



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, please don't just expect our members to fight for your rights at work for you. Visit our blog and join today.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

Annual General Meeting Special Edition

February 2018

blogs.brighton.ac.uk/unison

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Our Annual General Meeting takes place on **Thursday 1st March at Cockcroft Hall, Moulsecoomb**. We'll be starting at 12.30pm, but if you can make it for noon then you're welcome to join us for a free buffet lunch.

We're pleased to have booked Sandy Nicoll, who is one of two representatives on UNISON's national executive council from higher education. Sandy works at SOAS (London University's School of Oriental and African Studies), where he has been an activist for many years. Sandy will speak about the national situation for university workers, pay, pensions and workplace stress. We'll allow plenty of time for questions and contributions from our members.

Unfortunately, we've had to put back our planned speaker on stress, but we are in the process of talking to the University about what they're doing about it and we'll update you on that. We're planning an extensive session on stress for all members in April.

We've always been very pleased about the turnout we've had at our AGM. Despite the practical difficulties of members being able to make a lunchtime meeting at a split site university, we often get dozens of members there.

This is important to us, because we've always tried to make our branch of UNISON one which engages the membership and allows for healthy debate and discussion. It's a cliché, but we are a "member-led union" and we're here to represent the membership and lead the branch as well as we can.

We often have to make decisions on what to do on a weekly basis. By getting involved and holding all our officers and reps to account at the AGM, you can be part of that process.

Please come along to the AGM if you can.

Ivan Bonsell,

Branch Secretary



Your UNISON branch:

Our AGM is the decision making body of the union. Everything that happens in between annual meetings is overseen by the Branch Committee, but this is only operating on behalf of the members because we can't have an AGM every month.

The Branch Committee is made up of Officers, Stewards, Health and Safety reps and Equalities reps:

Branch Officers are the key decision making members of the branch, each with a responsibility for one area, but all operate together to discuss and debate the way forward.

Throughout the last year, we had the following officer posts filled:

Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Health and Safety

Membership

Communications

Equality

Education

Life-long Learning

LGBT

Labour Link (elected by Labour affiliates)

Retired Members' Secretary (elected by retired members)

But we also had the following posts vacant:

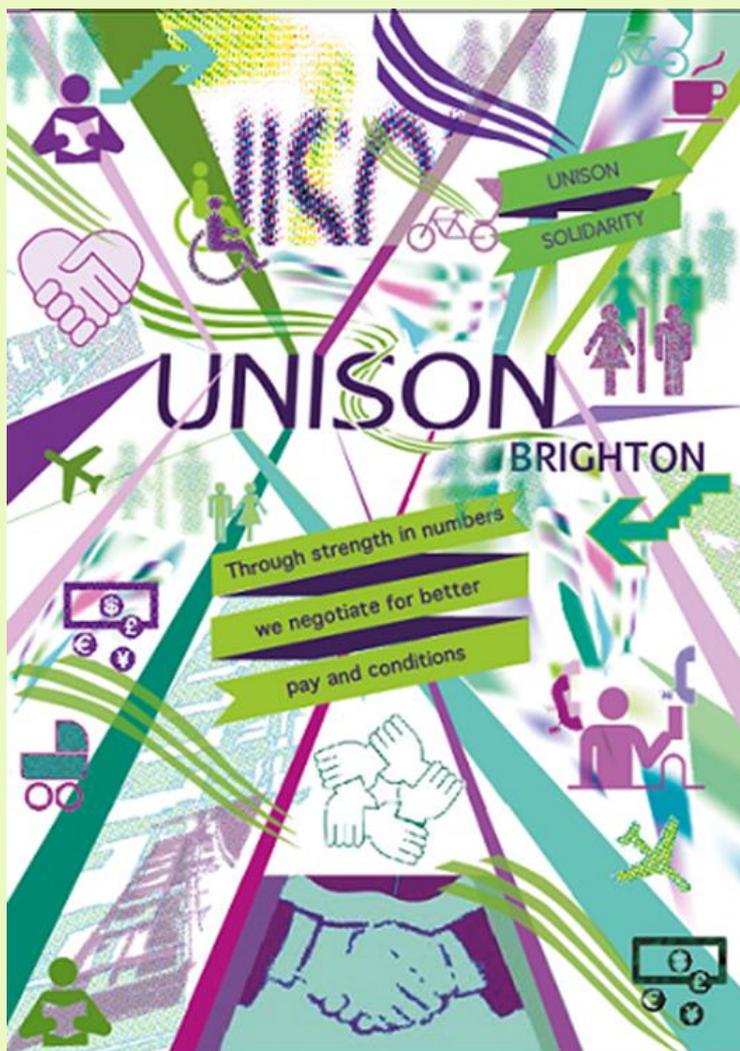
Young Members

Women

International

Environment

Welfare



...and others which we can determine according to what members want to do.

If members want to get involved by filling any of the branch officer roles then they are welcome to stand for election. In the vast majority of cases, roles can be shared, because for us, getting members involved and moving things forward on behalf of the whole branch is what matters most.

Please let us know if you want to stand for any officer roles and feel free to get in touch if you want to talk about it informally.

UNISON Stewards are the backbone of the branch. They are elected to represent members on their sites or across the Students' Union and deal with day to day problems and issues faced by our members. We have no limit to the number of stewards we have, but we want them all to be trained to represent members and play a part in the running of the branch.

During the last year, we had 14 stewards across five campuses, some of whom are also officers. (There's no reason why you can't be both.) If we have enough stewards at each site, we can arrange local meetings and engage members on a local basis.

If you want to become a steward or just want to talk about it, please get in touch. We can provide full training and you should have paid time off for union activities.

Health & Safety and Equalities reps are as important to the branch as the need to keep our members safe and ensure that equalities are part of everything we do.

Safety reps have the right to get involved in school and department committees and represent the union at the Joint Safety and Welfare Committee. The University has a legal obligation to respect the rights of our reps and we work with the University's experts to make sure that health and safety is not compromised. Again, if you want to be a H&S rep, we can provide training and support.

Trade unions have led the way in promoting equalities, years before employers decided to get involved. We recognise that equality is important to all our members because we are much stronger without any artificial divisions. Our reps are there to make sure that equality and diversity are taken seriously and that we are always tackling prejudice and discrimination through education and working people sticking together. Please let us know if you want to be an equalities rep.

Part of the AGM business is to elect officers for the next year and confirm that members at each site are happy with the proposed stewards and reps.

Our rules say that officer nominations should be received ahead of the AGM, but if anyone would like to stand for anything then we can easily arrange for job-shares.

At the time of writing , we have received the following officer nominations:

Chair	Martin Loftus
Secretary	Ivan Bonsell
Treasurer	Dawn Whitaker
Communications Officer	Dan Simmonds
Health & Safety Officer	Maurizio Valeri
Equality Co-ordinator	Emily Brooks
Labour Link Officer	Sarah Pickett
Education Co-ordinator	Cathy Peters
Retired Members' Secretary	Carole Chick & Mike Adams

We can take other nominations ahead of the AGM or we're willing to take them verbally on the day.

Our **Branch Committee** meets monthly at different sites and includes all our officers, stewards and reps. Everyone has a say and if we need to make a decision, we debate the issue and democratically decide what to do.

We meet the University's senior managers formally six times a year, alongside UCU and on our own, and these bodies are designed for us to air issues and find resolutions. All members of the branch committee should have "reasonable" paid time off for union activities, to attend meetings and represent members.

Please consider whether you would like to play a part in our branch.

Adverts

We're happy to use our newsletter to publicise things, which members may be interested in.

Readers will appreciate we're not necessarily endorsing a particular product or service.

Please let us have anything you want us to include in our next issue.

LOVE YOUR CORE AND PELVIC FLOOR WORKSHOP



Saturday 24 February | 2-4pm
The Healthy Living Company
92-98 Northease Drive
Hove BN3 8LH

Book at: tinyurl.com/coreworkshop

Sunday 18 March | 2-4pm
The Float Spa
8 Third Avenue
Hove BN3 2PX

Book at: tinyurl.com/coreworkshop2

It's never too late to improve your core strength, restore your pelvic floor and flatten your tummy. Whether you're pregnant, had babies six weeks or 16 years ago, or you're a sports person and want to keep your body functioning or you're just interested in your overall health – this workshop is for you. Course fee is £26.79 per person.

 rebecca@bn1pilates.com  07980 314345



UNISON lottery
supporting our charity **There for You**



UNISON members at Birmingham University are campaigning against plans to outsource some of their services. Please sign the petition below:

Dear colleagues,

The University of Birmingham management are planning to set up a subsidiary company to outsource staff in the Hotel and Conference Park (from the 1st of July 2018). This means that current staff will be transferred to the new company and will cease to be employed directly by the university, and their contracts' terms and conditions will be under threat.

This has huge implications to all workers at the university, and to trade union branches on campus, as the management could remove union recognition. This would make it much easier for them to cut sick pay, annual leave, and wages (especially as they said that they will be trying to 'compete' with other companies in the hotel sector, so the company will be completely profit-driven). We also anticipate that the new members of staff in the university's Hotel and Conference Park (who haven't been recruited yet) will be on worse pay than the current employees. A two-tier workforce will be the result of this move; the current staff will 'cost' the university more than the newly recruited staff, and thus the former could be bullied out of their jobs, so that the university can 'cut costs' and offer big bonuses to management. The management also said that they will quadruple the number of beds in their Hotel and Conference Park, but are intending to just double the number of workers, leading to an increased workload.

Unison will be starting an indicative ballot on Monday. I'm hoping that the more signatures we get, the more convinced Unison members will be to vote (and importantly, to vote 'yes' for strike action and action short of strike).

Please [sign the petition](#) and share it widely with others in your networks (it would be really appreciated if you could, for instance, forward the petition to your members)!

In solidarity,

Ioana Cerasella Chis

Joint Chair, Unison University of Birmingham branch

<http://www.birminghamuniunison.org.uk/>



Workplace Uniforms—A trade Union Issue

We are in the process of discussing the University's policy for Estates staff to wear uniforms, which would include caretakers, cleaners, security, transport and grounds maintenance staff.

If uniforms contribute towards improved health and safety standards without being a hindrance to members of staff then we are in support of the concept, but if, as we suspect, this is more about the image of "the business" then we'll have lots to say in terms of the practicalities of a uniform policy.

As we've pointed out, requiring certain members of staff to dress in a particular way represents a change to their terms and conditions, and we will not accept changes which the staff as a whole are not happy with.

We've said that uniforms need to be appropriate, reasonable and provided in sufficient quantities to make it possible for members of staff to have enough changes of clothes. We'll need appropriate changing and storage facilities, and those expected to wear the uniforms need to be given chance to try on their clothes and make sure they don't pose more of a health and safety risk than what they're designed to replace.

We also would like to see a proper consideration for personal preference and for name badges to only be imposed on those who do an outward-facing role.

We appreciate that many staff already have some limited uniform, but the changes as proposed could increase the penalty for not adhering to the policy and make the policing of the uniform much more of an issue.

If you have strong views on this, please get in touch, but remember that the more members we have, the louder our voice when it comes to negotiating on our members' behalf.

Six Reasons to Join UNISON:

PAY - Workers in a union are generally paid around 8% more than non-unionised workers. We negotiate nationally for pay rises and we carry more weight in those negotiations the stronger we are.

JOB SECURITY - Non-union employers are much more likely to do as they please as far as employment rights go.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING - Union safety reps have made a positive contribution to safety at work, which matters to all of us.

LIFELONG LEARNING – Unions are keen to allow all members the opportunities which education provides.

FAIR TREATMENT – We help our members when they have problems at work, making sure that all University policies are applied properly.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION – If necessary, members are always entitled to legal help, both at work and outside of it.



USS Pension Scheme— why this matters to us all

The USS pension scheme is common to all academic and “academic related” staff at pre-92 universities, so all lecturers and some support staff at Sussex, Southampton University etc. will be members of that scheme. The only people in USS at Brighton (as a post-92 university) will be those who were members elsewhere and then moved here, so we have a handful.

Proposed changes to the scheme represent a massive attack in it, designed, as you’d expect, to save money for the universities at the expense of members who are paying into it. If working people lose their attempt to resist this then other universities will follow with reductions to pension rights in relation to our pension scheme (LGPS) and the teachers’ pension scheme (TPS). (The LGPS already costs Brighton a lot of cash because it’s a relatively good scheme, but only because we’ve

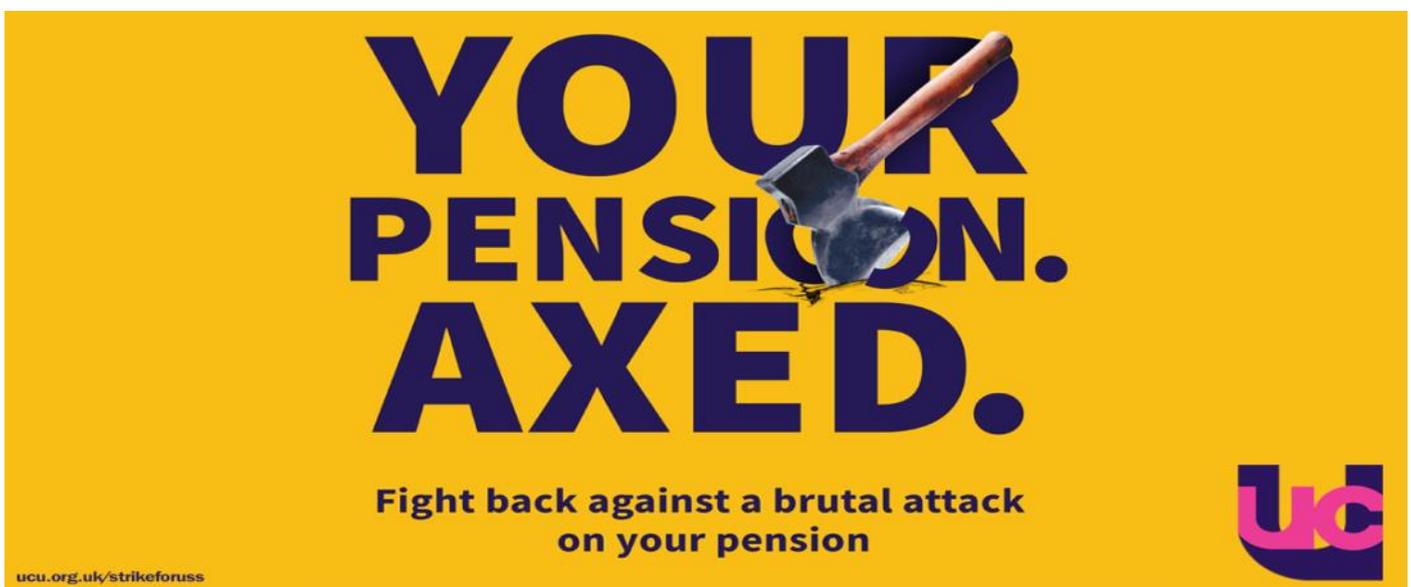
fought for it.)

Following a successful ballot, UCU members at Sussex and elsewhere will be striking on Thursday/Friday this week, with a rolling programme of escalating strikes to encourage the employers to conduct meaningful negotiations.

Whilst this dispute does not directly involve our members*, we would urge all our members at Falmer and elsewhere to support the strikers and Sussex and make sure the issues are explained.

There’s more background to this [here](#).

*Please let us know if you are a USS member and you haven’t already done so.



All members are invited to our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Cockcroft Hall, Moulsecoomb, Thursday 1st March

12.00pm for a free buffet lunch

12.30pm meeting starts, and we'll finish by 2.00pm

Our main speaker:

Sandy Nicoll, UNISON National Executive and UNISON branch at SOAS

Sandy has been branch secretary of the UNISON branch at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London for many years and was elected last year to UNISON's National Executive Council, holding one of the seats reserved for Higher Education.

His branch won a major victory last summer, with an agreement to end the outsourcing of core support services by September 2018 and bring more than 120 staff back in house.

Sandy will speak on the situation facing higher education workers, what a review of university funding could mean for Brighton, and what we can do to defend the interests of our members.

He'll also explain the background to the USS pension dispute and why this matters to all higher education workers.

We'll have plenty of time for questions and contributions or you can send us a written question if you'd sooner do that.



Our annual general meeting will also cover the business of the branch, electing officers and endorsing stewards and reps. We'll also have a financial report and take any motions or questions which members want to submit. You're free to raise anything you like on the day, but if you have a motion for the branch to consider, please let us know in advance.