



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, what were you thinking?

Now is the time to join!

Fill in a paper form or join online. Just ask a steward or the link from Staff Central.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

April 2019

Welcome to this month's newsletter.

First of all, unless you've joined the union very recently, please make sure you vote in the election for the National Executive Council.

This body is elected every two years and is made up of ordinary UNISON members who volunteer to meet regularly to make the decisions about where our union is going in between annual conferences.

Turnout in these elections is normally low, but we want to make our members more involved in the process so that we can genuinely say that our union is member-led and that members are having a real say in where we're going.

There's more information from page two, including who we've nominated and why.

As we mentioned in the previous newsletter, the Students' Union appear to be pushing ahead with compulsory redundancies, mainly as a result of an expectation that funding from the University will be cut in real terms.

This is perhaps a sign of where things are going, but it's hard to understand the attitude of UEB if we're still supposed to be putting students at the heart of everything we do.

Reducing the organisation for students to be able to elect course leaders and run efficient societies is only going to make the Students' Union less effective and cause damage to the University's National Student Survey outcome.

You really couldn't make all this up.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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National Executive Council Elections 2019



Provided you've been a member for more than a few months, you should receive a ballot paper at your home address by the end of April.

This includes information about the candidates in seats for which we have a vote. Please make sure you use your vote and have a say in the direction of your union. Each branch is entitled to nominate candidates for the relevant seats. We have made nine nominations. You should be able to see which ones we have, but please read all the election addresses and make your own mind up about who you would like to support.

If you want to follow your Branch Committee recommendations, here's a brief explanation of who we've nominated and why.

Higher Education Seats:



Kath Owen (Higher Education Female Seat)

Kath was our guest speaker at our AGM in 2017. She is a workplace rep at the University of Leeds Branch and plays an active role in the Yorkshire region. She is proud to have been part of a branch which has built its workplace campaigns on members' activism, fighting for decent wages for all cross-campus, securing parity in holiday pay for sectional staff and building our campaigns around the pay award. These campaigns and wins have been the best recruitment drives and succeed in building branch activism.



Sandy Nicholl (Higher Education General Seat)

Sandy spoke at our AGM in 2018. He is Branch Secretary of the SOAS branch and has been for 23 years (!) His branch has a proud reputation of standing up for its members, uniting with students and lecturers in the fight to defend our pay and conditions, for free access to education and against fees. They also have a track record of fighting back – consistently voting for industrial action over pay and leading the battle against outsourcing through the Justice for Cleaners campaign.

Regional Seats:



Jac Berry (South East Female Seat)

Our branch committee has nominated Jac Berry for the South East female seat because we believe she is the best candidate to represent the branch and our members at NEC. Jac is a frontline nurse working in Intensive Care. She is on the NEC and we are supporting her re-election. Jac is a fighter for her members. Jac understands and will fight for the change we need to see in UNISON, so our union can reach its potential.



Abi Holdsworth (South East Reserved Seat)

Our branch committee has nominated Abi Holdsworth for the South East Reserved seat because we believe she's the best candidate. Abi works in a call centre for Capita in Bognor, West Sussex. She's a young mum with MS, and we want to bring on young disabled activists within our region and give them a voice. Abi is a workplace rep and a tough fighter for her members. She'll bring this determination to the NEC so we can change UNISON.



Dan Sartin (South East Male Seat)

We have nominated Dan Sartin for the South East male seat. Dan is Branch Secretary at UNISON West Sussex. We believe he is the best candidate to represent our members on the NEC. We think UNISON needs to change in significant ways. Dan is standing on a programme to change our union, not least by giving more of members' subs to branches so we can better support and represent you!

National Seats:



April Ashley (Black Members Female Seat) (two seats)

We've nominated April because she stands on the following programme:

For a leadership that leads - UNISON must take nationally co-ordinated action to defend jobs, pay and conditions – to fight austerity.

This government pursued illegal action against the 'Windrush Generation' – dismissal, detention and deportation. Oppose racist division and put our union at the head of a campaign for jobs, homes and services not racism.

For a Member-Led Union – Members and activists must have full transparent, democratic control over the union.

For fairer branch funding

For a general election now to kick out this government



Sandra Okwara (Black Members Female Seat) (two seats)

Sandra is an activist in Unison Hertfordshire branch. For the last two years she has been the branch equality officer and has developed a greater understanding of the issues affecting members particularly Black members, women, Disabled members, LGBT members and young workers. She believes in equality and supporting individuals to understand how to deal with and challenge inequalities. Injustice and discrimination faced by our members can only be tackled if our activists are given the training and support they need. If elected to the NEC, activists' education and development would be one of Sandra's priorities.



Hugo Pierre (Black Members Male Seat)

Our Branch nominated Hugo. His campaign letter persuaded us these issues need action at a national level.

Change UNISON Leadership - Co-ordinate national action against austerity:

Fight for Jobs - privatisation is bankrupt!

Fight schools' funding crisis - Stop academy conversions

Fight on pay

Fight Racism and Division

Sack this 'Windrush scandal' government! Campaign for jobs, homes and services not racism.

No silencing branches and members. Elect Senior UNISON staff. More branch funding.

Back Labour councillors voting against cuts.

A General Election Now!



Paula Carlyle (Disabled Members Female Seat)

Paula has been actively involved in Knowsley Local Government branch as Equalities Co-ordinator. She has consistently campaigned and organised on Equalities issues, including those of our Disabled Members. She organised the successful battle against the outsourcing of Adult Provider Services, which is needed in our communities, not only to provide much needed support to disabled people but also as respite for carers.

Our disabled members are only too aware that Tory austerity also disproportionately affects disabled people. As the largest trade union in the country, we need to ensure our members voices are heard – and heard loudly!

It's important that you return your postal ballot by 17th May, or your votes won't count.

What if you don't receive a ballot paper?

The chances are, we don't have your current address on our system. If you contact us then we can tell you what we do have, and correct it, but you'll still need to call UNISON's national office on 0800 0857 857 before 14th May.

**National
Executive
Council
Elections
2019**



2019-20 Pay Talks

Two of the three scheduled pay talks have taken place and the employers have moved their initial (pitiful) offer of 1.3% to a not much better 1.5%. With RPI at 2.5%, this represents a 1.0% pay cut and is well short of the joint pay claim submitted by all unions, of RPI plus 3%.

The two sides are due to meet again on 30th April for the final time and UNISON will consider what to do a week later.



What's likely to happen is that the employers may move to 1.6%, probably with a higher increase for the lower grades, but I doubt they will go much further, pointing to a freeze on the value of fees, increased pension costs and the precarious state of some university finances.

If that plays out, we could well be conducting consultative ballots of all our members with a view to rejecting the offer and planning strike action, provided a ballot is won with enough of a turnout to satisfy the anti-trade union laws.

We've said before that talking to the employers in the Spring as they slowly increase a terrible offer to a slightly less terrible offer is a poor tactic. It allows a situation where the only possible way of taking action is over the Summer (!) or after the students return in October, by which time the pay increase has been imposed by university managers.

Hopefully, we can make sure a set of balloting is done quickly and efficiently so that it's possible to take action earlier. It's entirely likely that we will be forced to campaign against job losses by then anyway, given the relentless pace of reorganisations to make the University more "efficient".

More news to follow.

Car Park Charges

It's no secret that the University is planning to charge its staff (and students) to park on the premises from the start of the 2019-20 academic year.

This is ostensibly to pay for the costs of building the colossal multi-storey car park, about to be clad in green walls and obliterating the view of an unfortunate group of people working in the wrong part of Watts.

Consultation over the University's proposals will begin at the end of April and as you'd expect, most members of staff will have strong views on the subject.

We have seen an outline of what is proposed and made some initial comments.



What is important to us is that the charges are proportionate to income and that those who absolutely need to use their car to travel to and from work because public transport is not an option, are recognised as being in an impossible situation.

Whilst there is nothing contractual about being able to park your car freely i.e. there's nothing in anyone's terms and conditions of employment that says the University will provide a free parking space, we recognise that for some people, there's not a lot of choice and many people took their current job with free parking being a factor in that decision.

This does, however, need to be weighed against the significant and uncontrollable costs which some people have to suffer to get here every day using public transport.

In keeping with trying to reduce individual car usage as much as possible, we'd like to see the University do more to encourage public transport usage.

Parking is a difficult issue for a trade union, because the differing opinions and personal situations inevitably mean that it is divisive, the opposite of what we want.

What we'll do is contribute to the consultation and make sure that the charges are consistent with the principle that the better off should pay more and that those with disabilities, childcare and carers' responsibilities, as well as those for which choice is not a realistic option are not disproportionately penalised.

What we can't do is campaign for parking to remain free for all. We will, however, campaign for a significant pay rise for all, to address the real terms reduction in wages which our members have all suffered for a decade or so.