

# BRANCH LINES

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • [www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk](http://www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk)



## BRANCH'S MARILYN COX RECEIVES AWARD FROM ANGELA RAYNER, M.P.

Deserved  
recognition  
from  
colleagues  
for West  
Sussex rep  
SEE PAGE 14

**WSCC  
ROUND UP**  
SEE PAGE 4

**SEE INSIDE**

NJC pay and consultation 2 • Capita contract update 3 • Parking update 6  
SOS latest action 10 • Schools' FTE job losses 10 • WASPI meeting 14 • UNISON debtline 16



This edition tackles some thorny issues affecting hundreds of UNISON members, especially

across the council and schools. Our main feature discusses the issues raised

by the council's recent approaches to collective bargaining with the union. We also examine the emerging workplace culture at the council.

Numerous schools are going through fundamental restructures. We've selected six examples showing the extent and impact of budget

cuts on our members.

We also feature profiles of many of our reps, some newly elected to the branch committee and others describing the important roles they perform for our branch.

**Dan Sartin,**  
Branch Secretary

## UNISON ACCEPTS NJC PAY OFFER

**On our highest ever ballot turn-out, UNISON West Sussex members rejected the 2018/20 pay offer by 55%, with 45% voting to accept.**

However, when the West Sussex branch results were put into the national pot, the picture was more mixed. UNISON members as a whole more narrowly rejected the employers' offer, with 50.44% voting to reject and 48.66% to accept. (0.89% of ballot papers were spoilt.) 62% of branches and 8 out of 11 UNISON regions voted to accept the offer.

Because of this more mixed picture, UNISON's NJC committee re-consulted with branches on the next steps. UNISON West Sussex affirmed our members'

wishes to reject the pay offer. But overall, 79% of branches and 10 out of 11 regions wanted at that stage to accept the pay offer. UNISON therefore has informed the employers of our acceptance of the offer.

What this means for you The pay award is worth 2% in both 2018/19 and 2019/20. It is worth more at lower pay grades, such as WSCC Grades 3, 4 and 5. The offer was previously circulated, but to see what the offer is worth to you, see the NJC pay table on our website.

The branch is now in touch with WSCC and other employers who pay NJC to some or all staff to ensure the award is implemented as soon as possible. Back pay will be applicable as it will not be possible to implement the award for April.

The branch will enter talks with WSCC on how the award should be implemented in 2019/20, as the WSCC pay spine may require adjustment to accommodate it.

Lastly, the branch will be discussing the HAY pay award with WSCC, which follows the NJC process. Watch out for emails from the branch with further updates.

## FREE PENSION SURGERIES

**UNISON's Head of Pensions, Glyn Jenkins, will be visiting West Sussex in May.**

He will be holding lunch-time collective pensions meetings which are open

to any UNISON West Sussex member. No need to make an appointment:

- Tuesday 1 May; 12–1pm; Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chichester.
- Wednesday 2 May;

1–2pm; Conference Room 1, Centenary House, Worthing.

He will also hold free individual pensions advice surgeries at both venues, but all slots are now fully booked. Please email the branch office to be entered on a waiting list for either venue.

# CAPITA CONTRACT UPDATE

## FEBRUARY

UNISON sought assurances from the council on its contingency plans if Capita plc was no longer in a position to provide West Sussex services. Hot on the heels of Carillion's collapse, Capita had to issue a profits warning, seek a massive equity injection, and lost 47.5% of its company value in a single day. UNISON was advised by the chief executive that such plans existed and services would be insourced en masse if necessary, though this was not considered likely.

## MARCH

UNISON discovered that some TUPE'd staff had not had their 2017/18 NJC pay

rise honoured in full. For reasons of administrative error, sums in the region of £100 from the annual salary had not been paid to a small number of staff. The branch raised this with Capita and an investigation was carried out. Errors identified are being corrected and backdated.

## APRIL

At UNISON's regular meeting with partnership director Dale Wood, Capita has agreed to honour the NJC pay award for 2018-20 for West Sussex TUPE'd staff. This is good news for this group of staff and we welcome Capita's readiness to implement the pay award for our members.



## NEW BRANCH COMMITTEE ELECTED



Sam Theodoridi



Chloe Pascovitch

**The new branch committee of UNISON West Sussex was elected in March. In the key posts, Ian Harvey was re-elected as branch chair, Sarah Cawston (vice-chair), Dan Sartin (branch secretary), Karen Daubney (deputy branch secretary) and Jennie Barrett (treasurer).**

However, some new faces were elected. Here, a couple of them explain why they put themselves up for election:

Chloe Pascovitch (young members' officer): "When I started in WSCC I felt intimidated seeking advice

and support from someone older and felt more secure asking a peer. This inspired me to look for a way I can be that point of contact for other people in similar situations."

Sam Theodoridi: "I stood

for Labour Link officer because I wanted the branch's Labour Link section to continue to effectively support the Labour Party to elect councillors and MPs across the county who will stand up for our members, our movement and our public services."

Full details of the new committee are on the branch website.

# WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL: CONCERNING DEVELOPMENTS

## Increments and appraisals

On 8 March a 'One Voice' all-staff broadcast email was issued by Nathan Elvery, chief executive at WSCC. In that email, under an item headed 'It's time to book our appraisal conversations!' the following statements were made:

- "The council's pay policy states that incremental progression is subject to satisfactory performance, and appraisals are an important part of demonstrating that performance."
- "From April 2019 incremental progression will be dependent on appraisals being completed and a positive determination that performance is satisfactory. This is the approach that should have been taken previously, but given that this has not been the practice of the council over recent years it has been agreed that it would be appropriate to give sufficient lead-in time to ensure that appraisals are carried out well."

UNISON wishes to make it clear to members that there is no basis for the above statements as no collective agreement has been made with UNISON.

UNISON therefore notes that this is the intention of the chief executive, though UNISON members reading the above statements by the chief executive may be of the impression that an agreement has already been reached.

UNISON has formally raised our concerns with the chief executive, both verbally and in writing prior to the issuance of the broadcast email, and subsequently at our regular

meeting with him held on 12 March.

UNISON's view is that all staff have the right to incremental progression up their pay spine unless they are formally placed on a capability or disciplinary process by their employer. Nothing has been agreed with UNISON to change this position.

UNISON awaits sight of formal proposals from the employer, which we will deal with when they arrive. Until then it remains UNISON's view that progression remains automatic unless the staff member is under formal capability or disciplinary processes.

UNISON is increasingly concerned that decision-making within WSCC is taking place outside of established forums. It is vitally important that collective bargaining is not undermined. Therefore, UNISON will be raising these concerns with the chair of the WSCC governance committee in due course.

## Appeals panel

The staff appeals panel is the final internal place of appeal for any member of staff who is dismissed. It will also hear grievances at their final stage. It is made up of elected county councillors. UNISON rarely needs to use the staff appeals panel, as we support our members effectively before they are dismissed. But occasionally we do and one such time was in 2017. A member who had been suspended for nearly a year whilst an investigation was incompetently carried out was later dismissed. This was an unfair dismissal in our view and the councillors agreed with us and ordered their reinstatement. This lay councillor point of view is very important and allows for a fair test of the case and process



used. It also helps protect the council from poor decision-making which would, with UNISON's support, end up at employment tribunal and cost the council money.

UNISON would be very concerned to see this panel changed in such a way that the role of elected councillors was reduced or removed.

The make-up of the appeals panel is currently being reviewed by the three political groups on the council, at the chief executive's instigation. We are seeking clarity on what consultation and engagement will take place with UNISON, as the make-up of the appeals panel is specified in the relevant WSCC policy, and the trade unions are clearly an interested stakeholder group.

### **Big Conversation**

Members contacted the branch after a 'Big Conversation' posting by a library assistant about the new 'Values' lanyards the organisation is using. The posting could have been better worded, but members were shocked and angry at the response of the chief executive. The perception of

our members was that the response was inappropriate and aggressive and would likely intimidate staff from offering any form of challenge in future. Members felt that the chief executive's response ironically breached 3 of the 5 new organisational values: 'listen and act upon', 'trust and support' and 'genuine valued'.

Members asked us to raise these issues with the chief executive, which we did. UNISON is concerned that staff must feel empowered to challenge and not dissuaded from doing so. Challenge is essential for good decision-making. We also suggested that guidelines for posts should be considered, as social media is notorious for such issues arising, which all staff would then be expected to abide by. The Chief Executive noted our concerns.

UNISON members who wish to feedback to us on any of the above may contact the branch office through the usual channels.



## CAR PARKING POLICY UPDATE

**The chief executive's proposals to implement a new parking policy at WSSC are moving ahead, with change to start in Horsham from 23 April and in Chichester in the summer.**

UNISON retains concerns about the impact on low-paid staff who are not designated 'priority' users and so launched a targeted survey for them. We used the results to argue for special measures to be taken for this group. UNISON did not receive a wholly positive response with the view being held that it is not the council's responsibility to provide options for this group.

However, work is being done in Horsham to investigate if the district council's reduced rate parking permits can be extended to West Sussex staff. This was agreed if it could be done without cost to the county council.

The scheme will go live in Horsham as we go to press. There remain issues about reimbursement of parking charges to 'priority' staff who cannot find a place and have to park off site, and UNISON continues to work through these with management. No-one is obliged to make their private car available to their employer in order to visit clients, service users or partner organisations.

Watch out for more news by email from the branch if you are impacted by this.

## ADULTS' SERVICES LATEST

**Three focus groups were held recently covering the northern, southern and western areas.**

A small number of staff were updated on work so far. Views were sought on issues such as:

- multi-disciplinary working;
- creating positive change;
- maintaining new ways of working; and
- ideas to overcome potential challenges.

UNISON reps were able to attend. They reported similar themes and concerns being discussed in each area. We're waiting for the outputs from the focus groups.

Consultants PWC are working on 'customer pathways' through the system (not the structure). The innovations sites – where staff have tried out new ways of working – have either closed or will be in the process of closing. All the information is being analysed before deciding the next steps.

Adult provider services is about to start another transformation. Staff briefings on service proposals started in April. There is also work being done to design a lifelong service: a co-ordinated approach to children, young people and adults with lifelong disabilities and autism. This will impact both adults' and children's teams.

There is a lot going on but no final proposals as yet to report on changes to service design, impact on services or staff structures.

## BRANCH EQUALITY OFFICERS

**Following elections to the new branch committee, three members put themselves forward to be branch equality officers. In this edition we feature Heather Andersson, branch disabled members' officer.**

"I've only been in the role since August last year, so I'm still learning. I'm passionate about changing attitudes and injustice, particularly towards people with unseen disabilities. I want to challenge bullying and peoples' beliefs and hopefully, overturn them.

"Until you've been in a situation where you've experienced prejudice yourself, it's difficult to appreciate how that makes you feel. I want to do as much UNISON training as possible so I feel completely



confident giving people the right information related to their case. I want to make sure employers follow the expectations of the Equalities Act, recognise the protected characteristics of their staff and support them adequately. In my experience, very few managers have ever had any formal training to help them understand the needs of disabled colleagues, so I want that to change. It's one of my priorities. I've had tremendous support from UNISON. I had no idea of the breadth and variety of support the branch provided to members until I became a committee member."

In the next issue we meet Eleanor Hope, branch equality officer for Black members.

## LEARNING GRANTS FOR UNISON MEMBERS

**UNISON offers financial support to members taking part in various educational and learning opportunities, as well as learning discounts. Grants are awarded on a first come, first served, basis. Here are some examples:**

**Open University awards:** available to members taking 30 point (£200) and 60 point (£300) OU courses up to and including undergraduate level at their own expense.

**Members studying trade union and Labour movement or women's studies:**

- Certificate or diploma grants of up to £300 towards fees.
- Bachelor or masters' degree study: substantial grants available.

**Learning grants** of up to £200 to help members studying at levels up to and

including undergraduate at their own expense on the following types of courses:

- trade union and Labour studies (where an applicant has not received a bursary);
- non-vocational education (e.g. GCSE maths or English); and
- vocational education relevant to public service work.

**Grants for school support staff and care workers:** a limited number of personal learning development grant awards of up to £300 each are being offered to help towards course fees.

**UNISON distance learning discounts**

**Fee discounts available from:** National Extension College, CILEX Law School, Open College of the Arts, Birkbeck University of London, University of Wolverhampton.

Check out our website for more information.

# 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](http://www.unison.org.uk/changes)

This information is standard direct debit mandate information

Please go to [unison.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://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](http://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

## FOCUS ON LEARNING AND SCHOOLS

# SOS WEST SUSSEX GEARED UP FOR MORE ACTION!

-  Save Our Schools – SOS West Sussex
-  @SOSWestSussex
-  saveourschools@westsussex@gmail.com
-  saveourschoolswwsussex

**UNISON member Sarah Maynard (from the SOS West Sussex team) reports on campaign activity being planned in the next few months.**

“Following our recent ‘Next Steps’ workshop, this year we’re going to focus our efforts on growing the campaign, getting more parents on board to support adequate funding for all schools. We think many parents are still unaware of the reality so we’re planning to publicise the real impact of school cuts, focusing on

SEN provision and children’s wellbeing. We’ve recently sent out an anonymous headteacher survey to help gather evidence of the impact of cuts. We started with Worthing schools then extended countywide. The findings will develop a ‘Catalogue of Cuts’ which we will publish, but without identifying schools.

“There was a protest march on 21 April in Worthing town centre, including chalking messages on the prom. We’ll have a fresh social media approach to extend the reach of the campaign.

“Now is the time to join us. Parent power, with the backing of schools and other stakeholders is vital to turning around the funding crisis and deliver the kind of education our children deserve.”

## SCHOOLS ROUND-UP

The government’s unforgivable cuts agenda for our schools continues apace with the supposedly ‘extra’ £1.3billion doing nothing to meet the real funding challenge in schools.

UNISON has spent a lot of time so far in 2018 supporting members through

restructures. The figures below show the shocking impact these cuts are having in eighteen schools. Of course, virtually all schools are making cuts though this can often be done without the need to make redundancies, e.g. by not replacing staff who leave. UNISON is supporting the Save Our Schools West Sussex campaign and was invited to speak at their rally on 21 April.

**45.8** Full time equivalent teaching roles proposed to be cut from these schools

**83.75** Full time equivalent support staff roles proposed to be cut from these schools

- Balcombe School • Chichester Free School • Chichester High School • Clapham & Patching CE Primary School • Downsbrook Primary, Worthing • Holy Trinity Secondary, Crawley • Lancastrian Infant, Chichester • Lyndhurst Infants, Worthing • Nyewood CE Junior, Bognor • River Beach Primary, Littlehampton • Shoreham Beach Primary • St Andrews CE High School, Worthing • St Pauls Catholic College, Burgess Hill • St Peters CE Primary, Ardingly • St Wilfrid’s CE Primary, Haywards Heath • Thomas Bennett Community College, Crawley • Trafalgar Infants, Horsham • Warninglid Primary, Warninglid**

## DOWNSBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL, WORTHING

**The government's disastrous school cuts agenda has continued to affect Downsbrook Primary which has entered its second restructure in two years.**

The school is also to be forced to convert to an academy, after the destabilisation of the first round of redundancies and poor leadership led to an inadequate OFSTED judgement.

Schoolsworks Academy Trust took over the school from 1 April and is seeing through to

conclusion a restructure that began in March.

There were major cuts and changes to roles proposed for teachers, teaching assistants and office admin staff.

UNISON worked with members and submitted an 8-page consultation document. A number of concessions were made by

Schoolsworks, including honouring the school's pay protection policy for any downgraded staff, the status of which had become confused by the TUPE transfer.

The branch is working with members to finalise some outstanding points in the response and to support them in the lead-up to the end of summer term.

## THOMAS BENNETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CRAWLEY

**Run by The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT), the college faces a falling roll and major cost pressures due to funding cuts. TKAT stated the only option was either a complete school closure or a major restructure.**

The college was built under the controversial private finance initiative (PFI) scheme and pay out £1 million a year out of their £6million budget to Dutch construction giant, BAM. £176,000 a year of the budget is transferred to TKAT HQ to administer the academy chain. Proposals were to:

- Cut 15% from teachers;
- Cut 32% in school support staff;
- Cut 40% from Special Education Needs department;

- Cut 30% of the pupil welfare team;
- Cut out sixth form provision entirely.

This would clearly be a disaster if allowed to happen. UNISON met with TKAT and members in early March. Anger was palpable and UNISON agreed to hold a consultative ballot for industrial action. This led to a unanimous vote for industrial action on a very high turnout. At a further UNISON/TKAT meeting

on 29 March, TKAT tabled new restructure proposals including:

- Retaining the SEN co-ordinator (now with no redundancies for teaching assistants);
- Reinstating post-16 education, managed by an assistant head for the sixth form.

Original proposals identified up to 35 redundancies with 78 employees affected. Revised proposals identify 12 potential redundancies, with 47 staff affected.

The consultation timescale was extended by two weeks to 3 May. This is a distinct improvement on the original proposals. UNISON is now working with members to gather their views on the revised proposals.

## FOCUS ON LEARNING AND SCHOOLS

# BALCOMBE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

### UNISON caseworker Nigel Shanks reports on developments.

"The restructure at this small village primary school has been caused by budgetary issues. Proposals aim to reduce support roles but maintain the usual service and additionally start up a breakfast club.

"Sixteen staff are potentially affected. Teaching assistant (TA) hours are planned to reduce from 143 to 130 per week. Office hours are to be reduced from 58.5 to 45.

"UNISON's view is that the proposals focus on reducing support staff rather than

teaching and senior staff which is an imbalance in contribution to the cuts to the disadvantage of teaching support/support staff. We want to ensure there are no negative effects on pupils.

"UNISON has attended staff consultation meetings and had a long meeting with the headteacher and chair of governors regarding the implications and equality impact assessment, but the school has not yet completed the latter.

"We met members on 12 March, recruited a local rep

and gained new members.

"We want to ensure a fair approach involving all staff and minimum loss in hours and pay. Also, if there are potential enhancements in job content, they should be identified and looked at."

The formal consultation started on 12 March with the school response due on 27 April, as Branch Lines goes to print.

"We have advised members to maintain discussion with each other and raise queries and suggestions with the local rep and myself. We can hopefully sort some issues out at an early stage."

## TRAFALGAR INFANTS, HORSHAM

### Budget cuts have forced the school into looking at reducing the number of staff in an attempt to offset cuts.

No teaching staff are proposed to be affected, which is something UNISON will query through the consultation process. The restructure affects support staff including the librarian, school meal supervisors and learning assistants to create a total reduction of 71.5 hours support time. The school is anticipating further cuts in 2019/20 and therefore looking to save £110k over the next two academic years.

UNISON has met recently with members and welcomes a new school workplace rep, Noeline Tamplin. A further meeting for members will be held in order to contribute to the union's formal response to the proposals.



# ST. WILFRID'S PRIMARY, HAYWARDS HEATH

Faced with budget cuts of over £30k the school has proposed to offset cuts by reducing teaching assistants (TAs) by 3.06 fte (full-time equivalent), not replacing two other casual TAs and reducing agency costs.

A retiring class teacher will be potentially replaced by a newly qualified teacher at lower cost. Outsourced teaching planning, preparation and assessment activities (PPA) cover will be brought in-house saving over £12k per year. The school has set a savings target of 22% for office expenditure costs.

It's hoped most of the savings can be met through voluntary redundancy, but that's not certain. Support staff are proposed to bear the cuts, with teaching and management staff not affected. Reducing headteacher or deputy hours by just one day per week would make a significant contribution to the savings needed and have less impact on fewer staff.

UNISON recently met with local members and the management team and will be forming its response in the next few weeks.



# ST PETER'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ARDINGLY

**This restructure is caused by budgetary issues. Nine staff are potentially affected. TA hours are proposed to reduce from 155 to 128 hours per week, yet the school aims to maintain the usual service despite budget cuts.**

In UNISON's view, these proposals focus on support staff rather than teaching and senior staff. It is not reasonable that support staff who give so much and also work with a high degree of goodwill should bear the brunt of cuts.

UNISON has attended staff consultation meetings and had discussions with the headteacher and governors discussing the conduct of the consultation, timetable and equalities. There are significant equality impact factors regarding gender and age.

At a members' meeting on 22 March TAs provided alternative working patterns that meet the budget target. This will be discussed with the headteacher and governors.

Consultation ended on 20 April, with the school response due on 27 April, as Branch Lines goes to print.



# MARILYN AWARDED FOR GOING BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

We're delighted to report that UNISON workplace rep Marilyn Cox was awarded the south-east region 'rep of the year' award at the UNISON regional council meeting in Crawley. The award was presented by shadow education secretary and Labour MP Angela Rayner.

Marilyn said she had been quite overwhelmed and flattered by the award, especially as she had been nominated by UNISON members at her workplace, Field Place Infants School in Worthing.

She said, "For many teaching assistants (TAs) across the county it's been quite a tough year going through major restructures and all the stress that brings, but I think we're now in a better position at Field Place.

"I'm passionate about supporting my colleagues to try to get the best deal both for them and for the children and teaching staff we work with. We want to help make our school the best it can be."

Branch secretary Dan Sartin said, "Marilyn was nominated by her members for going above and beyond the call of duty. Even though she became quite ill during the restructure, she still counselled and fully supported her TA colleagues. It was this fact that especially impressed them and led to their nomination."

"Meeting Angela Rayner was a real pleasure," said Marilyn. "I had the chance to chat to her after the event. She told me she completely understood the value of TAs in schools and promised she would not forget us when she becomes education secretary."

Congratulations and thanks to Marilyn from the branch for your tireless efforts to support our members.



## W.A.S.P.I. MEETING

**WASPI (women against state pension inequality) is a campaign about injustice done to all women born in the 1950s affected by changes to the state pension law.**

The 1995 Conservative government's Pension Act included plans to increase women's SPA (state pension age) to 65, the same as men's. WASPI agrees with equalisation but does not agree with the unfair way the changes were implemented.

Their aim is to campaign for fair transition in state pension arrangements for all women born in the 1950s.

They are not campaigning for the pension age to revert back to age 60.

UNISON West Sussex retired members group has invited a speaker from the recently formed Bognor and Chichester WASPI group to speak to them about their campaign at 12 noon on Friday 11 May in County Hall, Chichester.

All retired members are welcome, as are working UNISON members. Refreshments provided.

# BRANCH WELCOMES ZOE

**We're delighted to welcome our new branch negotiations officer Zoe Walker.**

Zoe joined us in early March. She has experience of working in the private and public sector and joins us after working for a UK education charity for ten years. As well as her formal role there, for six years she was a UNISON workplace rep and convener.

She was involved in all aspects of trade union negotiations with the employer, such as TUPE transfers, restructures,



Zoe Walker

capabilities, disciplinarys and grievances.

Zoe's role will continue the focus of her predecessor James Ellis, now working for the New Education Union. She'll be leading union negotiations in many school restructures across the county and helping the branch support individual cases when required.

Branch secretary Dan Sartin said, "We're very pleased and fortunate to have been able to welcome Zoe to the team. I'm sure she will be a great support for our members."

# TIM APPOINTED TO PENSIONS BOARD

**Long-standing UNISON member Tim Stretton was appointed to the West Sussex pensions advisory board (PAB) in November.**

The PAB is an important, statutory, regulatory function set up two years ago. It consists of an independent chair, two employer reps and two employee reps. It holds the pensions panel (PP) to account. The PP sets the direction for the West Sussex local government pension fund. The PAB checks this has been done appropriately, challenges decisions where necessary and reports any breaches to the Pensions Regulator.

Tim's 'day job' is the strategic finance business partner supporting the EIE (economy, infrastructure and



Tim Stretton

environment) directorate. He has a wealth of knowledge from previous WSCC finance positions he's held to help him on the PAB.

"It was quite a competitive process for the role," said Tim. "It's great that both employee representatives on the PAB are both UNISON

members (the other being Chris Scanes). I'm looking forward to completing the training programme required for the role."

Branch retired member Judith Taylor is also the employee, retired and deferred member rep on the pensions panel, so UNISON is well represented on both the PAB and PP. This is really important because UNISON reps get support and training from the wider union and access to significant expertise and legal advice. PP reps who were not UNISON reps would not get this and would not do as good a job for LGPS members.

We wish Tim every success in this new role.

# Thinking about becoming a UNISON workplace rep?

Workplace reps play a number of roles. They:

- talk to, recruit and organise members around workplace issues.
- give members information about union issues and keep members informed about – and involved in – local negotiations.
- are advisers and sounding boards, talking to members about workplace problems and – if they feel confident and wish to do so – giving advice on how to deal with these.
- may arrange for a member to get advice or assistance from elsewhere in the union, or work with them to get the information they need.
- are representatives for members in their workplace, raising issues with managers or working with branch officers to ensure that work issues are highlighted and resolved.

Reps are elected each year by the group of members they represent. They are the most important link between the union's structures and members.

UNISON reps' training is often very useful within many people's day-jobs, especially knowledge of employment law, negotiation, influencing and persuasion skills.

If you'd like to find out more, contact the branch office on 01243 777636, or email [office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk)

You can also download our rep nomination form and find two UNISON members in your workplace willing to propose and nominate you. See <http://unisonwestsussex.org.uk/get-involved/become-rep/>

## UNISON DEBTLINE SUPPORT

**UNISON's Debtline service is available to all our members to help you manage money and deal with debt. We offer free confidential advice to help you clear your debts.**

Debtline can help you deal with:

- credit card debt;
- mortgage arrears;
- home repossession;
- county court judgment claims.

Our Debtline service is provided by debt management experts, Payplan. Using this service you get:

- immediate advice;
- a debt management plan to suit your circumstances;
- a case officer to advise

you throughout your repayment programme and negotiate with your creditors;

- a reduction of multiple debt repayments into a single, affordable monthly repayment;
- a choice of payment methods;
- a free and confidential service with no hidden charges.

Call the UNISON Debtline on 0800 389 3302.

Help with debt is just one

of the benefits of joining UNISON. We can also provide direct financial assistance to members in dire straits. Branch welfare officer Stuart Gibbons said: "I recently supported two UNISON West Sussex branch members through the union's 'There for you' service with grants of over £1,000 each. This really helped them both through challenging financial situations: in one case completely wiping out a debt. We also support by helping prepare debt action plans with members." Contact the branch for more details.