

Branch Newsletter Autumn 2020

Croydon UNISON

Message from Yvonne Green,
Branch Secretary



On Friday 23rd October **the Report in the Public Interest** concerning the Council's financial position and related governance arrangements, was published by external auditors Grant Thornton and has shaken the councils management and staff very badly.

The **Staff Review** is now closed and the employer has given a commitment to meet the unions to see what has worked well and what hasn't, however this has been interrupted due to the dire situation the council is now in. Initially, 400 jobs were at risk across the council as a whole. Staff directly affected by the Staff Review have now been informed if they have been accepted for voluntary redundancy, others are still awaiting redeployment and 59 have been given compulsory redundancy with 22 UNISON members included in this total. The branch continues to support all those members directly affected by it.



Over the last few months there has been intense media scrutiny of the cuts at Croydon Council including coverage on the BBC London News including the **UNION Protest** in August when over 50 union members attended outside BWH. UNISON members were joined by UNITE and GMB.

The fallout from the media scrutiny and negative staff feedback led to the resignation of Jo Negrini, the CEO in September with an alleged £400,000 settlement. She has since been replaced with Katherine Kerswell. Tony Newman, the Head of the Council has also been replaced by Hamida Ali. The deputy leader is now Stuart King who has replaced Alison Butler.

During the Staff Review I have been in close contact with all three Croydon MPs. In early October an invitation was sent out to all Croydon UNISON members to attend an **online meeting with Sarah Jones**, Croydon Central Labour MP, on Friday 9th October. Members had the opportunity to raise their concerns with the local MP. The meeting was attended by around 30 members and reps. The meeting gave those members directly affected by the staff review to raise their concerns about their own individual jobs and the wider affects that cuts would have on the community at large. These concerns ranged from the closure of Gateway, cuts in social workers, to the reduced service in grass maintenance across the borough. Sarah Jones said she would be happy to attend a further meeting if it would be helpful to members.

Pension update

The £95,000 cap on exit payments was passed through parliament on the 30th September and was to be applied in just 21 days so will impact on some of the people being made redundant at Croydon.

The 2020 Pension statements are now available online. Please ensure that you are signed up to the self-service log in and check your details. <https://intranet.croydon.gov.uk/news/annual-pension-benefit-statement-now-available-0>

Also check that you have completed an expression of wish form using this link <https://www.croydonpensionscheme.org/media/1605/nomination-form-beneficiary.pdf>

UNISON members are entitled to a free initial 30 minute consultation with Lighthouse who specialise in pensions advice concerning public service pension schemes. They also provide preferential rates to UNISON members. You can get further information by going to http://www.lighthousefa.co.uk/affinity_groups/unison.aspx or phoning them on 08000 85 85 90.

You can contact UNISON's Pensions Unit by e-mailing pensionsm@unison.co.uk or calling 020 7121 5406.

The branch is still busy with COVID19 queries including the ending of shielding and furlough which has affected some members.

In September we were shocked to learn of the **killing of Matt Ratana**, a Croydon police officer. He had given 30 years of his life to the police force. The Croydon branch left some flowers outside the police station where he had worked to show our respects.

On **Remembrance Sunday**, the 8th November, the branch will be represented by Kieran Gilmore, the Chairman who will attend the remembrance service outside the Town Hall and lay a wreath subject to COVID19 and council announcements.

Black History Month

In October due to continued COVID19 our usual event to celebrate Black History month which the branch normally holds was unable to take place. The committee decided to hold a raffle to include prizes of books and Black Lives Matter tee shirts. The raffle will include all those members registered with an ethnic coding on our UNISON records called WARMS.

Black History Month 2020 seems more important than ever following a year where Black people have been dying in disproportionate numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the world was shocked by the brutal murder of George Floyd in the USA.

The fight for racial equality continues and as Branch Secretary, I am passionate about raising inequalities at all levels fighting for justice for our members and the community. The **Global Black Lives Matter protests** shone a light on racism in the UK and to tackle racism we have to recognise it. In the UK, [#BlackLivesMatter](#) called for an end to systemic racism, where people aren't treated fairly because they are Black.

The coronavirus pandemic, has highlighted the racial inequalities in health, education, housing and employment that have shaped the lives of Black people from the cradle to grave.

Black History should be taught in our schools to educate the children of the future of the past of their forefathers and mothers and the struggles they faced to pave the way for us and for future generations. On the back of giants we stand tall. Giants like Mayo Angelo, Marcus Garvey, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman, Muhammad Ali, Barack Obama, Jesse Owens and Mary Seacole.

Without a struggle there could be no progress - Quote by Frederick Douglass.

Frederick Douglass became a leader in the abolitionist movement, which sought to end the practice of slavery, before and during the American Civil War. (1815-1895)

Retired Members AGM and Reunion

The Retired Members AGM and reunion was unable to take place in August at Ruskin House, again due to COVID19 restrictions and it was decided to hold a similar raffle for retired members. The winning ticket was Geoffrey Horner who received a £50 M&S Voucher. Other prizes went to Dame Lorna Boreland Kelly, Gregory Boyce and Kathleen Broderick.

2020/21 Pay Award

Just to remind members that the 2020 pay award should be included in your December pay with a back dated payment to April 2020.

<https://intranet.croydon.gov.uk/news/2020-pay-award-confirmation-increased-rate-be-backdated>

Election of a New General Secretary

The election of a new General Secretary for UNISON is underway as Dave Prentis who is currently in the position will be stepping down at the end of the year after 20 years in the role. The branch nomination vote made by the committee was for Peter Sharma. The branch held an on-line hustings meeting in September where the committee and reps could listen to the candidates who were invited to attend before making a branch vote. The candidates are Paul Holmes, Roger McKenzie, Hugo Pierre, Peter Sharma and Christine McAnea.

However, individual voting by members has still to be completed. Please find time to vote and make a difference. The ballot opened on the **28th October** so please look out for your ballot paper, which will be sent by post to your home address. Make sure you post your completed ballot in plenty of time to CES by 5pm on 27th November. See link below:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/about/our-organisation/lay-structure-democracy-and-elections/current-elections/general-secretary-election-make-vote-count/>

World Mental Health Day - Saturday 10th October 2020

Members need to keep well and positive in these uncertain times. If working at home make sure you keep a work life balance. Please refer to <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/world-mental-health-day>

COVID19 Update

This week new lockdown rules were announced for London and across England as a whole. Please remember by following these simple steps you can help stop the spread of coronavirus and keep Croydon safe: **Hands - Face - Space - Get Tested**

Visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus and <https://new.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-and-service-updates> for the latest government guidance and local information. Please find time to download the new free NHS COVID19 app on your mobile phone as part of **the Test and Trace Service** if you have not already done so.

<https://www.covid19.nhs.uk/>

Important Branch Update

Branch staff have been continuing to work from home due to COVID 19 and have been unable to attend meetings face to face but in the New Year, branch staff hope to be able to meet members again using **an appointment system** only. Meetings will take place at the town hall and will be for one hour and booked using Microsoft teams.

If you are unable to get through on our branch phone, which is being redirected at present, please leave a message but also send an email to branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk.

If contacting us by email with an enquiry please can you provide your membership number, workplace and job title and a contact telephone number.

If you still have any specific concerns about the staff review please contact your Line Manager first and then if you still need support please feel free to contact us.

Also please refer to the UNISON web site where there are regular updates about COVID19 and its future implications. <https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/>. There is sector specific advice for Education, Healthcare, social care, government and workers and police staff.

Reminder: My UNISON – Make sure your details are up to date

If you have not been receiving **any regular email communication**, it is important that you register an email address online with MY UNISON. If you have changed address or employer these can also be updated. <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/>

Branch office Information

Visit our new web site for updates.

<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.

Until the end of the year branch staff will continue to work from home so please contact us by email if possible and we will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible.

Email branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk

The Branch office does have a voice mail but these messages are being redirected at present and there may be delays in getting back to you.



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 come 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 email the Branch Office.



Are you receiving?

If you are not receiving emails that our sent out from time to time from UNISON and the branch, please go to <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/> where you can check if you have registered an email.

Proud to be in UNISON

Hands, Face, and Space

The UNISON Year 2020/21

Please note dates below postponed until further notice due to Covid 19 – watch this space

November 2020

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

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

Both Cancelled

January 2021

Black Members Conference:
To be online

February 2021

Women's Conference:
To be confirmed

Branch AGM:
Ruskin House
To be confirmed

June 2021

Local Government Conference:
National Delegate Conference:

August 2021

Croydon Retired Members Re-Union and AGM – Ruskin House

October 2021

Retired Member's Conference:

