

# Report to Annual General Meeting – 2020

## Membership

The London Borough of Enfield has continued making cuts which continues to affect our members, resulting in a drop in membership over the last year. We have off-set the numbers of people leaving by active recruitment across all areas. Currently we have 2455 full members which represents a decrease of 61 working members from last year's figures. Sadly, this is a trend that can also be seen in our neighbouring branches in Haringey, Waltham Forest and Barnet.

## Recruitment and Retention

During 2019 we have continued the Schools recruitment project whereby UNISON organises a recruitment meeting in every school. This project is now solely resourced by the Branch and under the management of our Branch Support. In 2019/20 the Branch visited just under 50 schools. It is intended to continue with this project throughout 2020.

The role of our stewards, activists and contacts is changing with the need to recruit new members in their workplaces, ensuring density of membership and a stronger voice for change and ability to challenge when required. We have in 2019/20 organised a number of recruitment events in the Civic Centre. Whilst these pick up one or two members and raise awareness of UNISON, a much more effective method is needed.

In the Parks and Cemeteries Service, the proposed changes to terms and conditions has led to recruitment of active local stewards, helping to ensure positive change and a voice in decision making for all members.

The Independence and Wellbeing Service who are due to be taken back in-house in June 2020, are expecting a major restructure once they return to the Council and wish to be part of UNISON to safeguard their positions.

However, it should be remembered that the best defence against changes to terms and conditions is high density of membership. The more members we have the stronger we are.

## Casework

Representation of individual members on employment related matters is our core activity. In the last 12 months we have represented approximately 165 members at disciplinary, grievance and other management meetings. We estimate that over the same period we have given advice to members on over 1500 occasions. This highlights the extra workload and stress that our members are enduring. We always aim to give excellent support to all our members on any issues and are proud to assist.

Our UNISON solicitors continue to represent members in a variety of legal matters. The help we give to individual members ranges from early intervention preventing the use of formal procedures to successfully pursuing litigation and resulting in significant compensation payments. In addition, our National Welfare Fund continues to support and make grants to members facing financial hardship. The Branch is now an official distributor of foodbank vouchers.

It says something about the state of our society when as trade union we distributing food vouchers rather than have achieved decent pay for all workers so they can choose their own food.

### Reorganisations and Restructurings within the London Borough of Enfield

As those members working for the London Borough of Enfield will know the Council is continuing to make cuts in services and jobs. Although the pace of cuts is slowing, the shape of the council is changing significantly with significant cuts in middle and senior management taking place.

Although the trade unions cannot stop the cuts as they are driven by central government, we can endeavour to ensure that the way the cuts are implemented is as fair as possible and that where savings are being made all other options are explored before staff are made compulsorily redundant.

UNISON and the other trade unions have insisted that we are consulted on all reorganisations and cuts. UNISON meets every fortnight with the Head of H.R. and the relevant managers to discuss all the proposed cuts. This has given us the opportunity to challenge the plans and change the way things are implemented. We also meet regularly with both the Chief executive and the Leader of the local authority to ensure that our members are represented at all levels.

Enfield Council is committed to insourcing its services where it can and UNISON actively supports this policy and is working with the Council to achieve its aims.

Currently we are involved in protecting the interests of our members in the Independence and Wellbeing Service who return to the Council in June 2020 and also our members in Enfield Norse Cleaning Services who are also being brought in-house.

In addition, UNISON is in close consultation with Housing Services regarding the re-introduction of an in-house Housing Repairs and Maintenance service which is starting this year.

These in-sourcing initiatives are expected to increase density of membership protecting staff and increase UNISON recruitment figures over the next few months.

## Schools and Academies

The Local Education Authority continues to be under pressure as government policy has underfunded schools leading to groups of schools setting themselves up as multi-academy trusts. The drop in school funding in this last year has resulted in virtually all schools making cuts. In schools the brunt of the cuts tends to fall upon support staff. We are yet to see the confirmation of the proposed increases to education funding now being promised and how this will be distributed.

Whilst the Council is bringing services in-house, schools are busy externalising their catering service. A number of academy chains and local authority schools have privatised their catering services using a variety of new catering companies. All of these companies are similar in that they pay minimum wage to staff on their own terms and conditions. Although under TUPE Enfield Catering staff are transferred on London Living wages rates, any new employees are taken on at the lower rates. The effect creates a two-tier workforce and means that as staff leave, they are replaced by people earning poverty wages. The local authority has just launched an independent report on the levels of Poverty within the borough and the detrimental effects particularly upon children and other residents. Part of the solution to these issues is to ensure that residents are paid the London Living wage

## Care Agencies

The Branch is campaigning amongst staff in private care agencies to achieve paid travel time between clients and to raise wages levels to at least the London Living Wage. We have targeted 5 major agencies operating in the borough. This is very difficult area to organise and recruit in as staff are often paid minimum wage on zero hours contracts and do not even meet each other.

We have set a up a Facebook page for care staff in Enfield to impart information and are using WhatsApp as means of encouraging contact between care staff and the union. We hope that this initiative will pay dividends in terms of recruitment and improving terms and conditions for staff.

## Term-Time Working

The branch is formalising a campaign to address the potential shortfalls of pay for annual leave, sickness absence and maternity leave for all term time only workers. We will be contacting all employers and assessing the formula they use to calculate staff pay.

Thompsons, UNISON's legal advisors have agreed to waive the normal four-week rule for representation to ensure all claims can proceed. Not only does this address the injustice of underpayment for our members, it also provides an excellent recruitment tool and the opportunity for better terms and conditions.

## Retired Members Section

We are very fortunate to have a large active retired members section. It has a fully functioning committee which organised social events throughout the year including a Christmas dinner and an annual spring buffet attended by the Mayor. Apart from a grant toward the costs of the Spring Buffet, printing and postage, this section is entirely self-financing. Currently its membership stands at 508 which is a drop from last year due to a data cleansing exercise.

## Self-Organisation

We have two self-organised groups in the Branch, the Black Members Group which formed in 2012 and a Women's Group both of which have full programmes for 2020.

## Organisation

The Branch currently has 93 officers/stewards/representatives/contacts including those in schools. This figure represents an increase from last year. Where possible stewards and other representatives are encouraged to meet on a regular basis in their work place groupings. I must take this opportunity to thank all of those activists who have made the work we have done this year possible.

## Health & Safety

There are 14 active Trade Union Health & Safety Reps. who sit on safety committees within the Council and our other large employers. Our Safety Reps also undertake Trade Union Health & Safety Inspections either jointly or independently of the employer.

## Employers

Although still primarily a Local Authority Branch, we currently organise across 159 separate employers. Of our total membership there are now 1142 who work for employers other than the London Borough of Enfield. The Branch has members in 398 different workplaces. The London Borough of Enfield itself has 145 separate workplaces.

## Branch Committee

The Branch Committee meets every 4 weeks at the Civic Centre in order to discuss the major challenges facing our members. All steward activists are members of the committee and are invited to attend. Existing contacts are also welcome to attend.

## Branch Office and Staffing

We have one Branch Office located within the Civic Centre. The Branch employs two part-time admin support officer and one part-time case worker. Casual clerical and casework support are employed as and when necessary.

## Conclusion

This last year has been challenging for UNISON and the Branch. Our membership figures are still in decline. Although our figures are consistent with neighbouring local government branches in North London. Decline in membership leads to a decline in income for the Branch. This put pressure on the Branch's ability to deliver quality services to members and prospective members. We are lucky in this branch that we have reserves to use in short term to avoid cuts in services.