

# Branch Newsletter Autumn 2021

## Croydon UNISON

**Message from Yvonne Green,  
Branch Secretary**



As restrictions around COVID 19 gradually become more relaxed and we see more leisure facilities open including cinemas and theatres and more overseas countries becoming available to visit again we should still be careful especially in crowded places. We hope the booster jabs being offered this Autumn will help us through the winter period without any more COVID spikes or increased hospitalisations.

We have had queries from our members about what if they do not want to have the two injections offered by the NHS this year. As a result they have had pressure from their employers to do so before they can return to work. We urge all our members to get vaccinated as soon as possible if you have not already done so to protect yourself and others. Also, we recommend to have the booster job being offered over the next few months.

Please continue to refer to UNISON's **Coronavirus: your rights at work** web page which was updated on the 1st October 2021. <https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/>

In June, Croydon Council sent out a survey to all staff about working preferences as many staff were still working from home at present. The outcome was that the council would continue to operate in a similar way unless staff were needed in the office.

### More Cuts

On the ITV London news on Monday 11th October it was announced that Purley swimming pool and leisure centre would be closed permanently. Cllr Oliver Lewis stated that the pool needed major repairs before it could reopen.

Swimming is on the national school curriculum and Croydon UNISON feel local facilities should be provided to meet these requirements. The nearest pool open will be at Waddon, a journey of around 50 minutes by bus.

The council also announced that it also needed to make cuts of £38 million to the budget despite receiving £150 million of government loans over the last 12 months.

As well as the closure of Purley pool these cuts include £12m of adult social care services to be transferred to the NHS, three-quarters of Neighbourhood Safety Officer jobs to be axed and Council Tax benefits worth up to £25 per week to be cut.

In our summer Newsletter we reported as a result of the two staff reviews/restructures over 500 jobs were lost from the council with all departments under on-going pressure to deliver services with reduced staff. However, we have since learnt this figure was around 350 even so it is still too many and Croydon UNISON will be fighting against any further job cuts.



There has also been a recent government announcement that the £20-per-week uplift to universal credit will be ending. The TUC are against these plans.

All these cuts to benefits put hardship on low income families and we are all also facing **higher energy bills** this winter as gas prices have soared over the last few weeks due to a shortage of supply. There have also been delays in delivering to shops especially supermarkets due to the shortage of lorry drivers. This has also affected deliveries to petrol stations with queues at many garages across London boroughs including Croydon.

## Council Mayor Referendum

On the 7th October the **Referendum** on whether to have a directly elected mayor in Croydon took place. The result was announced the following day that the majority voted to have a directly elected mayor. The turnout was 21% and four out of five voters opted for the mayoral model rather than the current leader and cabinet system. There were 11, 519 votes against and 47,165 votes for. The election for the boroughs first elected mayor will take place on the 5th May 2022 alongside the local council elections.

An important difference is the council would be unable to remove the mayor during their term, as they can in the leader model. This is only possible through the mayor's own resignation.

At present there are directly elected mayors in four other London Boroughs. These being Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets all under labour control.

## Black History Month



October is also **Black History**

**Month.** <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/>

Black History Month gives us a month to celebrate the contributions and achievements of black people throughout the world and to educate all on black history.

A Suggested book to read Cane Warriors by Alex Wheatle. There are various vibrant displays and events in Croydon Libraries during October to celebrate Black History

Month. The theme for this year is **Proud2Be.**

As Branch Secretary, I am working with Management to ensure that all council staff have the same opportunities to progress in their jobs and are not discriminated against.

Wishing you a Happy Black History Month – Proud to Be

## Retirement of Croydon UNISON Chairman.

The branch continues to be busy with cases and further restructures.

Kieran Gilmore, our Chairman retired from his position at the council at the end of September. Kieran had worked for 35 years in local government 16 of those years at Croydon Council.

He has also stood down as our Chairman. We thank him for all his support and his valuable contribution he has given the branch over the years and wish him a long and happy retirement.



## Croydon TUC

At the October meeting Dave Harvey, NEU and former member of the TUC General Council, reported on the 2021 Labour Party Conference which Yvonne Green our Branch secretary also attended.

Marc Wadsworth, founder of Liberation spoke on Black History Month and related issues and COP 26 one of the most important issues facing the planet was also discussed.

## Guardians Programme

We are still monitoring the implementation of the **Guardians Programme** announced by management to address some of the issues reported of bullying in the workplace, lack of career progression and staff favouritism by managers over others. These are all important issues and Croydon UNISON are always here to support you so please keep reporting such cases to us directly.

## Retired members Reunion and AGM

On the 16th August Croydon UNISON held our **Retired Members Reunion and AGM** at Ruskin House. This was our first in person group event still before lockdown. The event was hosted by our joint retired member's officers Peter and Laurie Pocock. Attendance was low but we hope as people get more used to attending group events again more people will join us.

Photo: Joint Retired Members Officers Laurie Pocock far left, Peter Howard centre and Yvonne Green Branch Secretary far right with two retired members.



## Libraries Consultation Update

After the end of Phase 2 of the consultation the cabinet meeting met in August and decided to go forward with Option 1 which would reduce service hours by 21% across the borough and also incur a number of job cuts. The full council meeting which met on 11th October voted to go ahead with this decision.

## COVID19 Update

Visit [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and <https://new.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-and-service-updates> for the latest government guidance and local information

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

Also, as mentioned earlier please continue to 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.

## Important Branch Update

Branch staff are continuing to work from home due to continued concerns around COVID 19 and have been unable to attend meetings face to face but we hope to meet members again using an **appointment system** only from September at the earliest, subject to room availability. However, the branch office will remain shut for now. 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](mailto: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.**



## Are you receiving .....?

**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.

**Branch staff will continue to work from home for now 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](mailto: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 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 email the Branch Office.

**Proud to be in UNISON**  
**Protect yourself and others**

**Vaccinate today!**

**The booster is on its way!**



## The UNISON Year 2021/22

### October – November 2021

Retired Member's Conference:  
12th - 13th October – on-line

Disabled Member's Conference:  
30th October to 1st November

LGBT Conference:  
19th – 21st November

### January 2022

Black Members Conference:  
To be confirmed

### February 2022

Women's Conference:  
To be confirmed

Branch AGM:  
To be confirmed

### June 2022

Local Government Conference:  
To be confirmed

National Delegate Conference:  
To be confirmed

### August 2022

Croydon Retired Members Re-Union  
and AGM – Ruskin House  
To be confirmed