

Branch Newsletter Winter 2021

Croydon UNISON

**Message from Yvonne Green,
Branch Secretary**



We hope that our members had a relaxing Christmas with family and friends and wish you all a Happy New Year.

2021 was a difficult year for members with **job cuts and restructures** taking places in all areas of the council. This was also alongside having to deal with issues relating to COVID 19 and after restrictions beginning to be relaxed in the Autumn the appearance of **Omicron**, the COVID variant in December left us all in a downward mood when further rules were reintroduced including asking shoppers to wear masks again in shops and other public places such as cinemas and theatres. As rules have changed since our last newsletter the booster jab is now available to all those over 18 if you have had a 2nd dose of the COVID19 vaccine at least 3 months ago. We again urge our members to get their booster as soon as possible and also the original injections if you have not already done so.

Further Protests against Cuts

Due to the cuts implemented by the council over the last 12 months it was decided to hold a further joint union protest outside BWH on Thursday 18th November. Members from UNISON, UNITE, GMB all attended. They were also supported by the Croydon TUC. After council staff suffered from over 350 job cuts a further announcement was made in October that the council needed to make further cuts of £38 million to the budget which would result in more job losses. Remaining staff are already under pressure to maintain an adequate level of service to the public and many are stressed facing increased workloads.



NJC Pay Offer – Ballot on Pay

During December and January 2022 a ballot of UNISON members is taking place regarding the pay offer of 1.75%, or 2.75% for members on the lowest pay point. Members should have already received their postal voting pack which included a ballot paper and a Freepost return envelope. However, if you have not received your ballot paper, you can request a new one until 12 noon on 10 January 2022 by calling the UNISON helpline on 0800 0 857 857, quoting your membership number. They will verify your membership and contact us to issue you with a replacement ballot paper. For your vote to count, you must return your voting paper to arrive no later than **14th January 2022** if you have not already done so. You can find out more about the ballot from UNISON, including FAQs on their website: www.unison.org.uk/LGpay.

Please have your say on this pay offer. Every vote counts.

Council Mayor Referendum

The names of those standing for Mayor next year have been announced. These include Val Shawcross for the Labour Party, Jason Perry for the Conservative Party and Peter Underwood for the Green Party. Peter Underwood is also a member of UNISON.

The election for the boroughs first elected mayor will take place on the 5th May 2022 alongside the local council elections.



Val Shawcross CBE is a Labour Co-operative politician who served as deputy mayor of London for Transport from 2016 to 2018 and as a Member of the London Assembly for Lambeth and Southwark from 2000 to 2016. As Croydon Council Leader in the late 1990's she introduced Croydon's tram system.



The **LGBT Conference** took place from Friday 19th to Sunday 21st November 2021 at the Brighton Centre. Photo: President Christina McAnea took to the rostrum at UNISON's LGBT+ conference to deliver a message of hope, of pride and of gratitude, mixed with anger at the antics of the Tory government in Westminster.

A motion on the climate crisis for the national committee saw Penny Smith explain that it had particular relevance for LGBT+ people, as "history tells us that diminishing resources is a driver for discrimination". The conference was attended by Petrina Ennis from the branch.

The **Black Members Conference** is taking place from the 21st to the 23rd January 2022 followed by the **Women's Conference** from the 17th to the 19th February 2022.

White Ribbon Day took place on 25th November 2021 also known as the **International Day for the Eradication of Violence against Women**, and is an annual day to raise awareness of family violence.

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/day>



Holocaust Memorial Day will take place on Monday 27th January. For more information visit

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

Croydon TUC

Since renewing our affiliation with the Croydon TUC committee Croydon UNISON representatives have been attending meetings online and at Ruskin House. The Croydon TUC attended the union protest outside BWH in November and we thank them for their support.

<https://www.croydontuc.org.uk/>

Pensions Update

Members are concerned about the news announced on the 26th November by Katherine Kerswell, the CEO, which stated that as the staff pension fund was doing so well the council is going to reduce their employee contributions to the fund. Although this money it is claimed will be used to save jobs but pensions also need to be safe guarded for the future. However, UNISON were unhappy that this was announced and was included in the budget when reviewing more job cuts before the pension committee had actually voted it through. The pension committee includes representatives from all three main unions which are UNISON, UNITE and GMB.

Libraries Consultation Update

The consultations with staff and unions are now taking place to make the changes necessary for Option 2 to be implemented from the library consultation which will result in a 21% cut of library opening hours. After which a further public consultation will be made. The final changes will not be introduced until the 1st April 2022.

COVID19 Update

As mentioned earlier further restrictions have been put in place due to the Omicron variant. Many places are asking for proof that those people entering their venue have had the necessary jabs. Passes can be downloaded from the NHS website using your phone.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-pass/>

If you do have symptoms please make sure that you have a lateral flow test and isolate if the test is positive. Packs can be picked up at chemists. It is also advisable to have a PCR test if you continue to have symptoms even though your original test was negative. These tests can normally be requested online and sent in the post to you. If these are not available due to over demand redo the lateral flow test. I have been fortunate not to have had the virus but I know a lot of people who have and have been told by them that on the first day of symptoms the lateral flow was negative but a few days later it was positive. The isolation period has been reduced from 10 to 7 days.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/>

Visit 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.

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

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.

The UNISON Year 2021/22

January 2022

Black Members Conference:
Fri 21st - Sat 23rd January
BT Centre Liverpool

February 2022

Women's Conference:
Thurs 17th – Sat 19th February
Edinburgh Int Conference Centre

Branch AGM:
To be confirmed

June 2022

Local Government Conference:
Sun 12th – Mon 13th June
National Delegate Conference:
Tues 14th – Fri 17th June
Both at Brighton Centre

August 2022

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

October 2022

Retired Member's Conference:
Tues 18th – Wed 19th October
Telford International Centre

Disabled Member's Conference:
Sat 29th – Mon 31st October
Brighton Centre

November 2022

LGBT Conference:
Fri 19th – Sun 20th November
Edinburgh Int Conference Centre

Proud to be in UNISON
Protect yourself and others

Get your booster today!

