

## Beware!! Interim Pay Rise & TUPE contractual commitments

On the 17th October 2008 it was announced that the employers side of the NJC agreed to UNISON's request for the 2008-09 offer of 2.45%, to be paid into employees accounts by Christmas 2008. In Harrow, it was agreed to pay the backdated offer from April 2008 in December's pay packet due to the fact that UNISON understood the amount of work involved and resources available. The agreement to pay the increase is an interim measure bringing some comfort to some workers ahead of Christmas.

UNISON draws members attention to a major concern regarding several of Harrow's preferred suppliers of service which are failing to acknowledge and are ignoring their contractual commitment under TUPE Regulations to pay the above interim measure. Under the TUPE Regulations 1981(amended in 2006) applying to ex-local authority employees, terms and conditions must remain protected under the above law including pay increases. **The council's home care providers, Care UK and Supporta Care have communicated with the branch stating that they have very little knowledge of this measure, they do not know who or what to pay and that they do not have any appropriate paperwork stating they are bound by NJC agreements and have not been consulted exemplifying further their little knowledge of TUPE and the NJC.** We believe this situation is evidence of extremely poor employment vetting procedures within the Council structure thereby jeopardising and compounding the hitherto poor performance of these home care providers as reported by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in its report findings and highlighted in recent media coverage. Failure to adhere to the contractual commitments to those staff transferred under TUPE would further dampen morale thus compromising Harrow's performance indicators and effecting overall outcomes for the most vulnerable service users in the borough. Furthermore, a service provider (Duchy Catering) which provides meals to Harrow's school children, are refusing to pay the backdated pay rise. UNISON are of the understanding that this disreputable company are about to lose the contract and is the reason behind the refusal.

A low morale factor and poor employment relations will impact on the future of Harrow, and the borough's school children. As matter of urgency Care UK and Supporta Care need to make the appropriate payroll arrangements. We have now informed our regional office and this matter will be in the hands of our legal representatives, Thompsons. We do not wish to put this council at risk of bad publicity and to be labelled a bad employer due to the actions or inactions of employers who seek to profit at the hands of employees delivering a service to the vulnerable residents of Harrow.

UNISON leads as an employer of choice

Credit crunch, credit Union

UNISON has had constructive dialogue with Michael Lockwood and the outcome being an extra days leave for Harrow staff. This follows our lead in granting staff employed by the Branch 1days leave and a free festive party for the members.... All proceeds of the raffle at the festive party to go to the Micheal Sobell unit at Harefield Hospital which provides care for asbestos related illness victims.

If you have lost faith in major banks have you considered joining a Credit Union? There are other London Boroughs where the workforce have clubbed together to form a savings and loan organization within Credit Union rules. Please contact me on e mail: r.thomas@harrow-unison.org.uk for info.

## Main Stories

- Conservatives to axe pensions
- With a view to an IPAD
- An Alliance of the South
- A bureau of lost souls
- Flexible strategies
- A Quantum of Solace
- Hold on—we know it hurts!!
- The property of a waitress

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## Conservatives to axe pensions!!!

Leading Tories have stepped up their campaign against the local government pension scheme(LGPS), suggesting that a future Conservative government will axe it. The shadow local government secretary is reported to say in the Local Government Chronicle criticising the pension entitlements of public services workers: “At a time when some private sector workers face having to work until 68 before they get their pension, this is neither sustainable nor fair.” The Chronicle also reports Conservative MP Sir Peter Viggers MP saying: “With the pressures on the public sector, it is inevitable that there should and must be a review of government and local government pensions to bring them in line. The concept of a final salary scheme with benefits, which was created at a time of less longevity is simply not sustainable.” Viggers said that staff in their 30s and 40s should not expect final salary schemes to remain.

Chair of UNISON Labour Link Steve Warwick says that this is a direct attack on local government workers, and on all those others covered by the LGPS scheme, including further and higher education, police staff and the water industry. He says it is now clear that any member of the local government pension scheme voting Tory at the next election would be going against their own interests because they would be voting to slash their own pension entitlement: **“Every single person working in public services needs to be aware of this and take note that it will be pensions first and then other service conditions will follow.** We’ve had a tough fight against the Tory local government employers to protect our rights.” - Refernece:UNISON labour link news letter Dec 2008

Leading Tories have stepped up their campaign against the local government pension scheme, suggesting that a future Conservative government will axe it.

## Did You Know..... ?

**When filling in a Health and safety incident/accident forms you must take a photocopy of the incident/accident form once it is completed and signed by the manager.**

**On the intranet, it informs you that the top copy goes to H&S at the Civic, the bottom copy is kept on file at site and finally another copy goes to personnel for the employees file. It should also state that the member of staff should take a copy, but doesn't. We are finding that the copies are not going to the areas as stated and we are concerned about the statistics we have been given regarding incidents/accidents.**

## Ten simple ways

Ten Simple Ways You Can Support UNISON Now.

1. Find out who your workplace representative is. Ask them how you can help.
2. E-mail a Branch Official; ask a question, make a suggestion or offer constructive criticism.
3. Attend at least one Branch Meeting a year and the Annual General meeting.
4. Vote in Ballots– Not voting is, by default, a vote for what you *don't* want to happen.
5. Never Cross a Picket Line.
6. Offer to train as a Workplace Representative.
7. Recruit a new member.
8. Find out what the Union is doing nationally by signing up to the UNISON e-mail circular at [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)
9. Offer to maintain a workplace Notice Board.
10. Read Harrow Council's Policy on Trade Union Recognition in the Employee Hand book.



**Compulsory games – A reneged ‘TUPE plus’ agreement**

Harrow UNISON has been in consultation and negotiations concerning a Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment (TUPE) within the education learning sector for adults from one provider, Nord Anglia to the new company, Prospects.

Briefly, the effect of the **TUPE** regulations is to make sure that when a business/service change hands all its employees transfer with it and are treated as if they have always been employed by the transferee. This means that their continuity of service and terms and conditions of employment are preserved. **Pensions are sometimes excluded by unscrupulous companies.**

Prospects want to alter member’s terms & conditions and relocate their work base from Harrow to Croydon without correct remuneration. Harrow UNISON challenged Prospects and negotiated a TUPE ‘Plus’ situation whereby members travel time to Croydon would be included within the working day, acting as a remedy to some member’s child care commitments, and that travel expenditure would be paid by the employer.

To this branch’s disgust, it appears Prospects have reneged on this agreement leaving members facing the perilous situation of redundancy. The branch faced no alternative but to refer the matter to the London region for urgent legal assistance. We hope our good work is continued by the regional machinery and we await the desired outcome benefiting those involved in this less than transparent TUPE transfer.

- Darren Butterfield

**UNISON invite**

**UNISON invites members to the Branch for mince pies on the 15th of December 2008 between 12-2pm.**

**Children’s Conveners Report**

I want firstly want to say thank you to my predecessors in the equivalent role in the branch. I would also like to thank all the other local representatives and activists who have put so much work in over the years but, who have not held office in *UNISON* themselves. I do not want to embarrass anyone by naming them directly, especially as I haven’t spoken with any of them before writing this. These members, I hope, will know who they are and I would like them to know that the considerable effort they have put in to protecting their colleagues’ interests in Children and Families Services have been greatly appreciated.

*UNISON* has not been as active as it should have been in this area for some time. This has not been for want of the efforts of a significant number of people and in this; I am including those I have referred to above. The fact is that there is only so much a few activists can do locally during times of organisational change and change within *UNISON* itself. Eventually, it has to be acknowledged that the baton has to be passed and someone else has to run with it (the change-over may not always be smooth)!

I am quite realistic about what will be possible to achieve over the forthcoming months. The priority, as always, will be the recruitment, training and support of workplace representatives. There is a good opportunity to make headway with this at the moment as we continue to develop a constructive relationship with the employer.

My own special interest area is the rights of employees in regulated professions, such as Social Care (although pay and the protection of member’s jobs as local services are increasingly transferred to the independent sector, which are also high on the agenda). We expect to see some interesting developments in this area shortly – so watch this space!

- Continued page 14



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 UNISON

the public service union

“ We will be paying particular attention to the number of cases of stress and we will be reluctant to accept any further excuses for delays in providing valid statistics ”

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## Health and Safety Officers report

### Access Harrow Asbestos

Since the last network article we have had a resolution at the last Employees Consultative Forum (ECF) to the **issue of illegal asbestos removal and disposal**. The administration had to concede 5 of the six points UNISON had proposed and this should mean increased scrutiny and more effective management of asbestos. In June 2006 a member contacted the UNISON office to say they were concerned about the works that were undertaken during the construction of Access Harrow. UNISON with the GMB began to investigate by holding meetings with senior officers.

The GMB bowed out of the discussions in the early stages never to return. However UNISON continued to investigate until September 2008, **almost two years after the incident**. UNISON will continue to fight for our members to ensure that Harrow Council will adhere to the requirements of the law. UNISON asks the question; When we speak is it considered the insolent breath of idle fantasy?

We are still not happy with the way the Council investigation was carried out and the delay by management in achieving a resolution. Accountability by management therefore remains an issue on our agenda and we will continue to scrutinise it.

### Health and Safety Department

The management of the Health and Safety department has come under criticism during the above affair and other incidents. We will be continuing our discussions at the highest levels of the Council seeking a reform of that department.

There have now been other asbestos related incidents that give cause for concern. In relation to these, management have been paying lip service to the issue of health and safety at all levels. This is a situation we are no longer willing to accept.

### Reception desk Civic Centre entrance

We have finally resolved the issue of a new and suitable reception desk at the Civic Centre entrance as the original comments given to Access Harrow management by UNISON at it's conception were ignored. Management had conceded over 6 months ago that a new ergonomic design should be installed but they have dragged their feet and initially failed to install the new desk. We had lost patience with this delay which seemed like deliberate punishment for the staff concerned. **2 years after our original suggestions Access Harrow management have replaced the front reception desk with a type that we originally suggested. They brought in consultants to advise them of ergonomics etc. They should have listened to us in the first place.**

### Gas incident next to Harrow Leisure Centre

A contractor had dug up a live gas main during demolition and site clearance of a Council project next to the Leisure Centre. There was a large escape of gas and the Leisure Centre had to be closed for a number of days. Management of major projects will now come under increased scrutiny as we have not always seen professional management of contractors or a duty of care exercised. Obviously these departments should be run by suitable professional staff with the commitment and experience required.

### Fall from height at the Depot

A major accident occurred at the depot, when a workman fell through a glass skylight in the roof of one of the buildings. Fortunately UNISON officers were on hand to assist even though they were officially on strike. A flying ambulance took the injured man to hospital where he made a good recovery.

### Health and Safety statistics

Our forthcoming target will be to improve the health and safety statistics provided by the Council. We have not been satisfied that the statistics provided previously, represent a true and accurate account of the situation.

- Continued page 6

## Assistance Health & Safety Officers report

Welcome! You are the proud owner of yet another informative newsletter from your union, Harrow UNISON. Firstly, let me introduce myself. My name is Darren Butterfield and I was elected the Assistant Health & Safety Officer in March 2008. I am also a workplace representative and have worked for Harrow within the Adults & Housing Directorate for nearly 4 years.

With the backing of a very supportive branch, I have hit the ground running and have been involved in many challenging issues regarding negotiating new policies such as the Capability Procedure and Remote Working Policy, representing members in a TUPE transfer, attending regional committee meetings and conducting various Job Evaluations. I have dealt with many of your queries, ranging from concerns regarding Occupational Sick Pay, service restructures to maternity rights. In the run up to the 'Fair Pay' dispute in July, I played a part in assisting our Strike Committee by providing UNISON members and Harrow Councillor's with a strike brief and issuing a statement on behalf of the branch to the press conveying our position within a local context.

On a Health & Safety front I have acted (along with my colleagues) as UNISON's mouth piece, representing the membership during my attendance at the Health at Work Group. Just recently the Group accepted a UNISON proposal to take part in a year long NHS Workplace Health pilot, specifically aimed at staff in the Central Depot, which will open up training opportunities giving staff the chance to conduct and promote a health initiative of their choice and in their workplace supported by management and the NHS.

UNISON has also requested numerous actions in this year's wellbeing delivery plan, one of which is calling for a complete overhaul of the corporate Health and Safety function. Currently the branch has a crisis of confidence within the existing structure. We have also asked for a full consultation process with staff at the Depot concerning the woefully poor 'healthy' eating options available and inadequate canteen facilities. I have also supported my colleague Mary Cawley, by assisting in workplace inspections, commenting on new H&S procedures and requesting risk assessments from management when hazards have been alerted by you the membership.

If you would like to get involved in some of the exciting work mentioned and strive to improve employee relations in Harrow, then please do not hesitate to contact either myself at the branch every Tuesday and Wednesday or one of the other branch officers who will be happy to help.

-Darren Butterfield

## Children's Services Conveners Report

### Email list for School activists

At the UNISON school staff seminar in May 2008, colleagues were asked if they would be interested in joining email networks and there was a very positive response. School managers were also invited to participate and over 100 replies were received within three days.

UNISON are therefore trialling some lists and invite you to fax your details to Susan Brampton 020 7771 1252 if you wish to be added to any of the following;

1. Members of Local Social Partnerships
2. School Managers
3. Library
4. Technicians
5. Classroom-based
6. Facilities staff categories - Continued page 8



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**Additional choices of healthier food on the canteen menus and an improvement in the catering facilities especially at the Depot were requested.**





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**Asbestos  
 can still kill  
 you, even if,  
 you were  
 exposed to it  
 almost 30  
 years ago**  
 “



## Harrow UNISON training (HUT)- A list of in-house courses

The following courses are open to UNISON members:

- Understanding Risk Assessments.
- Fire Risk Assessments.
- DSE Risk Assessments.
- Manual Handling Risk Assessment.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Workplace Transport Safety.
- Workplace Equipment Safety.
- Introduction to Health and Safety Law.
- Employer responsibilities (Health and Safety).
- COSHH Assessments.
- Accident Investigations.
- Workplace Inspections.
- Asbestos Awareness
- Hazard Notices (how and when to use).
- RIPH Hazard Awareness Course.
- RIPH Food Hygiene Course.
- Environmental Awareness for Reps and Stewards.
- Representing employees in negotiates with the employer on Health and Safety and Welfare issues.
- Stress.
- Vulnerable workers.
- Working at height.
- Preventing slips, trips and falls.

HUT training courses represent excellent value for money in that they are delivered by an experienced and qualified trainer(s), often utilising presentations from externally accredited organisations such as The Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, The Royal Institute of Public Health etc. Course materials are obtained from a wide variety of sources including The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), UNISON, The Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Highfield publications. Often courses are provided free of charge to UNISON activists, but where there is a cost to the branch a minimal charge is made to cover that cost on a non profit making basis. All courses are undertaken on a half day basis with the exception of externally accredited courses. There are only 12 places available for each course so please book early to ensure inclusion.

For further information or a course application form contact Ken McDonald or Varsha Patel at Harrow UNISON. Tel. 020 8424 1795. Fax 020 8424 1835  
 Or preferably by email at [info@harrow-unison.org.uk](mailto:info@harrow-unison.org.uk)

## Health & Safety Officers report -Continued from page 4

### Health at Work Group

At the recent Health at Work Group meeting we provided a number of proposals, with other groups and individuals to improve Health & Safety and the work/life balance for the workforce.

Major improvements are possible in addressing the major causes of sickness absence which are stress and back / neck problems. We are urging management to take an interventionist approach with for example exercise classes and better management of the causes of stress. Sadly management appear enthusiastic - Continued on page 7

## An Alliance of the South

I have been engaged in setting up an innovative project which, we have labelled the “West London Alliance” of UNISON Local Government Branches.

This is in response to the clear and present need for UNISON activists living and working in the West London area to unite in a broader, collective manner, combining resources and offering solidarity and support. We have contacted eight Branches ( Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond ) and have established a nucleus of participants, the first meeting of which was held on Monday September 1st 2008 (Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham and Richmond).

Activists at the meeting discussed a wide range of subjects such as privatisation outsourcing, hot desking, Health and Safety and various issues surrounding national conditions of service and degradation in local authority equality.

The Harrow Branch of Unison was able to offer a lot of advice and support in relation to a wide range of issues being experienced by our colleagues (hot desking, housing workers issues) as we have dealt with many of the issues ourselves already.

One thing is sure and that’s that there are a lot of challenges in West London Local Government and there’s, as you would expect much common ground.

We realised that it is very useful to talk to our UNISON colleagues as we are witnessing much the same issues and it has boosted our confidence as fore warned is fore armed.

I will keep the branch updated with news and events from the West London Alliance of UNISON Local Government Branches.

Lastly, I would like to welcome back our Branch Chair, Bob Thomas after his recent period of illness. It is good to see him back and I am sure that he will soon be moving into action serving our members.

-John Rattray –Vice Chair

## Health & Safety Officers report - Continued from page 6

for nil cost proposals. So we have asked them to consider providing additional resources especially, as fewer sick absences will save the Council money. We agreed to ask for Health & Safety events to take place at the Depot and possibly at the Teachers Centre and other Centres. Senior Management need to encourage staff to take part in Health & Safety events.

There appears to be a new enthusiasm by the Council to improve conditions for staff but they need to implement improvements before we accept that there has been a change of attitude. –Mary Cawley/Bob Thomas

### THE HILARY MACKIE PARK BENCH APPEAL

Hilary Mackie was a UNISON member who passed away in service earlier this year after battling with cancer for over a decade. She had worked as a field worker in the borough and then later as manager of Harrow Stores. Hilary was well loved by family and colleagues who considered her a very special person. UNISON members and colleagues of Hilary have already raised £300 via a sponsored swim to buy a park bench in memory of Hilary but are £200 short of the target. On behalf of Hilary’s close friends, Harrow UNISON would like to request donations from the wider membership to make up this £200 short fall. We would be very grateful if members could send any donations in person or via cheque in the post to Harrow UNISON LG Branch, Central Depot, Forward Drive, Harrow, HA3 8NT.



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## Children's Services Conveners Report - Continued from page 5

### Further Education College Staff

UNISON members have voted 'Yes' to the pay offer and sent a clear message to colleges: 'implement the deal or face a wave of anger'. 90% of members in England voted in favour of the offer. This a 3.2% increase on all salaries and allowances from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008, or £550 – which ever is the greatest.

This was a vote in favour of the higher than average deal for the lowest paid, with the new minimum wage of £6.91 per hour and the £550 underpinning.

Last year a large number of colleges failed to implement the underpinning for the lower paid; this will not be allowed to happen again. Already a number of colleges are preparing to ballot for strike action over the failure of their colleges to implement the 2007/8 deal. - Lynne Ahmad

### URGENT REQUEST TO MEMBERS

UNISON is actively engaged with Senior Management to improve Health & Safety within the workforce.

As a result of this, we would be grateful if members could report back to us with any issues they have regarding Health & Safety within their own workplaces or any examples of good or bad practice they have observed. Responses will be held in strict confidence.

Please refer all responses to Varsha Patel or Teresa Stanley on Tel no. 0208-424-1795.

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As a result of this  
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with any issues  
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regarding Health  
& Safety within  
their own  
workplaces  
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## CREATE

*One of the best London Councils by 2012*



**Customer first** – we are focused and invested in improving the lives of our customers, going the extra mile to resolve their issues and empowering them to take responsibility for their own decisions.

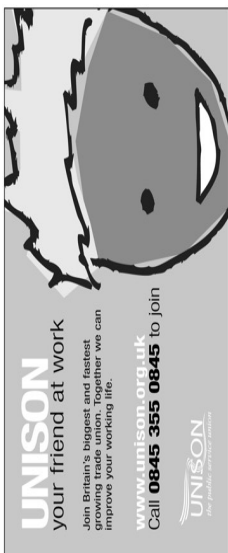
**Respect** – so we treat each other with courtesy and regard, earning respect through working with others to engender trust.

**Engaged Communication** – that's why we listen. Actively placing a premium on engaging in conversations that bring people together, allows curiosity and interest in areas other than their own.

**Actively 'One Council'** – we collaborate not blame, because we believe the 'sum of the parts' is more powerful than its individual parts.

**Taking responsibility** – We always deliver what we say we will, empowering and challenging each other to enhance performance and behaviour.

**Energise and Improve** – while distinguishing ourselves by taking actions that innovate and improve.





## Risk Assessment – A bureau of lost souls

It has come to the attention of the branch, that UNISON safety reps are being asked to carry out risk assessments. Can we make it clear to members and representatives alike that under the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations, the responsibility for carrying out and reviewing risk assessments lies firmly with management. Any appointed UNISON Health and Safety Rep may question or make comment on any part of the risk assessment in so far as it affects his/her members and may make suggestions in relation to risks, control measures or reviews that are carried out.

In serious cases where the risk assessment is not suitable and sufficient, reps have the power to serve a **Hazard Notice** on management to improve the situation. However **we cannot, and should not** undertake a review on management's behalf as we will be in breach of the law and could expose the union to possible civil litigation in the event of one of our members being injured as a result of the lack of a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment. The Union's Health and Safety Stage 1 course of training for union reps makes us competent to comment on risk assessments. It does this by ensuring that we have sufficient knowledge to discuss the risks and hazards that are present in our workplaces, with management, with a view to getting management to put in place sufficient control measures and precautions to protect our members.

- Ken Macdonald

## Flexible strategies

More than a year into Michael Lockwood's tenure and it appears our 'Iron man' Chief Executive is flexing his muscles in what are his proposals for change and actions in priority areas. Mr Lockwood is pumping money into HR to develop strategies to understand why Harrow has deemed to have one of the highest sick rates in London, to tackle the "5% of employees who have not raised their game" and to raise council wide performance making it the best performing authority in London by 2012.

Employees with years of experience that grow older will at some stage have less attendance at work for medical reasons. Will older staff members with high sick rates be targeted and therefore discriminated against? Poor ergonomics of equipment in the workplace may take its toll on staff members and be detrimental to their health. Under Health & Safety legislation, which this authority regularly contravenes, the employer has a duty of care to the employee and should make every effort possible to alleviate dangers, stress and hazards. Many employees suffer huge workloads and endure high stress levels and more often without a thank you from management. We can only hope Michael identifies stress as a major indicator of sickness and finds a remedy to overwhelming workloads.

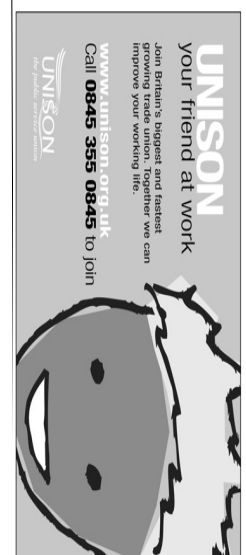
Members maybe curious to understand where the information concerning the 5% of underperforming employees came from and how this was obtained? What is the benchmark people have to rise to and from what level? Are Harrow staff already under the watchful eye of ill-informed members of HR? If so, why haven't UNISON been informed of this Big Brother/Alan Sugar approach to Industrial relations and have workplace representatives been consulted?

Most members are in agreement with the Chief Executive about making Harrow one of the best councils in London by 2012. However, the emphasis on the above areas sends out a clear message that our current state is the fault of lazy, sick employees and deflects attention away from years of mismanagement members have endured. Let's hope he really does get "Managers to manage" and secures the future of Harrow, as an employer of choice.

-(A curious workplace Rep)

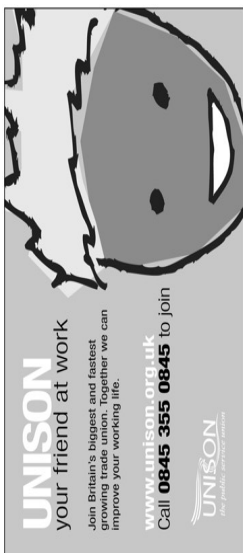


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 Employees with  
 years of experience  
 that grow older will  
 at some stage have  
 less attendance at  
 work for medical  
 reasons. Will older  
 staff members with  
 high sick rates be  
 targeted and  
 therefore  
 discriminated  
 against?  
 ”





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 relationships**  
 ”



## A measure of comfort?

Dear members,

As you may know, I have been recovering from a stroke since the end of February and I am on a phased return to work. I, as much as anyone else cannot carry the weight of the world, and with the help of the branch officers UNISON has managed to cover a major officer post and carry on the business of the branch very well during difficult times.

This is a worrying time for all our members with the economic crisis upon us and the concern over personal finance. Especially with the cuts in many of our allowances and an unresolved Scrooge like pay offer. The Council has been in some kind of economic crisis during all the 12 years I have worked for it. What has changed in those 12 years?

We have travelled in that time from Scrooge to Toad of Toad hall overspending and back to Scrooge. Now staff are being asked to bail out financial mismanagement again. During the Toad hall period when questioned how suddenly the new projects could be afforded, a director explained that we should not worry as funding was fully worked out. We now know that when staff are generating savings management are still shovelling cash out the back door to failed contractors and consultants.

What angers members is to have to tighten their belts when they see “those in authority” promoted in the discredited middle management review or individuals who can't manage properly and expensive consultants that carry out incompetent organisational reviews. There are also so-called senior professionals that do not have professional qualifications and seemingly no other redeeming qualities. Some people are running major projects without sufficient experience or qualifications. We see staff promoted temporarily and then cemented in after a year in post thus avoiding competition from other members of staff. It can be a temptation for inadequate managers to promote mediocrity around them but this has led to a loss in confidence in management generally. Hopefully we are now in a period where promotion is by merit and not how well you can role up your trouser leg and shake your hand in a funny manner.

The trend now is to outsource many of our services. Managerial competence is a vital requirement to get value for money and satisfaction from our customers. Sadly it is difficult to see any improvement or added value from our partnering contracts and often these contracts are on the edge of disaster for the ratepayers and the unfortunate staff transferred to these organisations. Recent history tells us, that outsourcing in its various forms can lead to a reduction in members conditions, which sometimes ends up in bullying and coercion for staff that should be protected under TUPE regulations. This winking out of ex-council staff is a temptation to many of these organisations so that they can employ a cheaper and less qualified workforce with the resultant loss in standards. These staff will also have less favourable terms and conditions.

What this local authority must remember is that staff are willing to accept certain terms and conditions and treatment beyond which, the relationship between employee and employer will break down. The late great writer Ian Fleming (1908-1964) had a very grandiose expression which outlined the level of trust, humanity and empathy in basic human relationships. He termed it:- “A Quantum of Solace” which loosely translated means ‘A measure of comfort.’ When any one of these ideals breakdown in the relationship between two groups of people, the ‘Quantum of Solace’ is said to be zero. I therefore ask this local authority;- as employees, where is our ‘measure of comfort’ this Christmas?

-Bob Thomas (Chair)

## The Bournemouth conference 2008

**Delegates agreed to withdraw UNISON's financial support** from the GLA organised RISE Festival. This was in protest CONSERVATIVE Boris Johnson's decision to drop the festival's anti-racist theme. RISE was set up by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), in memory of Stephen Lawrence and others who have suffered from racism. It had become the largest anti-racist festival in Europe. However, the new **Conservative mayor of London Boris Johnson removed any reference to racism** and has rebranded it in his own charming way "A celebration of music and culture." He also banned the National Assembly against racism from contributing to the festival...

- Delegates had mutual concerns regarding their employers trend toward shared services. With this in mind, complicit delegates got together to see if branches could work together on resolving the issues that were of concern. A later consequence of this meeting was a group called the West London Alliance was created. The Branches meet directly with all other branches in the neighbouring areas (via the alliance) to ensure that we are fully kept informed of the potential threat this will have to our Borough and residents who have individual and different needs.

UNISON's general secretary Dave Prentis criticised Gordon Brown's government and felt that UNISON support was being taken for granted. He made it clear that Labour needed to become once more, the party that marks itself out as the champion of working people, of social justice and fairness, of the poor and the vulnerable; properly funded public services, and seen to be breaking the costly chains of privatisation.

- The speakers at this conference provided an alarming account of the violence and aggression against front line workers in many areas. These incidents adequately display

the lack of importance that employers have given to these kind of incidents. The conference passed a motion which called for continued improvement within the law so that public service workers are given an adequate level of protection.

**"Flexicurity" is a term that has been introduced by the European commission**

to suggest that if the worker accepts Flexibility, job security at work will follow. This is a contradiction; effective security is designed to remove collective bargaining rights of workers. This initiative is a fundamental attack on employment rights which undermines the underlying principles of democratic trade unionism. The delegates of the conference unanimously voted for the opposition to this policy and called for a co-ordinated campaign by trade unions across all EU member states.

- Trevor Phillips heads Britain's new super-watchdog, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which oversees discrimination issues relating to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. Trevor has never been reticent or afraid to upset the status quo on thinking around race and multiculturalism. It was heartening to hear speaker address conference on these important issues a reminder us all at conference of the underlying principles behind trade unionism.

Speaker James Clancy represents a new form of trade unionism which allows working people to face up to the challenges of the 21st century. He congratulated UNISON on its 'Show Racism the Red Card' campaign. His knowledge and his campaigning in Canada has made him a strong believer in 'social unionism' which continues to compel him to strengthen public services for all. It is important that UNISON continues to forge links with active trade union activists throughout the world. We have a lot to learn from each other and must support our trade union colleagues in their struggles.



"  
**The speakers at this conference provided an alarming account of the violence and aggression against front line workers in many areas.**  
 "





“ The CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection) has awarded each provider a worrying ‘0’ star rating ”

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## Improving support for vulnerable people??? – An unfinished tale

Less than a year into Harrow Council’s contract with its two main homecare providers, Care UK and Supporta Care, and already the independent watchdog Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has awarded each provider a worrying ‘0 star’ performance rating. CSCI are an independent body which regulate/inspect all adult social care services in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They also promote improvements in social care and stamp out bad practice but to be awarded a ‘0 star’ rating an agency is deemed not to ‘meet the rules for an adequate and safe service’ (www.csci.org.uk).

According to the CSCI Inspection, Supporta Care need to improve in 5 key areas covering the ‘assessments of clients e.g. risks assessments, complaints, recruitment, training & supervision and office accommodation’.

**The watchdog found that Care UK’s ‘management structure and capability of the agency has been insufficient to meet the overall needs of people who use the service’. It also goes on to state that “administrative incompetence is very noticeable and that there were overall shortfalls regarding punctuality, a consistent team of carers for clients, the reporting and investigating of accidents and incidents and a general lack of supervision, support and training for staff”.**

The dire care situation in the borough has been recently highlighted by the local press who reported a dangerous incident in the dropping of a service user from a hoisting aid by one of the mentioned providers. As the majority of service users who receive care are classified as ‘critical’ and vulnerable, accidents like this should be avoided at all costs due to the potential outcome of a fatality. **Further investigations by the branch reveal that Harrow Council is not the only local authority struggling with one of its main block care providers. Just two months into Hertfordshire County Council’s contract with Supporta Care, the Watford Observer (June 2008) reported that the authority suspended the home care contract** amidst a deluge of complaints after the service descended into chaos because the company was unable to fulfil its contractual commitments due to staff shortages. One relative was quoted as saying “They (Herts County Council) should, surely, have made sure the company was able to fulfil its obligations before giving it such an important contract. This isn’t about money- it’s about the dignity and independence of elderly and vulnerable people”.

Some senior officers in the Council, such as the Director of Community Care appear to work with the regulatory authorities, encourage staff involvement and welcome trade union input in efforts to improve services e.g. Milman’s & HLDT but UNISON have seen little meaningful engagement from the responsible officer’s to uphold and re-ignite contractual commitments to achieve a better service.

Officer’s need not reminding that the care industry is now person centred and therefore this type of unresponsive contract management and unwillingness to act, in terms of serving enforcement notices/remedy powers or direct action as used in Hertfordshire, result in unsatisfactory outcomes and the denial of quality for service users. This apparent inaction is in stark contrast and light years away from the Cabinet’s call, as announced as one of three major objectives in its Year Ahead Statement (YAS), to ‘Improve support for vulnerable people’.

UNISON understands the council’s commitment to value for money but with a restrictive block contract scheme in place such as in Harrow, it appears that high quality standards, a valued and skilled staff base and healthy competition are compromised in efforts to keep costs low. All of these factors inevitably hit the most vulnerable people in society i.e. those who receive the care and those employees, some of the lowest paid in Britain, who carry out the care.

- UNISON Branch

## With a view to an IPAD

According to this year's staff survey, a good portion of staff felt that they liked how the IPAD (Individual Performance Appraisal and Development) scheme focuses on learning and reviewing objectives **however, around a third of staff have not even completed a full IPAD yet.** In comparison to the last staff survey undertaken in 2005, the numbers who agree that the learning and development employee's have received at Harrow has helped them be more effective, is significantly lower. If you've never endured an IPAD, it takes a year to complete, beginning with the setting of objectives and competencies agreed between the manager and the employee. Forms are completed, signed, and progress is reviewed and monitored 6 months later. The cycle is finally completed at the end of year review meeting when the job holder and manager re-assess the current IPAD and complete new forms for the next year.

So what is going wrong with the IPAD system? The comments received from reps and members paint a picture of a scheme which is in need of much attention and is generally badly managed. Far from providing a clear link between the personal objectives of staff and the organisation as a whole, members can be forgiven for thinking what actual relevance their job has in achieving the six over arching Corporate Priorities and where they fit in within this mass organisation. This distance factor is accentuated by the fact that some directorates and service areas do not make their Service Priorities known to all staff each year, if indeed any have been set. **It is no wonder then that a good number of staff, as identified in the staff survey, felt that leadership from senior management needs to improve.**

The IPAD is also treated as a form-filling exercise by many managers who generally neither have the time or indeed the training to adequately meet the needs of the employee in completing the IPAD. For instance, some members had been encouraged to register training interests as objectives and then subsequently found out from the Learning and Development team that they were not eligible to apply for the training because the training opportunities only applied to staff in managerial grades (eg CMS and DMS courses). This serves to restrict opportunities and hinders career progression for lower graded staff. It also further promotes the elitist culture that exists regarding training opportunities.

**The IPAD process was originally sold to UNISON as a 360 degree two way process** scheme that was intended to encourage staff development and feedback. The scheme is now being used in a number of departments where it is purely used as a target setting process for the employee, with little or no training and development being made available due to 'the need to make efficiency savings'. One has to raise the question as to what development opportunities are made available to our hardworking operational staff such as refuse collectors, cleaners, caretakers, grounds maintenance staff and home care workers. It would be interesting to see the statistics relating to training courses attended by management and 'officer' grade staff against those on lower grades. The elected council members would no doubt be highly embarrassed at the cost of some degree level courses that have been paid for by the council for some of its staff.

As the IPAD scheme is up for review later this year, the branch would like to receive your comments and your own personal experiences, feelings and general all round views on the process. For example, do you think the IPAD should become more focused on the employee's directorate and link directly to the job and department to which they work in? If the scheme is to be more effective, do you think managers need more training and resources, or even support from HR? Do you find it a superficial form-filling exercise with little meaning or worth? Do you think the scheme should be scrapped and replaced with structured/regular supervision meetings?? UNISON would like to hear your views. -Darren Butterfield



“ It is interesting to note that the IPAD is also a stepping stone to 'Investors in People' (IIP) accreditation for the council and hence a step closer to being the best council by 2012. ”





## Children’s Conveners Report - continued from page 3

**Improving communication between the Branch and members in Children’s Services will also be a challenge and I hope ultimately that a regular pattern of workplace ‘shop’ meetings in the different service areas within the department, will be established.** I hope to be meeting as many members as possible during my time in this role. I also hope that this will be mostly when things are going right. So I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Branch Meetings and the AGM in the future.

The job of Convenor within *UNISON* is primarily concerned with supporting Workplace Representatives and representing members and representatives interests across Children’s Services on the Branch Executive Committee.

I am usually available to advise members from the Branch Office on Mondays and for more urgent matters at other times. Please contact the Branch Administrators, who will be happy to pass messages on: **Tel: 020 8424 1795.**

- Neil Millington

### UNISON thanks Andrew Trehern



**UNISON would like to express a special thanks to Andrew Trehern, for his support in keeping the services in-house in the community and environment area. We wish him well in his new position.**

### Hold on—we know it hurts!!!!

UNISON have entered many departments in this Council to seek partnership working. Some have listened and some have been made to listen, due to their lack of vision, towards ideals which they should be aspiring to. **The cry from the membership is coming loud and clear from our in-house housing services.** UNISON seeks to enter the housing committees to ensure fairness, procedural requirements, and so that the clarity of vision is seen by all. We move towards the cry for help. We cannot print the entirety of the cry for help, but we are fully aware.— UNISON Branch

### The property of a waitress

After trade union pressure the Government has outlawed the practice under which disreputable restaurants pay staff less than the national minimum wage and make up the rest in tips. Sustained union campaigning in conjunction with recent media attention has persuaded the government to close a previous loophole in the National Minimum Wage which enabled restaurants to use tips left for waiters and waitresses as part of their basic £5.52-an-hour salary. The subsidisation of poor wages has ended but the union campaign for transparency in service charges and tips will not end there. The movement aims to introduce a ‘Fair Tips’ charter which serves to signpost customers to those restaurants where staff keep the tips they’ve earned and fully deserve, meaning customers/members really can tip with confidence.

- A UNISON member
- Reference - ‘Victory for fair tips campaign as ministers act’, Independent.co.uk, Andrew Grice and James Macintyre, 28 July 2008.

“  
The cry from the membership is coming loud and clear from our in-house housing services.”

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your friend at work



**U Do Say – UNISON Hears from you!!!**

Dear Harrow Unison,

I would like to express my gratitude for the good work you do for the members. There was a time about 3 years ago when I was at the verge of breakdown; I was feeling so depressed, distressed and helpless because of the way I was being treated at work.

We spend most of our time at work and if we are not treated with respect and dignity then life seems to be a burden. No one outside work can understand the problems you are facing because they are not in that environment. Only your colleagues can understand your misery. But unfortunately at that time in my life no one would come forward to help me because they felt that they would face repercussions.

I praise the brave unison stewards who are helping members who are in unfortunate circumstances. To be a unison steward is a rewarding task. It can be difficult and sometimes requires sacrifice. It was a privilege for me to find a rep who was willing to help, without thinking of themselves first.

I must add that not all Unison stewards are the same and we might get a few individuals who would back out for their own ulterior motives and press the victim to grin and bear it. But such individuals may be few and far between. I was lucky that I was represented by someone who is caring, understanding and I must admit on the whole very brave to take on such a challenge.

Thank you Unison

**- A grateful UNISON member**

**The beds too big without you! - Join UNISON now!!!** (contact details are on the back page)

I was outraged and appalled when I read the disgusting tactics used by Lidl in the last issue of the Network.

I've heard the council is coming down hard on sickness and reckon the council might consider using lie detectors, as it does in assessing false benefit claims, in attempts to deter employees from 'pulling sickies' I am also worried that staff are now being disciplined using camera footage. !! This really is like Big Brother watching over you!

**-A concerned UNISON member.**

**Overheard.....**



“Why should we have to wait for the Unions to agree to a pay rise? We should have a union for people who are not members of a union”.....!?”

“I wish I could afford to strike.....”

**- All from a non-member**

I hate to dampen the perceived progress the council is making but I'm quite shocked at the sheer amount of change, reorganising and restructuring currently going on throughout the entire authority. I feel that too often in Harrow the way to change and improve matters is to come up with another procedure/policy or decide to restructure a service which has already undergone countless alterations. I wish to share the following words of wisdom, and some would say caution, with the-powers-that-be harking back two thousand years to AD66 when Caius Petronius, a Roman Consul, astutely surmised;

“We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn in later life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising: and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress, while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation”.

Even after all these years the words of a Roman Consul are very apt.

**- A cautious UNISON member.**



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“  
**I was to learn in later life that we tend to meet any new situation by re-organising.**  
”





“  
UNISON would  
like to hear from  
you...  
”

## UNISON Branch Officers 2008

<b>Branch Secretary:</b>	<b>Gary Martin</b>
<b>Asst Branch Secretary:</b>	<b>Steve Compton</b>
<b>Asst Branch Secretary:</b>	<b>Ron Gray</b>
<b>Health &amp; Safety Officer:</b>	<b>Mary Cawley</b>
<b>Asst Health &amp; Safety Officer:</b>	<b>Darren Butterfield</b>
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Bob Thomas</b>
<b>Vice Chair:</b>	<b>John Rattray</b>
<b>Treasurer/Adult Services Convener</b>	<b>Deborah Hattam</b>
<b>Education Officer:</b>	<b>Ken McDonald</b>
<b>Equalities Officer:</b>	<b>Anna Jackson</b>
<b>Children's Services Convener/Recruitment Officer:</b>	<b>Lynne Ahmad</b>
<b>Children's Services Convener:</b>	<b>Neil Millington</b>
<b>Communications Officer:</b>	<b>Kanti Halai</b>
<b>Education Convener:</b>	<b>Andy Lusted</b>
<b>Welfare Officer:</b>	<b>Mary Cawley</b>
<b>Youth Officer:</b>	<b>Vacant</b>

## The UNISON Office

The UNISON Office is Staffed by:-

Office administrator: Varsha Patel (Part time)

Admin assistant: Teresa Stanley ( Part time)

**Please remember to contact your workplace representative in the first instance and let them deal with any issues at the grass roots level.**

Contact UNISON via:

**The UNISON Office  
Central Depot  
Forward Drive  
Harrow, HA3 8NT  
Telephone: 020 8424 1795**

**OR**

Via E-mail: [info@harrow-unison.org.uk](mailto:info@harrow-unison.org.uk)

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# U<sub>nison</sub> Say!



## UNISON would like to hear from you.

Do you have any concerns or queries regarding local and national issues? We would like your views. Do you have any articles or thoughts that could be included in this news letter? Has UNISON helped you? If so please let us know the details so we can include your success stories.

Contact the UNISON office via email or a letter to the above address.

Please send your comments to the editor via the email(s) below.

Email: [k.halai@harrow-unison.org.uk](mailto:k.halai@harrow-unison.org.uk) or [info@harrow-unison.org.uk](mailto:info@harrow-unison.org.uk)

(Please note that UNISON reserve the right not to publish some articles and edit others prior to publishing.)

