

Branch Newsletter Winter 2020

Croydon UNISON

Message from Yvonne Green, Branch Secretary



Since our last Newsletter was sent out the country has held an **election** in December resulting in an increased majority for the Conservative government with Boris Johnson continuing as Prime Minister. The number of Labour MP's were greatly reduced with Conservative government now having a working majority of 80 seats.

The Labour Party is currently voting for a new leader to replace Jeremy Corbyn when he stands down in the Spring. Keir Starmer is being backed by UNISON to be the next leader of the Labour Party.

We also left the **European UNION** on the 31st January 2020. We hope that worker's rights and current laws will be protected outside the EU.

Our **Croydon UNISON AGM** will be taking place on Thursday 20th February 2020 at Ruskin House in the Nelson Mandela Lounge. There will be two sittings at 12.30pm and 4.30pm. Please note you only need to attend one meeting. **We urge all our members to attend and show their support to the branch.**

Croydon UNISON AGM

Thursday 20th February
12.30 & 4.30pm

Winter Quiz Night

Thursday 27th February
7-9pm, doors open
6.45pm

Both being held in the
Nelson Mandela Room
Ruskin House

The **Nelson Mandela Award** was presented to me at the **Black Members' Conference** in Bournemouth which took place from 31st January to 2nd February 2020.



Yvonne Green was presented with the 2020 Nelson Mandela Award at the Black Members' Conference, by vice president Sian Stockham, for going "above and beyond" her duties toward Black members. "Yvonne is an inspiration to us all proving what can be achieved when you don't give up the struggle," said Carol Sewell, chair of the national Black members' committee. The award is particularly coveted, as winners are chosen by their peers.

Ms Green is a pioneer. She is the first Black person to hold the role of branch secretary in the London Borough of Croydon, where she has driven forward the equality agenda on behalf of UNISON members, often raising contentious and difficult issues.

The following **acceptance speech** was made by Yvonne Green:

I am delighted, and humbled to receive the Unison Nelson Mandela Award. We must continue to celebrate our diversity and work for a more fairer and more equal society. I quote Nelson Mandela **"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."**

Everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. The ability to live and work without prejudice is a fundamental right, regardless of your background, colour or sexual orientation. One of UNISON's main aims is to help workers fight for fairness and equality in the workplace and beyond. Challenging discrimination and winning equality are at the heart of everything UNISON does.

Besides the right not to be discriminated against or bullied, fair treatment also includes equal working conditions and pay. I am proud of our Union Unison and proud of the work that we do to support our members without fear or favour.

My thanks to my branch for nominating me, and I am so grateful to receive this award. My thanks to my family and my and my baby sister Jennifer who is with me today, who have been so supportive to me in my role.

On the back of others we stand tall.

"May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. There can be no greater gift than that of giving one's time and energy to helping others without expecting anything in return."

Yvonne will be also attending the **Women's Conference** in February at Bournemouth. A reminder that **International Women's Day** is on Sunday 8th March.

Greta Farian has temporarily taken over the role of Regional Organiser from Sally Tsoukaris, who left at the end of October.

We held a **Social evening** at Ruskin House in January to support **Croydon Nightwatch**.



Since October 2019 the branch has been collecting tinned food items to support Croydon Nightwatch. Nightwatch volunteers are out every night in the centre of **Croydon**

giving food and other help to homeless and other vulnerable people. They can be found every night at 9.30pm in the Queen's Gardens, by Fell Road.

Ring ext 65435 to arrange to drop off your donations in the office. <http://croydonnightwatch.org.uk>



Jo Negrini, the Chief Executive of Croydon Council has stated to all council staff that there will be 10 % cuts in all departments during the coming financial year.

Council Departments underwent a restructure from the 1st January with the number being reduced down from five to four (removing Gateway, Strategy and Engagement.) The four remaining will be Health, Wellbeing & Adults, Places, Resources and Croydon Digital Services.

Croydon UNISON is also concerned about money that the Council had borrowed from the Staff Pension Fund to purchase property within the borough and then to pay back in 40 years. Peter Howard, the joint Retired Members Secretary is lead officer.

The **Tram Memorial Service** took place on Saturday 9th November followed by **Remembrance Sunday** on the 10th November. The branch was represented at both events.

UNISON Quiz Ruskin House



The **Halloween Quiz** took place on the 29th October at Ruskin House and was well attended including Councillor Andrew Pelling. With the proceeds from our three quizzes the branch ran in 2019 we donated £150 to the Ruskin House Restoration Fund.

A **Winter Quiz** will take place on Thursday 27th February in the Nelson Mandela Lounge from 7 to 9pm. The quiz is open to non-unison members as well. Entry fee is £5 per person with a maximum number of six people to a team. Prizes will be given and a raffle. Please contact the branch if you may like to enter a team. Money raised will go to the **Ruskin House Restoration Fund** and UNISON's charity **There for You**.

The photo opposite shows some of the **restoration work** currently being done at Ruskin House upstairs in the **Georgina King Lewis room**.

At the turn of the century it was natural for the early labour movement, to meet in the town's public houses. The Temperance movement had traditionally been very strong in Croydon. One keen believer in the temperance movement was a Mrs. Georgina King Lewis. She felt that trade union and related meetings in public houses were wrong. She decided to provide a place specifically for the purpose of meetings for the labour movement in an alcohol-free environment.

She did so through the Croydon United Temperance Council. A trust was created, and Mrs. King Lewis spent £1,200 of her own money. The sole condition with the gift was that no intoxicants be sold on the premises. The old County Temperance Hotel in Station Road, West Croydon, was bought. Mrs. King Lewis renamed the building **Ruskin House** and it opened in 1912. Since then Ruskin House has relocated twice, first to Wellesley Road in 1919 and then to Coombe Road in 1966.



The LGBT Conference took place from Friday 15th to Sunday 17th November 2019 at Bournemouth and was attended by Petrina Ennis from the branch.

White Ribbon Day took place on 25th November 2019 also known as the **International Day for the Eradication of Violence against Women**, and is an annual day to raise awareness of family violence.



Holocaust Memorial Day was on Monday 27th January, and this year it marked exactly 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

UNISON marked the event with an event at UNISON centre, attended by hundreds of staff. There was a minute's silence and the lighting of a candle of remembrance to honour the victims of the Nazi regime and those murdered during modern genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Branch office Information

Our new web site is now live and we are hoping to recruit a volunteer to help us keep it up to date due to the pressure in the Branch Office with general enquiries and other administrative matters.

Visit <https://croydon.unison.site>

If you need advice in the workplace please contact your local Representative in the first instance. You can find a list of all our

representatives and their contact numbers and their email addresses listed on our local Branch website.

The Branch office does have a voice mail and this will be checked on a regular basis, so please leave a message and we will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible.

Branch Office no: 020 8760 5435



Don't get angry - get active!

Have you ever thought about being a steward? We are always looking to welcome new Reps into the branch and this could be a role you might be interested in pursuing.

The Branch will organise full training for you, both from UNISON and the TUC as a Rep you are entitled to time off to train. We would not expect you to carry out any representations or to support your colleagues until you have carried out training.

Our most experienced Stewards and officers are also on hand to support you. Whether you work in the public or private Sector we need you! If you would like to find out more about the role, please contact the Branch Office on 020 8760 5435



Are you receiving?

If you are not receiving emails that our sent out from time to time from UNISON and the branch, please contact the Branch Office by phone or email branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk and your details will be updated.

Proud to be in UNISON

The UNISON Year 2020/21

February 2020

Women's Conference: Thu 13th – Sat 15th February Bournemouth

Branch AGM:
Ruskin House
Thur 20th February

June 2020

Local Government Conference:
Sun 14th – Mon 15th June 2020
Brighton Centre

National Delegate Conference:
Tues 16th - Fri 19th June
Brighton Centre

August 2020

Croydon Retired Members Re-Union and AGM – Ruskin House
Thurs 13th August

October 2020

Retired Member's Conference:
Tues 13th – Wed 14th
Bournemouth

November 2020

Disabled Member's Conference: Sat 2nd – Mon 4th November Brighton

LGBT Conference: Fri 13th – Sun 15th November Brighton

January 2021

Black Members Conference:
To be confirmed