



Dear members,

It has been a frenetically busy few weeks and I would like to update you on what Greenwich Unison has been doing to support and protect our members. I hope there will be something of interest for all of you.

All the best

**Simon Steptoe
Branch Secretary Greenwich Unison**

Elections

Elections. Around this time of year we start off the process of electing new officers for 2017. We will upload full details on our website in the next few days www.greenwichunison.co.uk and there will be information on our new Facebook page, If you use face book just search for Greenwich Unison (and LIKE us). All Branch Officer posts are up for election and the first date for you diary is when nominations close on Thursday 15th December at Midday. Our AGM's will be in the week beginning 6th February 2017, in the town hall on Tuesday a Lunchtime and an AGM/Social for members at The Plumstead Radical Club on Friday 10th February, so why not put these dates in your Diary now. The posts up for election are; Branch Secretary, Branch Chair, Branch Treasurer, Assistant Branch Secretary RBG, Assistant Branch Secretary Schools and Colleges, Assistant Branch Secretary Private Sector, Equalities Officer, Health and Safety Officer, Education Officer, Communications Officer, Retired Members Officer, Welfare Officer and Labour Link Officer. If you want to find out more then contact me or another Branch Officer. There have been several activists who have left the Borough over the last year and we need people to step up and support the Branch by becoming a Branch Officer.

(Early) Christmas Party

The next big event for many of us is the festive season and as a thank you to members we are organising an (early!) Christmas Party to get the Christmas spirit going. We can't use the Town Hall this year, so we have booked The John Roan Sports Club, Kidbrooke Park Road SE3 9NF for Friday 18th November. We will kick off at 7.30 and be going all the way through to midnight. DJ 'The Dark Knight' will be spinning the Discs, also known as Earl Leslie, if you have been to one of his events you will know how good he is. Entrance is free for Unison members and a guest and we will even throw in the first drink! I know money is tight for many of our members, especially at this time of year so why not take advantage of a good value night out. Please come and bring along your colleagues, and remember if they are not a member and they sign up it's free entry!



Pre Christmas Party
Friday 18th November
7.30pm - 12am
Joan Roan Sports Club
The Roan School Playing Fields
Kidbrooke Park Road
SE3 9NF

Free entry to **UNISON** members including one guest.
Not a member? Join up on the night.

First drink is FREE!

Music provided by:- The Dark Knight



Campaigns

Axe the Housing Act

From speaking to members, one of the biggest worries we all have is the Housing Crisis in London, even if like me you have been lucky in the London Housing lottery, you know how tough it is for your family and friends and especially young people find it to get good quality affordable housing in Greenwich. The recent Housing Act will make a bad situation worse for many of us and we have been Campaigning hard to oppose the Act. Our campaign has been brilliantly spearheaded by Tanya Murat, our convener in the Councils DRES Directorate and she recently led a Branch Delegation to the London Housing Summit aimed at getting a coordinated response from London Labour Council's in opposition to the Bill.

Simon

Telecare

Another issue that has recently come to light is what appear to be back door cuts in the excellent Greenwich Telecare service which members recently brought to my attention. The dilution of the service scared the hell out of me as I rely on the service as a disabled member of my household uses the alarm system to keep him safe. Without it I would find it hard to work. I have questioned the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council over this and am awaiting a response. Of course the real villains are the Government who seem to think that you can cut and cut year after year and somehow magically you can keep all the same services.

Simon

Schools Funding

This is a concern for all our School's members as proposed government changes to how Schools are funded in the Borough are a threat to kid's education across the Borough and to our member's jobs.

The government is threatening to rob London Schools to make up for inadequate funding elsewhere in the country. Increased spending by the last Labour government has helped make Greenwich Schools some of the best in the country and I and Clara, our Schools rep have been leading the campaign at a Regional Level in the Union to make sure we fight to protect school funding for London's Kids so they continue to be among the best in the whole country.

Simon and Clara

Workplace Issues

Cuts to Greenwich Services

This brings us to the rather dry 'Medium Term Financial Strategy' which some of you will know is the Councils way of implementing government cuts, while trying to maintain services. Some of you reading this will be recently retired members who left the Council as part of this strategy, what Unison has said right from the start of this process is that this level of cuts will prevent services being delivered and impose an impossible workload on those who remain and sure enough we are being proved right. Having lost huge numbers of experienced managers, services are beginning to collapse and the stress of trying to deliver is beginning to tell on our members.

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at
joinunison.org



Call us on
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form

Planning

The Planning service, which was already buckling under the pressure of previous cuts is now threatened with being taken out of the Council's hands. Our team of reps in DRES are fighting this tooth and nail.

The problem is compounded by the council failing to pay competitive wages to recruit and retain Qualified Planners, a problem becoming more prevalent throughout the Council as years of vindictive pay restraint imposed by the Government on Public Sector workers has led to staff shortages in roles across the Council. We are actively pursuing realistic wages for our members in Planning and will do the same in any area you let us know about.

Simon

Children's Services

I recently helped our fantastic Unison rep in Children's Social services, Pat Keith conduct a workplace survey one lunchtime on the 1st floor of the Woolwich Centre. As we made our way round the staff trying to eat their sandwiches while desperately trying to catch up with an impossible work load it was clear that work related stress will become an ever more serious problem in the months and years to come. We will be following up our findings with management and our other reps will be doing the same on other floors at the Woolwich Centre and Council offices across the Borough.

Simon

Staff Survey

The Council will shortly be rolling out its employee survey. Unison have insisted they ask questions about stress and workload. If you work for the Council, look out for this and make sure you make your feelings known. We have also put pressure on Greenwich Schools to conduct their own Employee survey. If you work in a School why don't you ask your Headteacher how they plan to find out how their staff feel?

Simon

Birchmere, Back to normal for loaders

Greenwich Unison have raised with management loaders having to report to Birchmere depot before the start of their AM shift. We told management that loaders being picked by drivers on way to their round is a contractual issue and management have not consulted with TU over this issue and therefore we would begin an indicative ballot for work to rule, if they refuse to return to the status quo.

Management have confirmed that they will return to the status quo but have advised that if any loader does not call in sick before 6.30, that management withhold the right to ask that member of staff to report to Birchmere depot in the future, therefore Greenwich unison are advising our members to ensure they follow the calling in sick procedures and if the sickness line is busy they must continue to try and get through, but as of now no AM loader will be required to report to Birchmere. Greenwich Unison have also confirmed with management that there is no change to the Christmas working arrangements for drivers and loaders.

Jay

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at
joinunison.org



Call us on
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form

GS+ Pensions and the London Living Wage

We will be fighting to make sure that the Council does not, once again, pay its handful of staff entitled to the increase in the London Living Wage from £9.40 to £9.75 before it pays the increase to its huge number of low paid staff who work for it's own Company, GS+.

We are also continuing to fight for the right of new GS+ employees to get access to a decent pension, employees who transfer to GS+ continue to get a proper Local Government Pension, but new workers only get offered a practically worthless 'workplace pension'. Unison will not accept that a council owned company which is part of the Councils own Local Government Pension Scheme be allowed to continue to treat decent working people in this way.

Tracey and Simon

Schools

Term Time Only pay

There is still time to take part in this. Unison believes your pay is not calculated correctly and are mounting a legal challenge, if you're pay is term time only and you have you yet filled out a case form contact the office ASAP.

Clara

Conway School

Conway School in Plumstead is making all its Level 3 Teaching Assistants redundant because it claims that it does not have the money to keep them. We are fighting this tooth and nail and the Branch is supporting members in their calls for strike action. We believe that the proposed cuts are a threat to children's education at the School and the School has failed to explore alternative ways of reducing costs which don't involve leaving whole classes with no support. This is a fast moving story and we will need support from Schools members across the Borough to stop this happening. If Conway gets away with this educational vandalism other Schools may try to do the same and there will be hundreds of job cuts in Greenwich Schools.. Keep an eye on our website and face book page for updates.

Clara and Simon

Stars in our Schools

We have contacted all the Headteachers in the Borough to encourage them to take part in celebrating the contribution support staff make. The day is on Friday 25th November, why not ask your headteacher if they are planning anything?

Clara

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at
joinunison.org



Call us on
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form

Stars in our schools

It takes a whole team to make a school a safe and happy place for children to learn. But many of you are tucked away behind the scenes – the unsung heroes of our children’s education.

Join us on 25 November as we hold award ceremonies, special assemblies and tea parties in schools across the UK to say “thanks for all you do”.

Friday 25 November 2016



facebook.com/UNISONinSchools
Twitter @UNISONinSchools
StarsInOurSchools.uk

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at
joinunison.org



Call us on
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form

Get involved

One thing you will have noticed by now is how effective we are when we have activists like reps and conveners. I have already mentioned Pat and Tanya, but I would like to show you the difference that can be made by telling you about Allison Grant our rep in Public Health, not only has she brilliantly protected members in the current reorganisation, forced on the Council by another round of cutbacks on this essential service from the Tory Government. She also leads our Women's Self Organised Group and is our Branch Education Officer. The point is, just think how much stronger we would be if we had an army of Pat's, Tanya's and Allison's standing up for our members in every Council Office and Depot, every School, every Care Home and all the places our members work all across the Borough.

If you want to be a rep, give us a call, contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Email address

If you have got this newsletter through the post, that's because we don't have a working email address for you, if you would like to get future newsletters by email, please let Pauline in the office know your current email address. It costs about £1 to print and post each newsletter to members, email costs us nothing.

We are happy to continue posting to those members who prefer it. But if you are happy with an emailed newsletter then let us know. We also can and do update members more often by email. Simon

Contact details

Simon Steptoe

Branch Secretary

Tel: 07879 990318 Email: simon@greenwichunison.org.uk

Jay Lowman

Assistant Branch Secretary Royal Borough of Greenwich

Tel: 07879 990269 Email: jay@greenwichunison.org.uk

Clara Mason

Assistant Branch Secretary Schools and Colleges

Tel: 07818 518934 Email: clara@greenwichunison.org.uk

Tracey Higgins

Assistant Branch Secretary Private Sector (includes GS+)

Tel: 07881 384397 Email: tracey@greenwichunison.org.uk

Kevin Sullivan

Birchmere convenor

Tel: 07818 517470

June Williams

Birchmere

Tel: 07881 384409

Office: Pauline Revell-Bowles

Tel: 020 8921 5226

Email: unison@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Greenwich UNISON

Riverside House West

Woolwich High Street

London SE18 6DN