

BRANCH LINES

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UNISON'S YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS 2023

The first WSCC Black History Month
in-person seminar takes place **SEE PAGE 7**



**BRANCH
COMMITTEE 2023
NOMINATIONS
AND AGMS
SEE PAGES 4 & 5**

SEE INSIDE

NJC pay claim 2023-24 2 • Capita services assimilation 3 • Mileage latest 6 • AS commissioning restructure 7 • TTO pay 8 • Aspire goes into liquidation 9 • NEC nominations 10 • Energy grants 12



A very happy new year to you all. Nationally, this year is likely to be a continuation

of the struggles many of us experienced in 2022 against unfair pay awards, an erosion in our workplace rights and employers' unreasonable expectations.

UNISON's latest pay claim (see below) reflects the fact our income has been hugely eroded over the past twelve years of Tory government. We need to do more for our members to make sure they can afford a decent standard of living. I'd also like to draw your attention to an important election within our union: this is for you to vote for members to

join the national executive committee (NEC, see page 10). This is an important influence in our union's policy approach and one that could make a big difference to the way we campaign and the issues we prioritise.

Dan Sartin,
Branch Secretary

NJC PAY CLAIM 2023–24

Following a branch consultation, UNISON West Sussex members have voted to back a pay claim of RPI (retail price index) plus 2%.

The UNISON NJC committee agreed our core objective must focus on the restoration of decent pay levels for all members. We need to do better, with a bold, straightforward claim linked to the escalating cost of living.

RPI inflation, (the measure UNISON believes is the most accurate reflection of the cost-of-living realities our members face), is running at 14% at time of

writing (November figure).

Often, the media will talk more about consumer price index (CPI) inflation rather than RPI inflation. This is because CPI is the government's preferred way to calculate inflation. However, CPI inflation does not reflect the true increase in the cost-of-living because it leaves out housing costs. These costs are increasing due to rent and mortgage interest rates going up.



The NJC committee also recognised that mileage is a huge concern for many members. Therefore, it proposed that the 2023-24 pay claim must have a strong focus on improving mileage rates.

The claim is due to be submitted to the employers during January. We will report back as discussions continue.

NEW MEMBERSHIP QR CODE

If you or one of your colleagues wants to join UNISON, it's now easier than ever.

All you have to do is scan the QR code shown here. This will take you to the membership application form, which you can complete online. If you prefer, you can print a hard copy form from our website at unisonwestsussex.org.uk/join

SCAN ME



CAPITA TRANSFER: CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

UNISON workplace rep Ian Harvey reports on the return of Capita services to the County Council.

“The transfer has, in the main, gone very well. There have been one or two issues to resolve since we transferred but overall, the transition has been a smooth one. UNISON reps are still in discussions with WSCC for the outstanding issues of assimilation to WSCC pay and grading and the continued use of the EG system in business services.

“As a result, ahead of expected restructures or voluntary opportunities to assimilate to council terms,



the council has agreed to implement the NJC pay award of £1,925 (pro rata if you're part-time) for staff still on Capita terms. This means

a pay increase backdated to November 1 2022 and an uprated salary going forwards, plus additional day's leave from April 2023 in line with staff on WSCC terms whose leave will also increase by one day. We welcome this positive move and that UNISON and our members were listened to.”

Branch Secretary Dan Sartin said, “There won't be many that mourn the end of the Capita contract. Profit has no place in the provision of public services, and when it is introduced, it is a disaster for every worker and every citizen reliant on public services. We are continuing to work hard for members to ensure that the negative legacies of the Capita contract are all removed.”

WINTER OF DISCONTENT

In this Tory-inflicted 'winter of discontent' many unions have received convincing support from their members to take industrial action, including UNISON's health workers and ambulance staff, RCN's nurses, RMT's railway workers, CWU's postal delivery staff, PCS' border control officers and other civil servants and many others.

But why the high number of strikes? The TUC explains: “There is a common cause: a pay disaster meaning workers are being paid less in real terms now than they were 14 years ago.

“Average real pay is lower now than it was in 2008. It's not expected to go back above 2008 levels until 2027. This 19-year pay squeeze is longer than any we have official records for, and likely the longest since Napoleonic times.”



UNISON ambulance worker members out on strike

The government's only response is to plan to legislate to restrict workers' legitimate ability to use strike action as a last resort to settle grievances. But people are winning better deals and public support by standing up for themselves. If you aren't in a union yet, there's never been a better time to join.

BRANCH COMMITTEE

The branch committee has nominated the following members to serve as branch officers in 2023/24.

As part of the union's democratic process, nomination forms for any of the positions below 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 Wednesday 8 February.

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. If you would like to get more involved with the branch, as a committee member or workplace rep, now is the time. We have vacancies for the following roles. Please get in touch with us if you are interested: coordinators for education, lifelong learning, membership, young members, communications and environment.

Officer roles marked with an asterisk (*) currently have WSCC consolidated facility time associated with them.



Branch Chair
Ian Harvey



Branch Vice-Chair
Sarah Etherington



Branch Secretary*
Dan Sartin



Deputy Branch Secretary*
Karen Daubney



Equalities (Women)
Carla Hardy



Equalities (Black Members)
Olu Oyedele



Equalities (Disabled Members)
Sarah Etherington



Equalities (LGBT+) & Welfare
Karen Fenn



Health & Safety Officer (1)
Karen Daubney



Health & Safety Officer (2)
Carla Hardy



Labour Link Officer
Dan Sartin



International Officer
Chris Hughes

NOMINATIONS 2023-24



Branch Treasurer
Jennie Barrett



Pensions Officer
Tim Stretton



Retired Members' Secretaries
Julie Bolton and Clive Coleman



Children's Services Convenor*
Sarah Etherington



WSCC Adults' Services Convenor*
Gerard Robson



WSCC Schools Convenor*
Keith Manville



WSCC Other departments
Convenor **Ian Harvey**

BRANCH AGMS 2023

Branch 'virtual' annual general meetings will take place at the end of March 2023. Dates and times are opposite.

Details of how to register for a meeting will be sent out via email and advertised on the branch website nearer the time.

We will be holding a raffle at each of the three AGM meetings with great prizes at each event.

After registration, we will send you joining

instructions and the electronic link you will need (or telephone number if joining by landline). We will also send you a link to the agenda for the meeting.

To be included in the raffle, you will need to register for your ticket before 12 noon on the day of the meeting. To win a

raffle prize you will need to be present at the AGM you have registered for. Only one prize can be won per member. The draw will take place at the end of each meeting. You will need to be present at the end of the meeting to claim your prize.

We look forward to seeing you in March.

Monday 27 March	12-1pm
Tuesday 28 March	4-5pm
Wednesday 29 March	1-2pm

“ THANK YOU ”

“I was very happy with the assistance that I received from X and UNISON, who managed to achieve my desired

outcome. I am fully confident that should events have taken the route of X looking to bring disciplinary charges against me that X would have been able to assist me and win any appeal to overturn X's management decision.”

MILEAGE RATE INCREASE TO BE REVIEWED

Members will recall that the West Sussex branch successfully argued WSCC should increase its mileage rate for casual car users from 46.9pence to 58.7pence.

This improved rate has applied since July 2022 and is confirmed to run until end of March 2023, when it will be subject to review. The branch has also made the case with other local employers and some, notably Grace Eyre Foundation, have followed suit. The higher rate also applies in schools.

Currently UNISON can see no evidence of a reduction in the cost of petrol. Petrol prices were running at £167.7p at the point we agreed the increase with the council in May 2022. In November petrol still cost £129.6p a litre. This compares to £129.6 pence a litre in May 2021.

The council is due to take a decision on whether to extend the higher rate at a meeting of its executive leadership team in February. The branch is planning an online survey to gauge members' views and support for the policy in January, so look out for this and take part at the website below. We would also ask all members to speak up in team meetings about the value of this increase. Let your manager know how you feel and ask them to report it on to their manager!

The cost-of-living crisis shows no sign of abating yet. So, if you value measures like the mileage rates increase, it is up to us to make the case for them and defend them.

smartsurvey.co.uk/s/wscctravel



MEET BRANCH PENSIONS OFFICER TIM STRETTON

Tim Stretton has been the branch pensions officer since last spring. A UNISON member for over thirty years, he worked in finance at WSCC in many different roles, including five years as the deputy chief finance officer. His experience on the West Sussex pension fund dates back to the 1990s.

Tim was the employee representative on the pensions advisory board from 2017–22, before taking over from Judith Taylor as the UNISON face on the pension committee in July last year. As the only scheme member on the committee, he ensures that employees' voices are heard in setting the fund's investment strategy and ethical framework.

"Although I left WSCC nearly four years ago, I didn't want my finance experience to go to waste," said Tim, "I'm delighted to represent the scheme members on the pension committee."

He left WSCC in 2019 to focus on his parallel career as a novelist. After writing six fantasy novels in twenty years, he recently 'turned to crime', and his Barcelona-set heist thriller, *Catfish Alley*, will be published by Spellbound Books this summer. He is currently at work on a second Barcelona thriller.

CHANGES AHEAD IN ADULTS' COMMISSIONING



Branch convenor for Adults' Services (AS), Gerard Robson (pictured), reports on collective actions in AS.

Unregistered practitioner progression

"The employer and UNISON continue to talk. This has become a more complex issue as similar actions are taking place in CYPL. HR and UNISON are working together to look at progression for unregistered practitioners. Meetings are due in January. We expect faster progress from then and will report back to members."

AS commissioning

"The key role of commissioners is to look at customer needs and match resources to those needs. Feedback from staff told managers of a lack of people to implement

recommendations. The restructure aims to address this deficit by increasing posts from 53 to 61.

"There are no redundancies forecast, but 53 posts will be affected. Staff consultation ended on 15 December. UNISON attended three collective meetings, six meetings with members and four with HR.

Gerard continued: "The restructure introduces a more structured approach to commissioning with greater flexibility of resources across different sections of work, aiming to support teams facing crisis situations (for example, when care providers fail).

"There are some concerns about current job descriptions not accurately reflecting the actual jobs being done and the fact that staff may lose their current autonomy and creativity. The future physical location of some roles is not yet clear, adding further uncertainty.

"However, service managers are listening and addressing individual issues as they are raised. In the wider system they've made changes to support social workers undertaking duty and have acted on discussions at the council and UNISON's regular meetings. Implementation is due to begin on 28 February."

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

UNISON has been concerned that some of our members have experienced discrimination from customers (racism being one of the major concerns) and that the County Council did not have sufficient policies and procedures in place to address this.

Members have reported that they have not always felt supported by the council when they have experienced discriminatory behaviour from customers. UNISON raised these concerns and

has been working with the employer to develop a new policy and procedure for the prevention, management and reporting of unacceptable customer behaviour and this is due to

be launched early this year. Branch black members' officer Olu Oyedele said; "The UNISON-sponsored Black History Month event was the first of its kind at WSCC. It was a rich celebration of the culture and diversity of the workforce. The theme for the event was 'actions not words.' It was very positive to see a lot of council leadership members turn up and give their pledges to promote diversity and inclusivity."

TTO CONTRACTS AND HOLIDAY PAY

The branch previously advised members on term time only (TTO) contracts of a miscalculation in holiday payments for some employees, most of whom are impacted within school settings.

Following a Supreme Court judgment in July 2022, all UK workers will now receive the same minimum level of paid annual holiday leave, regardless of how many hours they work. Employers now need to settle this concern, including back payment for impacted employees.

Following significant negotiation from early 2020, the branch has an agreement in place with WSCC to pay the settlement of the TTO claim. How this would be implemented was agreed by the council's

senior leadership in December. The broad principles include settlement for individuals in scope who were WSCC employees on TTO contracts on 1 April 2020 and those who began or left employment after 1 April 2020. The agreement requires settlement of historical underpaid holiday pay calculated back to 1 January 2015. The agreement also includes a payment for potential loss of pre-2014 pension based on £50 for each complete year of continuous WSCC service up to 31 March 2014.

For those in scope the settlement figures will vary in each case based on length of service but are in the range of a few pounds to a few hundred pounds.

The council believes it can correct staff pay going forwards from January 2023 and make good the historic underpayment in March 2023 payroll.

This is good news for our members. The branch is working hard to see this agreement implemented in other West Sussex employers, including academies, following the West Sussex model.

“ THANK YOU ”

“I just wanted to make you aware of how grateful I am for X's support and guidance in the grievance I brought against my line manager for bullying and harassment which concluded in the appeal outcome hearing yesterday. This was quite a protracted matter which I found incredibly stressful but X was always there for me when I needed him, on many occasions at short notice. He always explained the process and what it would entail, providing me with alternative options to consider to resolve certain issues. He kept me grounded, with his calm and reassuring manner. Always being honest with me and never raising my expectations”.

“I would like to say thank you to X for all support provided! He demonstrated professionalism and it helped me to receive a positive outcome. At the beginning I was a bit sceptical; however, I was convinced from the moment I was contacted by X that this would be a smooth process with a positive outcome. Again, thank you very much and I highly recommend UNISON, especially X, for support with regards work related issues”.

ASPIRE GOES INTO ADMINISTRATION

UNISON West Sussex was dismayed to learn that Aspire, the County Council's former adult and community education service has gone into administration and that all staff, many of whom are UNISON members, were made redundant at very short notice.

The branch expressed strong concerns about the outsourcing to Aspire some 10 years ago, when the council decided to spin out the service. Sadly, our worst fears have proved to be correct. As well as the impact on our members, all the enrolled learners, many of them vulnerable adults, have been left high and dry in the middle of their courses, which came to an abrupt end at less than a day's notice.

UNISON will continue to provide advice and support to our members, who are quite rightly angry and upset that the dedication

they have shown to the West Sussex adult learning community should end in this manner. Because Aspire went bankrupt, there is danger our members with legacy council employment contracts do not get their enhanced redundancy payments (only statutory minimum), costing them tens of thousands of pounds. This is one of the consequences of outsourcing our members generally must be alive to. A request for collective legal advice for Aspire members has been submitted and we continue to support them after redundancy.

CCG UNISON

Karen Fisher (pictured), the new UNISON convenor for the Chichester College Group, has completed her first full term in this new role. She reports back on her findings.



"Last term saw phase 1 of the restructure affecting senior management roles, with phase 2 due to begin next term. This will involve heads and deputies of learning as well as other middle management roles.

"I have attended the individual college and group consultative and negotiating forums. I would welcome input to these from members if you have local issues you would like me to raise.

"In early December

I attended the UNISON national further education and sixth form colleges seminar where we heard from the 'save BTecs' campaign delivered by James Kewin from the sixth form colleges association.

"Concern was raised about the impact on less academically skilled students and their path on to HE. 2022 was UNISON's year of the disabled worker, where recommendations to the employer for best practice for staff with disabilities was discussed.

"The UNISON West Sussex branch is also discussing term-time only pay corrections and back pay with CCG (see page 8 for more info).

"Lastly, you may have heard that the government has renationalised further education colleges. We wait to see the impact this has on funding and whether it will go any way towards closing the funding gap that exists between schools and colleges."

WEST SUSSEX BRANCH NEC NOMINATED CANDIDATES

UNISON's NEC elections are vital, as who we elect to this important body determines what kind of union we will be. Did you know that in the UNISON rulebook, it is the NEC which has authority vested in it for the 'general management and control of the union between national delegate conferences', not the general secretary.

The following candidates have been nominated by the West Sussex branch as we believe they are the best choice for our union. UNISON, like any organisation, needs to change and adapt to new conditions. The West Sussex branch believes that the candidates below represent the kind of changes we need to see and will deliver them. The vote is due to take place from April 17 to 19 May via postal ballot sent to members' home address.

OUR UNISON NEC

LOTS DONE BUT MORE TO DO!

The NEC elected in June 2021 is making good progress and intends to continue to build a more effective union that can win for members. Below we set out some of their work so far.

- Doubled strike pay and payable from day 1 and not day 4 as previously, so our members can afford to take action when necessary to defend themselves.
- New £4 million project agreed to radically improve and coordinate UNISON's digital communications for members.
- Secured more ambitious proposals for a £1 million energy support fund to support members in most need with rocketing home energy costs.
- Banned the carrying of gambling adverts in UNISON publications, recognising the harm gambling does to our society.
- Initiated a wide-ranging review of UNISON's staffing structures, to ensure they are fit for purpose, consistent, and focused on delivering a powerful, organising union.
- Developing UNISON's legal services in 2023 to better meet member needs.

Take part in UNISON's NEC elections. It's your union, so have your say in how it's run!



South East Male seat
Dan Sartin



South East Reserved seat
Abi Holdsworth



South East Female seat
Jac Berry



Local Government General seat
Ant Solera



Local Government Female seat 1
Andrea Egan



Local Government Female seat 2
Jane Doolan



Disabled Members' General seat
Andrew Berry



Community General seat
Kevin Jackson



Health Female seat 1
Claire Dixon



Local Government Male seat
David Jones



Disabled Members' Female seat
Tara Thomas



Community Female seat
Saoirse Fanning



Health Female seat 2
Jordan Rivera



Black Members' Reserved seat
Julia Mwaluke



Young Members' General seat
Sam Harris



Higher Education General seat
Jo Tapper



Health Male seat
Kevin Corran



Black Members' Female seat
Shazziah Rock



Young Members' Female seat
Alejandra Navarro-Woods



Higher Education Female seat
Kath Owen



Water, Environment & Transport
John Jones

Members can vote in all the regional seats and all the national black, disabled and young member seats regardless of their own age, ethnicity or disability. Members are strongly encouraged to use all the votes available to them. Members will only be able to vote though for the service group candidates for the service group they are in, for example, local government only.

FUEL AND ENERGY SUPPORT GRANTS



Please be advised that UNISON welfare's winter fuel grant will launch in January 2023 and a third phase of the energy support grant will launch in March. More details will be publicised soon.

The UNISON welfare energy support fund is currently closed to applications. Phase 2 closed once the first 4000 applications were received.

Once the above grants become available again, please ensure you have all your supporting documentation ready in advance so your application can be processed quickly. Typically, to qualify for a grant you must meet all of the following criteria:

- have 4 weeks of up-to-date membership.
- have not received a main grant since March 2022.
- have not more than £1,000 in savings or rolling bank balance.
- have not received more than £750 worth of grants if applying within first year of membership.
- net household income of no more than £30k/year (£2,500/month).
- monthly housing costs

(mortgage/rent plus any service charges and ground rent) make up at least 1/3 of net household income.

- not receiving of any means-tested benefits (excluding child benefit).

We will publish details on our website as soon as they are available. Retired members can also apply for energy and fuel grants if they meet the eligibility criteria above.

COULD YOU BE A UNISON REP?

UNISON West Sussex has around 100 workplace reps who are integral to supporting members.

If you don't have a rep for your service and have an interest in speaking up for members, learning new skills and knowledge, improving your workplace and being part of a team that is passionate about making a positive difference then get in touch to find out more.

As a member of a movement, reps promote equality and fairness,

tackle discrimination and help secure good terms and conditions for their members. Being a rep means you can raise concerns with one voice, with the support of branch officers and the trade union organisation behind you. The branch has a number of committees you can choose to become involved in and some reps attend meetings where

UNISON raises issues directly with employers.

Reps receive paid time off for training in areas such as employment law,, negotiation skills, advocacy, conflict resolution, and supporting members through processes such as performance management, grievances and sickness absence. The skills you gain are of value to many employers and can enhance your career prospects.

Contact us on 01243 777636 or email office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk