

## 2017 – NOT A YEAR TO REMEMBER FONDLY

**A**t the start of the year there was much anticipation and hope for 2017. There was hope that the campaigning the Branch had put so much effort into would keep the Tories from taking control at County Hall. However, our warnings were not heeded by some and the Branch's worse fears came to fruition.

In May, the Tories scraped a majority and unashamedly the previous Tory Leader Geoff Driver, now with a CBE and police bail for witness intimidation and perverting the course of justice, took the Council Leader role once again. He didn't take long to start wielding the axe.

Amidst threats to axe UNISON's Facility Time before the election, now elected, he carried out his vindictive threat and removed the union's facilities. That is not just a swipe at the unions, it's a swipe at you, an employee.

The emboldened but vulnerable Council Leader then set about removing the top officers at the Council on the premise that an independent report about the Council's finances commissioned by the previous administration, advised that the most senior management posts should be removed as soon as possible. It was, as



they say, 'fake news'!

More recently, the Leader decided that it would make good sense to attack the lowest paid 5,800 staff in the Council and remove the Foundation Living Wage. UNISON and others voiced fierce opposition to this very publically and thankfully it resulted in the Cabinet backing down.

The Cabinet did not back down with the proposal to slash £11m from the staffing budget and threats to reduce staff annual leave and sick pay.

The Council is in denial about the finances. The Council will run out of

money next year and it will not be able to set a legal budget. The answer is simple; UNISON calls on the Leader to ask his own Government for some more money. They've done it in leafy Surrey and affluent Oxfordshire, so why can't they bail out Lancashire? Driver has so far rejected this call and you may question as to where is Lancashire in the Northern Powerhouse, compared to the devolution in Greater Manchester and Merseyside region.

*Continued overleaf >*

# AGM

**Lancashire UNISON  
Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 8th March at 4pm  
Savoy Suite, Exchange  
County Hall  
Preston  
PR1 0LD**

**SEE PAGE 3 FOR MORE**

*Our thoughts are especially with the many members who have to work over the this period. So whenever you get the chance to celebrate, the team at Lancashire UNISON wish you A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.*



## 2017 – a year in review ...continued from page 1

**T**here has been some good news to shout about. The fears that a review of Further Education (FE) would result with colleges being merged didn't materialise. However as with other public sectors, funding of FE is in a poor state and there is a growing uncertainty as to how Brexit will affect the numbers of foreign students coming into our FE colleges.

As we've previously reported 2017 has been a terrible year in schools owed to the funding crisis and I think it is safe to say that the Branch has never seen so many school reorganisations as this year. In previous years it was quite uncommon for redundancies to take place but this year, particularly before the end of the summer term, UNISON attended at least one school where jobs were at risk every week. The uncertainty in school funding is causing further anxiety.

UNISON had a tremendous landmark victory in the Courts over Tribunal fees in the summer. The win meant that Employment tribunal fees were scrapped after UNISON won a landmark court victory against the Government. The Supreme Court – the UK's highest court unanimously ruled that the government was acting unlawfully and unconstitutionally when it introduced the fees four years ago. Anyone in England, Scotland and Wales wanting to pursue a case against their employer had to find as much as £1,200. This has been a huge expense for many low-paid employees and denied many workers accessing justice.

With immediate effect it meant that anyone who has been treated illegally or unfairly at work would no longer have to pay to take their employers to court – as a direct result of UNISON's legal challenge. The Government also had to refund more than £27m to



### *Good news: Landmark victory in the Courts over Tribunal fees*

the thousands of people charged for taking claims to tribunals since July 2013, when fees were introduced.

UNISON continues to campaign and pursue employers who try to dodge paying our members the National Minimum Wage to staff who provide on-call night care.

In one charity some carers had previously been paid a flat rate of £25 for a nine-hour sleep-in shift – which works out at just £2.80 an hour. Staff will now be paid an average of £7.50 per hour for every sleep-in they work.

Lancashire County Council applies the legally compliant rate but if you work for a private provider and think you are not being paid the correct rate please contact the Branch.

The issue of pay in the public sector is an open sore that must be addressed. Local Government staff, along with FE and Probation have suffered the most under the continued pay restraint. In Local Government, staff have suffered a 21% cut real terms pay since 2009 and yet it is only staff hard work that is keeping services going with ever decreasing resources. Time will tell if members have had enough of below inflation

pay offers, especially when matched with cuts to terms and conditions.

2018 will continue to be a challenge for us all. The loss of Facility Time will mean that the Branch will look, and feel very different from April. The removal of four full time officers, takes the Branch back to the mid 1990s. At that time, the Branch had Reps in most workplaces although this is not the case today. In order for our members to receive the support they need, members could ask themselves what can I do for my union and my colleagues? Being a Rep can be rewarding and improve confidence. Full training and support is given and Reps can get as involved as they like and all that is needed is enthusiasm the desire to make a difference and help colleagues.

UNISON is proud to be a lay member led union; this makes it unique. Take a stand and play a bigger part in your union. Best wishes to you all.

**Elaine Cotterell**  
Branch Secretary  
Lancashire UNISON

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## Preliminary Agenda



1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Notes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 3/3/17
4. Election of the following Branch Officers and Stewards
5. Treasurer's Report and Audited Branch Accounts
6. Annual Report
7. Motions\*
8. Amendments to Branch Rules
9. Guest Speaker-Heather Wakefield, National Secretary Local Government, Police and Justice Section
10. Prize Draw

***\*If you wish to submit a motion please send it to the Branch Office with the name of the proposer and seconder by no later than 28th February 2018.***



## Take the lead in UNISON

UNISON is the largest public services trade union in the country and Lancashire branch is one of the biggest branches within UNISON. Having lots of members means that there are lots of different issues and concerns to address. Health and Safety, equality, discrimination and campaigning are but a few.

We look to members to take on lead roles in particular areas of UNISON activity by becoming

branch officers. Below are details of the officer roles that the branch will elect next year, a brief idea of what the role involves can be found at <http://lancashireunison.org/2016/09/take-a-lead-in-unison/>

Some roles need more experience than others but the main requirement is enthusiasm, a willingness to undertake training (which will be provided) and a desire to make things happen.

## Branch roles in your union

- BRANCH CHAIRPERSON
- VICE-CHAIR
- BRANCH SECRETARY
- ASSISTANT SECRETARY (4)
- BRANCH TREASURER
- ASSISTANT TREASURER
- EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR
- LIFELONG LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR
- EQUALITY CO-ORDINATOR
- HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER
- COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
- INTERNATIONAL OFFICER
- MEMBERSHIP OFFICER
- YOUNG MEMBERS' OFFICER
- WELFARE OFFICER
- LABOUR LINK OFFICER
- RETIRED MEMBERS' SECRETARY

## Want to do something more?

Help your colleagues and other members becoming a UNISON rep or workplace contact.

Being a UNISON workplace rep gives you the opportunity to:

- make a positive difference to people's work lives
- learn new skills and meet new people
- help create a fairer society

Call the branch office on **01772 533072** for more details.

## Keep up to date with your branch



Find us on the web:  
**lancashireunison.org**



Follow us on Twitter:  
**@unisonlancs**



Follow us on Facebook:  
**Unison Lancashire**



## The 2017 National Conference in Brighton and North West Regional Conference

**I was lucky enough to be included in the delegation from Rossendale and Darwen Constituency Labour Party to attend this year's National Labour Party Conference in Brighton.**

I hadn't attended the conference previously and it is difficult to describe the sheer scale of it. Delegate numbers were up from last year and filled most of the 5,000 seat hall. Unlike other political parties, the role of Labour's Conference is to pass resolutions which formulate policies, and this showed in radical motions to reinvest in the economy, redistribute wealth and power from the few to the many, and to support and offer solidarity to workers' struggles abroad.

Most memorable to me was the speech by Lauren Stocks aged 16 who talked about increased mental illness in children and young people caused by the immense pressure on them to succeed. In addition to the packed hall there were a dizzying array of seminars, meetings, trade union events, socials and outside events on all manner of subjects. Momentum had its own venue for its side event, The World Transformed, with queues forming around the block.

Stalls on just about any socialist grouping or topic you could name were packed in outside of the main conference arena. In a few minutes of getting lost amongst them I ran into Dennis Skinner then shortly after Ken Loach. All the front bench speakers made rousing speeches including UNISON member Angela Rayner MP.

The highlight – the speech by party leader Jeremy Corbyn

– rounded the conference off. When he walked up to the rostrum the hall exploded with clapping, cheering, the stamping of feet and rounds of 'oh Jeremy Corbyn!'

After several minutes and more than one attempt Jeremy managed to resume order and delivered an excellent and rousing 75 minute speech, well populated with jokes and witty remarks about the Tories and their magic money tree. Everyone left resolved to fight hard for the election of a Labour government with Jeremy Corbyn for PM, when the Tories finally topple. It can't be long now.

After this, Regional Labour Party Conference in Blackpool was a hard act to follow but once it was announced that Jeremy Corbyn would be speaking the 1,000 available tickets soon sold out. Debates and motions were more orientated to local issues, such as the plans the Tory county council have to save £5 by attacking the pay and conditions of its LCC employees. Banning fracking was a popular subject, given the proximity to the Cuadrilla installation just down the road. More stalls and fringe events – I attended the TULO event (joint venture between UNISON and local trade unions) which discussed the issue of low pay. The highlights, apart from Jeremy Corbyn of course, were another round of excellent speeches by front bench ministers Angela Rayner, John McDonnell, Diane Abbott, and Emily Thornberry. Everyone was enthused.

**Pam Bromley,**  
*Labour Link Officer*

# Chaos reigns at the council

## A CHAOTIC FEW MONTHS – BUT A VISION AT YOUR EXPENSE

The last few months have been chaotic at Lancashire County Council. The County Council has been dragged through the mud which reflects badly on the services we work so hard to deliver. Yet amidst this chaos, UNISON members may be surprised to hear in the media that the Council Leader has a vision for tackling what he admits is a black hole in the funding of our services in Lancashire. Under the guise of “prudent management of council finances and resources”, and “working as efficiently and effectively as possible to prioritise the services people in Lancashire want”. He has made it clear he will scrimp, scrape and cut your terms and conditions as a key element in his strategy to squeeze ever growing demands in services into an increasingly inadequate budget.

## THE REAL REASON FOR COUNCIL'S STRUGGLING

His fundamental problem is the majority party on the Council, in power for seven years nationally in Government, has made cutting public services the centre of their economic and political strategy. This has led to a crisis across our major services, a crisis of growing need and demand combined with a built in shortfall in budgets.

The hope is that no one will notice, people will struggle on, volunteers will replace employed staff, those in work will struggle on to do the work of colleagues taking redundancies. That the good will of public service workers will save the day because we care so much about the services we provide. Amidst seven years of pay freezes and caps, that workers will increase productivity, will remain in post and struggle on the cheap.

## THE FINANCIAL BLACK HOLE IS WORSE IN LANCASHIRE

Yet in Lancashire it is even worse. As elsewhere the talk is of how the pay cap is unsustainable and that public services need more resources, Lancashire County Council are proposing to further cut terms and conditions. Unlike many other County Councils, Lancashire has a lot of problems that require public money to ameliorate, especially in the area of care. Yet a lower income base from which to meet the need. This is why an end to central government grants will be a disaster for people in Lancashire. We all pay our taxes nationally, yet unlike in the past, these are no longer being distributed to where the need exists. Therefore we end up unfairly paying for our own misfortunes.

## AN OPPORTUNITY MISSED

Recently, at the Full Council Meeting on Thursday 26th October 2017, as part of a debate on Libraries, opposition Councillors called on the County Council to prioritise pressing the Government for more resources for Lancashire. That the County Council leadership should do so immediately, as the opportunity to make a difference would exist on Wednesday 22nd November 2017, when the Budget for the next year was announced. If a Conservative Leadership of one of the largest Councils in the country were to be heard loud and clear in Westminster. If the 8 Conservative MPs in Lancashire voted down the Government on this, they may have a similar impact to the 10 DUP MPs who are keeping the Government in power only on the promise of more investment in Northern Ireland. Yet Lancashire is only slightly smaller than Ulster in population. Our needs are similar.

## A THREAT HIT THE LOWEST PAID THWARTED

The most recent aspect was a plan by the Council Leadership to freeze the wages of 5,800 lowest paid workers and to withdraw from the Foundation Living Wage. This was in the very week the National Living Wage Foundation announced the annual increase and urged employers to adopt, not abandon this principle. People should be able to live on their pay, not merely exist. Your branch strongly opposed this proposal and we were gratified to see it withdrawn at the start of the recent Cabinet, on Thursday 9th November 2017, meeting where wages and conditions were being discussed.

## A FACT IS A STUBBORN THING

Whilst paying lip service to the duty of any Council to fight for its residents and try to secure the most advantageous financial settlement from Government, the leading party have continued to blame massive cuts amidst growing demand on the last administration. Conservative County Councillors in power have ridiculed calls to go ‘cap in hand the Government’ despite accepting an all party approach to Government earlier in the year. Yet, as the Independent Price Waterhouse Cooper Report, often quoted in these pages has said, without extra funding, Lancashire will face an increasingly difficult situation, ultimately being unable to run even essential services.

What the people of Lancashire need is an honest assessment of our needs and a fair financial settlement. This Conservative Leadership would sooner make you work harder than ever for less and less than face up to the failure of their national party's economic model, being rejected in other Councils, but being intensified here.



## Good value and great values from a trusted insurer, LV=

UNISON members have been enjoying exclusive discounts on LV= Car and Breakdown insurance for many years.

LV=, the UK's largest friendly society with over five million members and customers, has been awarded Which? Insurance Provider of the Year 2017.

The UNISON approved Car insurance as well as the comprehensive and deluxe levels of Breakdown cover are all Defaqto five star rated to give you peace of mind.

To make the most of your membership give us a call or go online. Call 0800 756 8161 or visit [www.LV.com/UNISON](http://www.LV.com/UNISON)

Lines are open Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm  
Calls may be recorded.  
For Text Phone: first dial 1800

## Financial matters

**A**s discussed in this column previously a significant minority of British adults have virtually no savings. A House of Lords committee revealed that 40 per cent of the working-age population held less than £100 in savings.

Financial advisers typically recommend that workers maintain a rainy day accessible savings pot of 2-3 months' wages – on top of spending money, and any pension or other investments. At the estimated UK average salary of £27,000, that would be £4,500 to £6,750.

### THIS IS JUST IMPOSSIBLE FOR OUR MEMBERS ON THE "BREAD LINE"

Many British households struggling with a combination of soaring housing costs, rising shop prices and stagnating wages, would consider such a savings cushion an exceptional luxury. The Lords Financial Exclusion Committee also condemned the 'scandal' of the poorest people being excluded from basic financial services.

### CAN UNISON HELP?

Well we have negotiated with **Blues & Twos** credit union who now offer membership to all UNISON members in Lancashire and Cumbria.

#### What is a Credit Union?

**Blues & Twos** credit union is a "not for profit" financial co-operative, owned entirely by its members and run by a trained professional team. Setting the policies, compliance and strategic governance is the Board of Directors who draw experience from

a variety of business / public sector backgrounds. The team offer you ethical savings and affordable loans. Save as you borrow.

For more information visit [www.bluesandtwos.org.uk](http://www.bluesandtwos.org.uk) or call 01772 618833

**BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE ALREADY IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY**, struggling with credit card and other debts UNISON offers a free service with its partner Pay Plan call free on 0808 278 9044 for a quick and easy way to get free advice from experienced professionals. Or visit [www.payplan.com/about-us/supporters/](http://www.payplan.com/about-us/supporters/) remember to tell them you're in UNISON when you call.



### SOME FEEDBACK

#### "I'D BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT LOSING MY HOME."

*"Before I came to PayPlan, I was with a fee charger who told me that it would take approximately five years to pay off my debts. After a few months, I moved to PayPlan and the repayment period immediately reduced to two years."*

Ian – Feb 2017

#### "THANK YOU TO PAYPLAN"

*"I'm very open with all my family and friends about being in debt. It can happen to anyone regardless of who you are or where you came from. Thank you to PayPlan for helping me get where I am today."*

Jacque – Feb 2017



# School Report

The Autumn Term is always the longest in the school year and I am sure at times it appears never ending but at least December is usually a happy and festive time in schools – particularly primary schools.

Autumn term also means the annual national celebration, organised by UNISON, of the work all Support Staff undertake with the Stars in our Schools day – this year it is on Friday 24th November. I know that some schools put on celebratory events and invite parents and local dignitaries into school to appreciate the work that Support Staff do in educating

all children. If your school did join in the celebration then I hope you had a fabulous day.

### School funding

The issue of school funding never seems to be out of the news. The Government announced their proposals for a fairer funding formula and they went out for national consultation in December 2016. In July 2017 the Government announced plans to increase schools spending by £1.3bn over the next two years to enable per pupil spending to be maintained. In September the Secretary of State announced further updates saying the funding formula would make things fairer and more transparent and would mean increased funding for every school! The concern is that this additional money is not “new” money and in real terms could mean a cut for some schools’ funding.

We all know what that may mean- increased class sizes (already happening), loss of teaching and support staff (already happening), fewer subject choices (already happening) and possibly less support for SEND pupils.

What can we all do? If your school suffers any of the above you, and family members, need to contact your local MP and ask what they are doing to raise the matter in Parliament. Check the Fair Funding for Schools site for information about your school and other schools [www.fairfundingforallschools.org](http://www.fairfundingforallschools.org)

Let the UNISON Branch Office – 01772 533072 – know of any staffing reduction proposals so that we can support members and ask questions of the school as to why reductions are required.

### Support staff national seminar

This is an annual event that is always informative and a good way of meeting with delegates from across the UK.

The 2018 seminar is likely to be held in Brighton next May. As soon as details are available they will be circulated for anyone interested in attending. Because of the location it could mean 2 overnight stays which would mean 3 days out of school – that may present a problem for some Headteachers.

## ESSENTIAL COVER IF YOU WORK IN PUBLIC SERVICES

With cuts, redundancies, restructuring and outsourcing, now is the time to **join UNISON**. Call free on 0800 171 2193 OR ask the branch for a membership form.



Join online at [joinunison.org](http://joinunison.org)



Join by phone 0800 171 2193



Ask your steward for an application form

From **£1.30** a month

# Pay Up Now!

Concern about public sector pay limits has focused on NHS and emergency service workers. But pay for more than a million school and council workers has been kept down for longer and it's time for things to change.

It's hard to see why local government and school support workers should face a further 2.7% cut in basic pay next April when their current two-year pay deal comes to an end. But another big cut it will certainly be, if the government's 1% public sector pay cap is not scrapped.

Inflation is currently at 3.7% and forecast to remain above 3% up to 2021. With damning evidence on pay and conditions since 2009, the unions' claim for the Foundation Living Wage rate at the bottom rate and a 5% increase for all from April 2018 is modest.

Since 2010, 1.3 million school and council workers covered by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services – aka the NJC – have suffered a three-year pay freeze, followed by 1% increases for the majority since 2013. That's one year-long 'freeze' more than other public sector groups and equates to



an overall, real-terms cut in basic pay alone of 21%. Seventy eight percent of this group are women. During that period, the lowest pay rates have fallen so low that they have had to be upped by more than 1%, just to keep them above statutory National Minimum Wage and Living Wage rates – and keep councils and schools within the law. That should be shocking. In 1999, the lowest NJC pay rate was 24% higher than the NMW, but by 2016, there was just a 0.3% difference. NJC pay is now poverty pay.

Funding is critical to a fair outcome for NJC workers – 75% employed by councils. Devastating local authority budget cuts of 40-70% by governments since 2010 have left councils reeling, cutting non-statutory services, pay and conditions to keep afloat. It will require the Treasury to put its hands in its pockets to fund our claim and the pay spine review, which will also carry costs. If local government – or Theresa May's reign – are to have a future, there is no option but to pay up.

The above statement was made by Heather Wakefield National Secretary for UNISON's local government, police and justice section.

One in ten council workers in

England, Wales and Northern Ireland are paid below the living wage, and the extra money would lift more than 60,000 cleaners, library assistants, residential and home care workers and other local authority staff out of poverty?

The new living wage rates, currently £9.75 an hour in London and £8.45 in the rest of the UK are already coming under attack from cash strapped Local Authorities saying that's budgets won't allow them to continue the arrangements.

UNISON says Scotland already pays the wage to local government workers while in the rest of the UK the current lowest hourly rate is £7.78. We ask that the current Government put the Living Wage firmly onto the statute books in order to lessen the impact on the work poor members.

**Thanks for this issue of Loud & Clear go to:**

*Pam Bromley  
Elaine Brookes  
Elaine Cotterell  
Tony Harmson  
Jason Hunter  
Chris Lomax*