



North Somerset
UNISON
Annual Report
2018 - 2019

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Report from the Branch Secretary

Goodbye and thankyou:

Helen Thornton, a long time North Somerset UNISON activist, and our branch secretary since 2017, left the council's employment in December. Her energy, enthusiasm and expertise are already much missed! Thank you to Helen and we wish her the best of luck for the future.

Thanks are also due to Jakob Wollmer for being such a skilled and dedicated treasurer over the last 3 years. Jakob is leaving our accounts in an ordered fashion ready for our new treasurer to take over with the minimum of fuss. (volunteers for this important role are welcome!)

Our new regional organiser:

Liz French has taken over from Christina Cook as our new regional organiser. Liz has a wealth of experience in supporting members and running a UNISON branch and has already provided invaluable advice and support for our reps and branch secretary.

Our core business:

As always, the branch had a busy year with over 200 members receiving individual support with issues including restructures, sickness absence, grievances and disciplinaries.

This year looks like being no different; in-fact in January, we received 29 completed member case forms (compared to 14 last year).

Branch ethical policy

We decided to practice what we preach and adopted a branch ethical policy in March. This commits the branch to, wherever possible:

- buying products which have been produced by organisations signed up to the Ethical Trading Initiative, which protects workers' rights,
- ensuring that members, on UNISON business, travel as sustainably as possible,
- buying locally
- producing as little waste as possible.

Together we are strong:

Members of North Somerset UNISON attended the TUC march and rally in London on 12th May to Step up for Public Services



Votes for Women!

A group of UNISON members joined the march in Bristol to commemorate 100 years since (some) women were granted the vote in the UK.

Although it was a wet and cold night the atmosphere was great! It was a really uplifting celebration of the power of a group of committed activists.

During the march, Suzanna Weeks and Pat Barratt, two of our committed branch members, took part in a lengthy interview with BBC Radio Bristol.

Well done to two articulate women – you did us proud!



Workers' Memorial Day

The Branch put on bake sales in April to commemorate workers' Memorial Day. As well as raising awareness of the union and enjoying lots of cakes, we raised over £100 for Unseen a Bristol charity which raises awareness of human slavery.

Tolpuddle



In the summer the branch put on a free day trip to the Tolpuddle Festival. This world-famous celebration of the union movement is always a great day out with music, politics, a march through the village and lots of amazing food.

The weather was perfect and those who attended had a really great day and returned feeling replete, exhausted and uplifted all at the same time! If you haven't been before, it is well worth thinking about joining us this year for this "festival for beginners" - like Glastonbury, only much cheaper, without the mud but with much better toilets!

Jean Long rep of the year

In July, the branch was proud to celebrate the work of Pat Barratt, who is definitely one of our most popular, dedicated and energetic activists.

Pat's expertise and know-how when representing members, incredible cakes and sparkly humour have lifted the morale of the branch for many years!

The award commemorates branch friend and activist Jean Long who sadly died in 2016.

This year it was presented by Heather Wakefield, UNISON Head of Local Government and Joanne Kaye, UNISON South West Regional Secretary



Change of Branch Secretary:

The role of Branch Secretary is now being taken by Louise Branch with Pat McCulloch's invaluable support. We may not have Helen's experience, but we are keen to learn and we are very keen to work together with UNISON members to ensure that our union reflects what people want, that we have open communication between branch office and all members and all representatives and other activists feel supported to get involved in their union.

Please look out for future communications from us about how to get involved. If you have any ideas or comments about how the branch could improve, please let us know! (email unison@n-somerset.gov.uk)

We look forward to working with Liz and with Val our brilliant administrator as well as all branch members to further develop our union.

We understand how hard it can be to find time to do more, especially with so much pressure at work. But if you can do more, everyone will benefit. Whether you get involved with your branch, vote in UNISON's elections, become a steward, recruit a friend or colleague or vote in ballots about your pay and conditions - every extra voice added to our call for better public services makes our union even stronger.

North Somerset Council Report

The last 12 months have been busy at the council; with UNISON representatives supporting many individual members through reorganisations, sickness reviews, disciplinaries and grievances; as well as representing all members on broader issues at Joint Consultative Committees and union liaison meetings with councillors and management.

Local Government and Schools Pay claim

UNISON national office represented members at the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government during prolonged negotiations over pay. After a close result in the consultative ballot of UNISON members, the NJC agreed a two year pay deal. The main points of this are, from 1/4/19:

- A 16% pay increase for those currently on the lowest scale point, SCP 6, over two years.
- A pay increase of between 4.3% and 15% for those on the current SCPs 7 – 28.
- A 4.04% pay increase over two years, for those above the current SCP 29, including those above SCP 49.
- A new pay-scale from 2019, with new scale points 1-43 and even 2% pay gaps between SCPs 6-28.

Locally, UNISON is now in consultation with the council on how the changes to the lower pay scales will be implemented.

TUPE of education support services to Somerset County Council

Education Support Services merged and transferred into their equivalent service in Somerset leading to the TUPE transfer of those staff and their relocation to Taunton.

Budget



The council's budget was cut by a further £10 million in 2018 with another £5 million planned in 2019. Although this reduction in annual cuts is perceived by some as an end to austerity, the effect is cumulative, with services which have been reduced or even ended in previous years not being restored.

The net result is a depleted but dedicated workforce being left to support often vulnerable residents who are feeling the impact of cuts across the whole of the public sector including health, police, mental health services, the court system and more. For many staff this is leading to stress and lowered morale.

UNISON Apprenticeship Charter

In May the council signed up to the UNISON apprentice's charter.

This is an important statement of commitment to supporting people to develop their career.

The Charter states that apprentices have the right to:



- An employment contract
- The council will endeavour to find the Apprentice a job through redeployment or other available means
- Payment at the rate for the job
- The same terms and conditions as existing workplace policies and procedures
- High quality training - both on and off the job
- Appropriate job supervision, pastoral support and clarity about rights and responsibilities
- Not be used for job substitution, including covering staff shortages of any duration
- A safe and healthy working environment - free from discrimination and bullying
- Join and participate in a trade union of their choice
- Remain on the same contract, terms and conditions, if they are already existing employees who start an apprenticeship

Employers have a responsibility to:

- Conduct a skills audit, to properly determine their organisation's needs
- Negotiate with relevant trade unions, to develop a high quality apprenticeship scheme, which ensures apprentices' rights are respected
- Select and monitor a high-quality training provider
- Endeavour to ensure the apprenticeship leads to a real job
- Recognise apprenticeships as investing in future labour, rather than 'cheap labour'
- Keep existing employees informed about the introduction of the apprenticeship scheme
- Provide support and training for the supervisors of apprentices
- Meet regularly with apprentices and their representatives

- Actively challenge job stereotyping
- Encourage and celebrate apprentices

Adult Social Care Workforce Consultation led by Hayley Verrico

As all adult social care staff know the consultation for the workforce restructuring ran from the 1 November to 7 December 2018, staff were asked to attend engagement meetings to have their say and voice their concerns which was very well attended by staff.

There is already the split with North and South,(as this part of the consultation was uncontested), we now have two teams North and South, in the consultation there was mention of re-designing the council's approach to adult social care, also to have more focus on SPA and it is hoped that effective intervention at SPA may assist in managing demand for statutory social care support, the council reported that they are not seeking any programme of redundancies, but it seems likely there may be implications for individual staff given the proposed restructuring of services and moving locations, the implementation of the new structure including any moves of staff was due late January/early February subject to change? Which appears to be the case at present.

Hayley asked for feedback from staff with regards to the proposals and any concerns that staff may have, feedback response was constructive from staff members and was a good indicator on how staff are feeling with regards to the restructuring of services.

Any members that feel they have any issues once the implementation of the proposal is published please speak to your Union rep, or the Unison branch for advice and support

Weston Area Health Trust Report

2018 was a very busy year for Unison at Weston Area Health Trust. We sadly said goodbye to two long standing reps - Ian Johnson & Gill Malakooti. Both had been reps with the Trust for many years and supported many members and were the driving force for union issues. Ian had been staff side chair and Gill was instrumental in developing onsite childcare for staff.

The remaining reps continue to support the 200+ members and take part in other staff side activities such as job matching and Joint Negotiating Consultative Council. There have been a number of consultations where Unison have contributed and a revamp of the job matching process to ensure fairness and efficiencies.

The Trust continues to work in partnership with University Hospital Bristol (UHB) and it is anticipated that UHB will take over Weston Area Health Trust later in 2019. It is

expected that this will generate far more union work to ensure staff contracts change as services merge and are redesigned.

As always, we need more reps and continue to do the best we can for our members.

Alliance Homes Report

The past year has seen a welcome reduction in the number of individual representations that we have been involved in. However, we have worked with members and management on the following collective activities:

- The restructuring of our housing-related floating support service and consequential redundancies. Following a 50% reduction in funding from NSC, AHG proposed a restructure and reduction in the workforce. Unsurprisingly, this was a difficult time for all involved and, despite a programme of voluntary redundancies, some compulsory redundancies could not be avoided.
- Mitigating the impact of the introduction of agile working and the refurbishment of our head office in Portishead.
- Following a restructure in HR, the reintroduction of the quarterly meetings with reps from both Unison and Unite.

Bill Prescott & Jane Burt

Agilisys Report

The consultation on the change to the staff pay date to the 28th of the month went through without challenge or concern and will be implemented from February.

In January Agilisys will undertake a new consultation to TUPE staff from 3 of its payrolls, into Agilisys Limited. The purpose is to simplify the Agilisys structure and reduce the administrative burden. By law a TUPE consultation is required although the only change for staff will be the title of the payroll. All the NSC TUPE'd staff are already in Agilisys Limited so will not be affected. It may impact some of our members in contact centres or those directly-employed into IT.

Liberata Report

A busy year at Liberata with a number of cases throughout, although thankfully no redundancies.

Liberata pay award for 2018 was agreed as 2% or a move to the Living Wage Foundation hourly rate based on a standard Liberata contract (£15540 pa) whichever was greater. This meant the lowest paid staff received around a 9% increase, those on a TUPE contract received the NJC award.

North Somerset Community Partnership Report

No report received

Weston College Report

No report received

Case Worker Report

As a Case Officer for UNISON my job is mainly dealing with the private sector. In the last year I have been very busy with members' in several sections of the work force for example, Care Homes, G.P. Surgeries, School Academies, Day Nurseries, to name just a few.

Once again most cases are usually to do with abuse of members of their terms and conditions. Health and Safety is also a big issue with employers putting members under pressure to work on their days off and longer hours, which leads to stress and errors and then Disciplinary Action.

I have noticed that UNISON's membership is increasing in the private sector and this is due to getting advice and representation.

Pat Barrett

Retired Members Report

Well the last year has flown by. Several members of our group joined with our working Unison members and had a very good day out at the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival on the coach organised by the Branch Committee (well done, Helen and Val). All of the retired members who went on the trip also joined in the march through the village and we carried the Branch banner.

Towards the latter end of the year, we organised a Christmas meal at the Summer House in Worle. Nineteen members attended and a very good lunch and social get together was had by all. We, as a Committee, gave all the members a gift of a Unison diary which was well received.

As I write this report we are about to start a new year, our first Committee Meeting will take place in early February at which we will discuss ideas for possible retired members events for 2019.

Martin Toleman
Chairperson
Unison Retired Members

Treasurer's Report

North Somerset UNISON's ('the Branch') General Fund account started 2018 with a balance of £35,235.62 and ended it with a balance of £21,855.34.

The Branch's reserve stood at £16,411.24 at the start of the year, rising to £16,433.55 by year-end following the transfer of this balance to an interest-yielding savings account in August.

Taken together, and including accrued liabilities, the Branch's finances totalled £36,549.35 on 31 December 2018.

As in the previous year, a large percentage of expenditure in excess of our funding payments is as a result of the Branch Committee's unanimous decision in May 2018 to agree a further six months of contributions towards the part-funding of a fixed-term post for Helen Thornton.

Totalling £12,391.83 in 2018, these payments to North Somerset Council allowed Helen to serve the membership as Branch Secretary until the end of 2018, and to make arrangements for the Branch's transition to new leadership under Louise Branch and Pat McCulloch.

Other major items of expenditure included:

- Sending delegates to the Women's, Black Members', National, Local Government and Retired Members' conferences
- Training costs associated with enhancing the skills of existing Branch representatives
- Activities/events of interest to members/activists staged during the year (e.g. provision of a coach to the TUC's *Step up for Public Services* march in May and Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival, the 2nd annual Jean Long Rep of the Year Award ceremony)