Welcome to our spring 2016 newsletter. It is with heartfelt thanks that we acknowledge all of the hard work and commitment from Kathryn Woodroof over the past two years as Branch Secretary. Please find Kathryn’s Annual Report on the work of the branch over the last year on Page 4. We shall endeavor to do our best in guiding the branch through the next year.

We continue to face many challenges as Unison continues to ask for your support in lodging objections to the Trade Union Bill by contacting your MP and local Councillors.

We recently conducted a poll on behalf of Unison to gauge your response to the EU Referendum and from responses received you overwhelming thought that the UK should remain within the EU with Public Services and Workers Rights equally as important for maintaining our membership. We’ll keep you posted on any updates.

UNISON @ York – AGM Update
By Helen Adcock

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Front of House Collective Bargaining Negotiations
By Andy Bickerstaffe

Reception Porters have endured a period of uncertainty recently as university management sought to increase the number of managers, paid for by cutting pay for the majority by almost 20%. Shift length was to be reduced from 12 hours to 8.25 hours, thereby increasing travel costs and heavily impacting on work–life balance. Management were also seeking to introduce a permanent night shift. Many staff would have been forced to leave their employment as a result. Receptionists were also affected by proposals, with proposed changed working hours proving equally unpopular.
Front of House Collective Bargaining Negotiations

UNISON engaged with management over several months in collective bargaining negotiations, with Kathryn Woodroof and Regional Officer Sultan Mahmood presenting the case for front of house staff to retain their current terms and conditions of employment, supported by Andy Bickerstaffe and with welcome input from many affected staff. Management eventually submitted a compromise proposal shortly before Christmas, accepting the case made by UNISON on many key points. This in turn was accepted by 80% of staff in a ballot.

At time of writing much detail, especially in terms of rostering, remains unclear. Management still seeks to introduce shorter shifts for new members of staff, requiring additional weekend working and possibly a permanent night shift to achieve the same level of service. New working patterns are now scheduled to be introduced.

Executive Committee Focus – Jenny Underhill – Welfare Officer and Steward -  By Jenny Underhill

I came to York as a student in 2005 and worked various part-time jobs at the University to support myself. After my studies I decided to settle in York, taking a full time role as a Porter in 2009 and moving to Security in 2010. I've been a member of Unison since I started working, both for the great member benefits and for the strong representation in the workplace. Having relied on the great support offered, I jumped at the chance to take on an active role last summer.

Date for your diary!
The Unison @ York Strawberry Social
Raffle * Buffet Lunch * Visiting Speakers *

Friday 17th June, 12:30-2:00pm, HG/21
I am very pleased to act as your Unison Equalities Officer for this year. I have a personal and professional interest in diversity and equality matters and have worked as a volunteer for PCS union (in a previous career) and Citizens Advice Bureau.

I have studied and worked at the University since 2008 so I am aware of many issues confronting our staff and students. After graduating in 2011, I did a bit of temping at different departments before finding my current job as Clinic Administrator at York Law School on Heslington East.

I have lived in York since relocating from London more than 10 years ago following mobility issues. I find York a lovely small city and manage to get around reasonably well. I’m particularly interested in accessibility matters on campus and welcome feedback from Unison members about any disability-related access difficulties.

I have been on Unison training and development courses and hope to represent Unison members with individual cases soon. In the meantime, please contact me if you want to raise any equalities related matters. Issues that affect an individual member could be more common than you realise, and there is strength in numbers when seeking answers.

Francess Daly

“I’m particularly interested in accessibility matters on campus and welcome feedback from Unison members.”

Training and Education

For those of you lucky enough to be retiring this year – we are happy to send you on a pre-retirement workshop held at Unison, Leeds. The workshops will run on:


Your branch are happy to cover your £10 delegate fee and reasonable travel costs. Please get in touch with Helen at unison@york.ac.uk for more details and a form.

UNISON wants to help members realise their potential. Because we know how difficult it is to afford training and development at the moment, we offer financial support to members taking part in general non-vocational education, or in vocational education relevant to work in the public services, as well as learning discounts from a number of providers. We also offer grants to members studying on trade union and labour movement or women’s studies courses.

https://www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/learning-development/financial-support/
Annual Report 2016
By Kathryn Woodroof

I write this Annual Report with some sadness as I will not be seeking re-election as Branch Secretary this year. I’ve got so much joy and fulfillment from leading the branch team. However, it’s time to focus my energies elsewhere. I hope that someone will be elected as Branch Secretary and reap the same rewards that I have. I’d like to use this Annual Report to celebrate the successes that we have achieved by working together.

Many of you will know that the University proposed a major restructure of Portering and Reception Services in 2015. UNISON members were willing to strike to protect their terms and conditions so we took the fight to the negotiating table. This was a shining example of UNISON members, stewards and regional officers all working together towards a better outcome.

In 2015/6 we also worked closely with our colleagues in UCU and Unite to make the University of York a happy and safe place to work. We have supported each other on issues such as pension provision, gender equality and anti-terrorism legislation. When all three trade unions speak together we have a powerful voice. We used this united voice to good effect by negotiating a pay increase for all staff, forcing the University to abandon its INTO proposal and securing a working group on pay protection policy.

During the past year, political issues on the national and European stage have been more relevant than ever to UNISON members. On every front the rights of workers are being assaulted. In the UK, the government has introduced its aggressive Trade Union Bill and also seeks to implement new pension rules, which will have a disproportionate impact on women. With the referendum on European Union membership, we risk losing the protection of EU employment law. The EU has created many of our most valued working conditions: equal rights for part-time workers; maternity, paternity and parental rights; and a minimum of paid annual leave. I encourage you to take an active interest in these issues and participate in any UNISON consultations or ballots. Through collective action we may be able to protect our rights as workers.

All UNISON members have a part to play in making the University a better place to work. Support your colleagues with a friendly hello, a chat over coffee or an offer of help. Participate in the wider University community by joining the Disabled Staff Network ‘INCLUDE’, becoming an Equality Champion or training as a mediator. Be our eyes and ears on the ground and tell others what being a UNISON member is all about. As we’ve seen in 2015/6, by working together we really can make a difference.

Finally, I’d like to thank all of this year’s branch officers and stewards: Alistair, Andy, Anne, Carole, Fransess, Helen, Jacqui, James, Jenny, John, Rosie and Seb. You have all played a part in making 2015/6 a successful year for the branch and so much of what you do is unseen or unrecognised. Thank you.

We have updated our Google website pages!
Take a look and find links for Events, Travel, National news and so much more!  https://sites.google.com/a/york.ac.uk/unison/home