,001 – and over | £22.50 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Instruction to deduct the subscription from my salary

By signing the below I wish to join UNISON and authorise deduction of subscriptions from my pay by my employer

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Signature | Date |
|-----------|------|

This information tells us whether you wish to contribute an additional 5% toward UNISON's campaign fund. This voluntary contribution will be taken annually in October as a single deduction by Direct Debit. Further information is available at www.unison.org.uk/changes

This information is standard direct debit mandate information

Please go to unison.org.uk/privacy-policy to see how we will protect and use your personal information

We are legally required to keep your information up to date. You can amend your details via My UNISON at www.unison.org.uk/my-unison

Email Text Phone

By ticking these boxes, you are giving your consent for UNISON to contact you by these means about how we campaign on your behalf.

4 Campaign fund contribution

UNISON stands up for its members and speaks out publicly on the issues that affect them. To continue this work we ask for a voluntary 5% campaign contribution by Direct Debit when you join. Please tick your preference below:

Campaign Fund

The campaign fund promotes better public services, enables the union to talk with politicians of any party about the work our members do and supports the union's equalities work.

UNISON Labour Link

Labour Link campaigns for UNISON policy on the NHS, your employment rights and for quality public services within the Labour Party locally and in Parliament.

No thank you

I do not wish to contribute to campaigning at the moment. Those who choose not to opt in will not be disadvantaged in any way as compared with members who do opt in.

If you selected 'No thank you' – by ticking this box you are giving consent for UNISON to contact you in future about our campaign funds. We will do this using the contact details you provided on this form.

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



| | |
|--|-------------------|
| To the manager bank / building society | |
| Address | |
| | Postcode |
| Name(s) of account holder(s) | |
| Account number | Branch sort code |
| Office use only | Office use only |
| Service user no. | Membership number |

Please pay UNISON Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with UNISON and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Signature | Date |
|-----------|------|

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

Branch Officers for 2020/21

The branch committee has nominated the following members to s



Branch Chair
Ian Harvey



Branch Vice-Chair
Sarah Etherington



Branch Secretary
Dan Sartin



Deputy Branch Secretary
Karen Daubney



Equalities Officer (Women)
Carla Hardy



Equalities Officer (BME)
Anusree Biswas-Sasidharan



Equalities Officer (Disability)
Vacant



Equalities Officer (LGBT)
Paul Woodcock



Health & Safety Officer (1)
Karen Daubney



Health & Safety Officer (2)
Carla Hardy



Labour Link Officer
Dan Sartin



International Officer
Vacant



Environmental Officer
Julie Bolton



Young Members' Officer
Chloe Pascovitch



Education Co-ordinator
Briony Stilliard



Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator
Briony Stilliard

Elections

serve as branch officers in 2019/20.



Branch Treasurer
Jennie Barrett



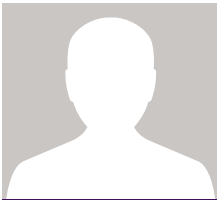
Pensions Officer
Judith Taylor



Welfare Officer
Stuart Gibbons



Retired Members' Secretaries
**Jennie Gudgeon/
Margaret Guest**



Communications Officer
Vacant



Membership Officer
Vacant

The branch committee has nominated the following members to serve as branch officers in 2020/21.

As part of the union's democratic process, nomination forms for any of these positions are available from the branch office. The annual election process for workplace representatives has also started. The nomination period for all positions ends at 12 noon on Friday 24 January.

If you are interested in taking on any role, please contact the branch secretary to find out more or request a nomination form.

Branch committee meets six times per year (split between Chichester and Worthing). If you would like to get more involved with the branch, as a committee member or workplace rep, now is the time. Please get in touch!

“ THANK YOU ”

“You are a miracle worker... they have been resisting increasing the team for months! Then hey presto! I am impressed.”

“Thanks again for all your hard work - you and your team have been there for me and my family during a really difficult time.”

APPRAISALS AND INCREMENTS

A favourable change for council staff achieved since the previous chief executive departed has been the de-linking of annual appraisals from incremental progression.

Members will be aware that UNISON has been working hard to avoid this calamity since April 2018 when it was announced. It was on the cusp of being introduced for the first time in April 2020.

The departure of the chief executive allowed the UNISON branch to re-engage on this. We asked for the evidence to be properly considered. UNISON has concerns that the approach

would be unsafe as it would discriminate against disabled, black and older staff. Despite our repeated requests, an equality impact assessment was not completed. We turned instead to ask for the data on 2019 appraisals so we could see whether there were patterns between appraisal score and equality groups. UNISON is still to receive that data, but the council

has interrogated it and concluded it is not safe to link incremental progression to appraisal score.

This is a huge relief. There are many other good reasons why appraisal score should never be linked to incremental progression, not least the impact on individual and team morale as members in children's services were quick to alert us to. Thanks go to the acting chief executive for recognising this potential disaster for staff and the council and taking decisive action to avert it.

DISABILITY PAY GAP

UNISON disabled members met in Brighton for their annual conference, and marked Disability Pay Gap Day (4 November) by calling for mandatory reporting.

This is the day of the year when disabled workers effectively stop being paid – such is the difference between their pay and that of their non-disabled counterparts. Disabled workers work for 57 days a year without pay. The day they stop getting paid is 4 November.

The mover of a motion for Newcastle City Branch explained how the Equality and Human Rights Commission has found that the disability pay gap is at its highest level since records began.

“Mandatory reporting is starting to reduce the gender pay gap and it's now time for mandatory reporting on the disability pay gap,” she said. It was a call that resonated with delegates, who gave it unequivocal support.

Disabled members' conference also called for more guidance on the issue, including a model action plan to reduce the pay gap that branches can use in

negotiations with employers, together with recruitment materials showing what UNISON has achieved on reducing the disability pay gap and is continuing to do on the issue.

Find out more from the TUC at www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/disability-employment-and-pay-gaps-2019.





THE MENOPAUSE IS A WORK ISSUE

Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55 – while they're working. Given that women make up more than 70% of UNISON's 1.3 million members, it's clearly a workplace issue.

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives, and it also affects trans, non-binary and intersex people. In the workplace, the impacts can be exacerbated for disabled women by their disability and, for Black women, by racism and the prevalence of less secure working conditions among Black workers.

For some UNISON members, menopause issues will cause difficulties at work and may even lead to discriminatory action by employers. By agreeing good policies with employers, it's likely that we can help reduce the number of cases requiring union representation.

Branch women's officer Carla Hardy has helped shape the council's menopause guidance. "We agreed managers should familiarise themselves with the guidance and be willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating discussions sensitively and professionally.

"Managers should signpost to the guidance before agreeing with individuals how best they can be supported and what adjustments are required, implemented and recorded. They need to ensure there is ongoing dialogue and review dates."

To read more and access resources, visit www.unison.org.uk/menopause

FORMAL ACTION POLICY CANCELLED

UNISON has reported previously on our concerns about how WSCC conducts its formal HR processes.

Our concerns coincided with the arrival of a new HR director from Croydon. Sickness and discipline processes became more erratic and arbitrary changes were often introduced. Lengthy delays to discipline processes were causing mental health problems for staff.

UNISON's requested changes were not introduced, but rather we were approached with the bizarre idea of merging three of the key employment policies into a single formal action policy (sickness absence, discipline and capability). UNISON engaged in a complex discussion with the employer over the best part of a year. We pointed out where the proposals would be unhelpful in practice, corrected mistakes, and helped to smooth the worst edges of what would have been too complex a policy for managers to use effectively. But we had reached the end of that discussion.

Then, due to the change of leadership at the council (see pages 4–5), we were approached by the acting chief executive who asked UNISON to write a paper on the proposals. We did so, and called for them not to be implemented. This request from UNISON was 'listened to and acted upon', and the single formal action policy cancelled. Instead, WSCC now intends to keep and work to improve its individual policies. UNISON looks forward to supporting this in 2020.

MEET JUDITH TAYLOR, BRANCH PENSIONS OFFICER

"I've been in this role now for 3 years. I took it on when I was approaching pension age myself. I felt I could represent local government pension scheme (LGPS) contributors and pensioners' voices on the pensions panel (PP).

"I've learned how the LGPS works locally and nationally, about investment generally and the factors involved in investment decisions.

"I believe the West Sussex pension fund is managed very well by a combination of specialist finance officers, councillors and investment managers.

Employers pay the larger portion of the pension so it is in their interests, as well as ours, that funds are managed properly.

"On the PP, I am the members' and deferred members' rep and while nominated by UNISON, I speak for all

employees and pensioners. My role on the branch committee means I have better opportunities for direct feedback from reps, which I can then use on the PP.

"My views are taken into account and generally respected. I believe most panel members are sincere in wanting to do their best for employees' pensions.

"This important role is challenging at times, but I really enjoy it and always aim to safeguard members' interests."



WEST SUSSEX

Branch pensions officer Judith Taylor reports on the health and governance of the West Sussex pension fund.

"There are over 150 employers in the fund, including:

- districts and boroughs;
- town and parish councils;
- outsourced services' organisations such as Capita; and
- academies.

"This makes a huge job for our administrators, Hampshire County Council, but so far they seem to be doing well and I've not received any complaints. My personal experience using the portal and the phone line has been very good."

Judith represents scheme members including employees, pensioners and deferred members (those not in work but not yet old enough to take their pension).

Pension fund health

"I am pleased to report the 'health' of the pension remains very good. At the last valuation, it was 110% funded. This means our actuaries (pension experts) believe there is enough money in the fund to pay pensions into the foreseeable future (20-30 years).

Pension

PENSION FUND

Ethical, social and governance (ESG) issues in investments

"The government's scheme advisory board asked all authorities to ensure we are putting ESG issues at the forefront of investment decisions. I've been to two ESG seminars in the past few weeks.

"Our main investments are managed by an 'active manager', in our case Baillie Gifford. Active managers must perform against targets – known as 'benchmarks' – set by the pension panel. Baillie Gifford has consistently outperformed the benchmark.

"We are significantly invested in areas such as artificial intelligence, battery technologies and biomedical research, so we look to the future as well as considering stocks and shares which have performed well over the long term.

Investment structure, pooled investments and employee representation

"When the current local government pension scheme (LGPS) governance structure was set up, all administering authorities (such as WSCC) had to have a board – dealing broadly with governance – and a committee,

dealing with investments. Our pension panel is the equivalent of a committee.

"Government guidance required scheme member representation on boards but not necessarily on committees, and even if there was a rep on a committee, they would not necessarily enjoy full voting rights. In West Sussex, I am given full voting rights on the panel and our reps on the board are Chris Scanes, Tim Stretton and Rebecca Caney.

"To reduce fund manager fees the Cameron government required all administering authorities to form 'pools.' WSCC is one of 11 local authority members of the ACCESS pool.

"The guidance was 'silent' on the issue of employee representation, but reps across the 11 South East councils have been lobbying for over a year for representation on the ACCESS joint committee.

"The ACCESS committee has voted twice in that time and decided unanimously it does not believe pensioner/employee representation is necessary or desirable. In this they are out of step with most other pools, as 5 out of 7 already have member reps. With the support of UNISON regional officers, we will keep trying."



SCHOOLS' FORUM REPORT

UNISON's forum member Keith Manville updates us on the latest news.

STAFF SHORTAGES AND SCHOOL VIABILITY

“Following restructuring resulting from departures in WSCC senior roles, one of the issues recognised by the local authority’s (LA) education teams is the fact that the LA has not recruited to new posts, leading to significant departmental staffing issues.

“During my time on the schools’ forum (SF) there has always been increasing demand for services to support students, especially within SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) teams. I’m sure many of our SEND team members recognise this problem along with increased pressure to deliver services with fewer resources.

“I wish I could be optimistic, but despite additional money from the national funding formula, only a third of schools in the schools’ block will benefit. Despite increased funding, West Sussex remains one of the worst-funded authorities in the country.

“There is a crisis of viability facing our smallest primary schools especially in rural areas. Amongst the difficult options recommended to at-risk schools are mergers, academisation or possible closure.

HIGH NEEDS BLOCK PRESSURES

“Significant pressure remains on schools in the high needs block (HNB), which covers funding for special schools and where a significant cost driver is the increasing number of early help and care plans (EHCPs).

“The HNB faces an overspend and as previously, requested SF approval to transfer 0.5% (£2.4mn) from schools block funding to offset this. Following consultation with maintained schools, responses were sympathetic but overwhelmingly against it. SF did not approve the request, despite recognising it is well deserved and knowing this would cause additional funding problems.

“It’s difficult to understand denying the money. However, the schools block can’t afford to give money it doesn’t have. This would only push funding issues elsewhere within education, as well as sending the wrong message to government that our schools are well funded.

“High needs funding is broken and not fit for purpose. SF hasn’t approved the transfer over the last 3 years of my time as UNISON representative. Continued requests have proven to be controversial. It’s clearly not an effective long-term strategy to solve funding issues like this. The matter will now be referred to the secretary of state for education.

“Many schools’ members will feel the effect of these decisions. UNISON will be there to support you. We will continue to highlight the issues of how schools’ funding and government policy continues to let down young people in West Sussex.”



SCHOOL SUPPORT UPDATES

Branch officer Zoe Walker talks us through some of the school support issues the union is monitoring.

SMALL SCHOOLS' CLOSURES PROGRAMME

Five schools are affected: Clapham & Patching CoFE Primary, Compton & Up Marden CoFE Primary, Stedham Primary, Warninglid Primary and Rumboldswyke CoFE Infants. Several options were put out to public consultation in October 2019 including federating, relocating and closure. Results of the consultation will be known in January. UNISON will support affected members, whatever the outcomes, and has already visited some of the affected schools to meet members.

PARKLANDS PRIMARY, CHICHESTER

An emergency (cladding falling off) forced the school to close for five days, pending repairs. Three INSET days were due to be held, but the school decided it would open on those days instead, having already lost five days. The problem for our support staff members was that they would lose pay as they would only receive 2 days' emergency leave pay, with 3 unpaid. Unlike teachers, support staff at Parklands are not normally required to work INSET days and so they would be losing pay through no fault of their own. Our negotiations resulted in staff receiving 3 days emergency paid leave and 2 unpaid with the option of working on the new open days so everyone gained a paid emergency leave day and the option to work an extra day if they wished. Members were satisfied with this agreement.

TERM-TIME ONLY PAY AT WSCC

Due to a recent employment tribunal (the 'Brazel' case), there is some doubt over the correct way to calculate holiday pay for term-time only (TTO) workers.

All workers are entitled to the statutory minimum of annual leave (20 days excluding bank holidays). At WSCC, leave is above the statutory minimum, starting at 23 days, rising to a maximum of 29 days. The Brazel case would have an impact on workers at or near the statutory minimum holiday entitlement.

In East Sussex and Brighton & Hove councils (both covered by the same joint HR department) a settlement was agreed with TTO workers. This is because those authorities calculated TTO pay in a particular way (which was not the same as WSCC). This led to back-pay being agreed for staff, as well as slightly higher future pay being agreed.

The UNISON West Sussex branch is engaging with WSCC to establish whether the same situation could apply to West Sussex TTO staff. This work took some time to get going due to wider instability at the council (see pages 4-5).

Members should note that the Brazel case is being appealed in the supreme court by the school employer which lost the case originally, so there is some uncertainty about the outcome.

We will keep members up-to-date. You can be assured that the West Sussex branch is on the case to ensure that your pay and holiday entitlement is calculated correctly, and meetings are planned for January.

SARAH INFLUENCES LABOUR'S NATIONAL CAREERS POLICY

Branch vice-chair and SE regional rep on the UNISON national careers forum (NCF) Sarah Etherington, has been working with other reps to influence the Labour Party's approach to careers service provision.

Sarah explains:

"At the moment, career guidance for NEET (young people not in education, employment or training) – often vulnerable – 16 to 18-year olds provided by local authorities is unregulated, so support can vary enormously: it's a bit of a postcode lottery.

"We want to see the creation of a national, publicly funded and properly resourced career

development service (CDS) so that young people and adults of all ages have access to excellent career guidance from professionally qualified careers advisers. This was accepted as Labour Party policy. We hope the CDS will become a fundamental part of its national education service to enable all to achieve their full potential.

"Through UNISON's NCF, I've been lobbying central government for many



years to create national quality service standards, regulation and funding so it doesn't have to rely on local budgets. However, the government simply isn't listening.

"I've also been lobbying county councillors, some of whom visited the service to find out more about what we do, which was really positive. We'll see if our work bears fruit as the council's budget proposals are rolled out in the next few weeks."

SCHOOLS WORSE OFF DESPITE FUNDING PROMISE

New figures show that four in five of England's schools will be worse off next year than they were in 2015.

In a major announcement last September, prime minister Boris Johnson promised school funding would be "levelled up across the entire country," and that there would be "no winners or losers."

However, analysis by the schools' cuts coalition of six education unions – including UNISON – shows that about 16,000 schools will have less money per pupil in 2020 in real terms than in 2015.

The unions say that allocation to schools in 2020-21 still needs £2.5 billion to reverse the cuts that have taken place since 2015. Schools with the highest levels of deprivation are the worst affected.

Furthermore, a third of all schools will see real-terms cuts to their budgets next year because school costs are greater than inflation.

Even after an additional £700 million, the high needs

block of funding to support the most vulnerable children will still be £1.5 billion short of what is needed. The unions called for the government to honour its promise to give schools the funding they need and to reverse, in full, the cuts made since 2015.

Do you work in a West Sussex school or academy? Join UNISON today and find out how you can get involved in your union.