

Annual Report 2016



UNISON

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Following on from a tumultuous 2015, work on campaigning against the Trade Union Bill continued, with some success in the Lords, where they voted to pass amendments that diluted the Bill and even removed certain elements.

Work on the DOCAS switch pilots also continued with 3 Regions taking part in the pilot projects: North West, which started in November 2015, South East which started at the end of January and West Midlands which started in March.

In the South East, Gosport and Ridgeway Branches worked with their DOCAS members to get them to provide their bank details to be 'switch' ready to convert to direct debit if the Bill became law. UNISON also recruited 2 temporary 'Membership Organisers' to work with Central Sussex Hospitals Branch who started on 7 March to similarly seek members bank details to be ready to switch to direct debit.

UNISON South East launched its 'Proud to be in UNISON' campaign in March. A new website was created, where members and activists can upload pictures and stories showing that they are proud to be a UNISON member. Campaign merchandise was made available including notebooks, lanyards, t-shirts and pin badges, all of which branches can still order through the website.

At the end of March, a Branch Briefing was held covering topics including Proud to be in UNISON, the role of Organisers, CASE protocol, WARMS, and the EU referendum. In addition discussions were held on various topics raised by branches on the day including different approaches to ERA refresher training, dealing with members joining on line with an issue, engaging caseworkers and costs of professional registration cases.

The Trade Union Bill became the Trade Union Act after receiving royal ascent on 5 May. However, the final legislation was much changed from that initially proposed by the government, and we can put that down to the impressive and sustained campaigning and negotiating work undertaken by UNISON, the TUC and many other unions, in both the House of Commons and House of Lords.

UNISON was mentioned frequently in the debates in the Lords, and members' efforts to lobby MPs have shown what we can achieve when we work collectively.

Although the Bill still contains some very damaging legislation for workers, UNISON members can be justifiably proud of the campaign they waged, which saw UNISON leading on DOCAS, and which resulted in the government abandoning their proposals in this area.

At National Delegate Conference, the Standing Orders Committee upheld the regional appeal and allowed our Regional motion '£10 now' back onto the agenda although sadly it wasn't heard. Therefore the region actioned the very similar motion passed at Regional Council AGM.



Our delegates at NDC showed their support for our brothers and sisters in Florida following the horrendous hate crime at Pulse nightclub by wearing LGBT wristbands and having a photo taken with the Regional LGBT banner. This photo together with a message of support and solidarity was sent to the president of AFSCME, our sister union in Orlando.

The General Secretary and many other speakers paid tribute to Jo Cox; many of them personal friends of the vibrant MP, who believed in socialism, fairness and who worked hard to promote integrated communities.

Following the rise in hate crime after the Brexit vote on the last day of Conference, UNISON South East produced a circular for branches and draft wording of a joint statement for public service employers to publish. The statement condemns all racist attacks and ensures employers provide safe systems of reporting for their staff and clients as well as support in doing so. In addition information on what is a hate crime and how to report it was made available on the UNISON South East website.

Over the summer, Regional Committee approved the setting up of the Task and Finish Group and the objectives of the three work streams. Four meetings took place over the summer months and we had a good attendance of Chairs at each of them. The Chairs agreed at the first meeting how each of the days would run and then split into the three work streams: - Reviewing the Regional Strategy, Establishing Access Standards in the Region and Reviewing the Regional Constitution. All three groups worked very well and produced welcome outcomes that met the objectives agreed by Regional Committee. UNISON would like to thank all attendees for their very productive input and for their willingness to dedicate so much of their time to this important work.

A major industrial relations dispute with MMD Shipping Ltd and UNISON was settled on 5 September averting the need for strike action following a negotiated settlement. MMD members of the Portsmouth City Branch voted overwhelmingly to accept a new pay and conditions package, with a £2,000 payment to all members in October, 3% pay increase in April 2017 and a pay rise in line with CPI in 2017, alongside a profit share scheme if the Company returns to profit after 8 years of losses underwritten by the City Council. There had been a threat to dismiss and re-engage on annualised hours contracts from 17 September.

Thanks to solid support from members, the branch and regional staff, the employer was forced to negotiate and concede on key areas in dispute.

The Region has surpassed previous years in recruiting and training activists; branches should be congratulated on the work being undertaken in developing new stewards in particular. A new one day course 'U in UNISON' was piloted in early November, feedback from this will be used to publicise the 'taster' course throughout the region. The course will be run both as part of the education programme but can also be run within branches / workplaces.



The union launched a new national campaign – Public Service Champions, which allows the public to recognise and value the work of our members but also publicises the wide range of roles within the public sector and demonstrates the impact these roles have on everyday life.

With November being Young Workers month, The Young Members' Forum ran a digital campaign to raise the profile of UNISON young members and the roles they carry out in the public sector. Our current young members group may be small, but they are passionate and highly motivated and have been doing excellent work both around Young Workers month but also developing a regional 'Cap It' campaign, about fair rents for young workers.



NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE 2016

It was great to see so many members from the region at National Delegate Conference (NDC), with 259 members attending the conference. We held two well attended regional delegates meetings, as well a training event for first time delegates. It was also pleasing to see so many members at the region's informal social after the mid-week delegates meeting.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, both our region's national Standing Orders Committee representative and substitute were unable to attend NDC. In order for our region to have representation on the committee, an electronic ballot was held of Regional Council members. Paul Couchman (Surrey County) was elected to the role and UNISON would like to say thank you to Paul, and all candidates who stepped forward at the last minute, for volunteering and being willing to undertake this important role.

UNISON would like to thank the regional delegates Lorna Mooney (Portsmouth City) and Mark Chiverton (Isle Of Wight LG), regional retired members' rep Janet Cullup (Oxfordshire County) and News Sheet Editor Pete Dearden (Bucks Area) for their sterling work throughout conference.



The Committee met three times in 2016, on 14 March, 9 July and 3 November.

EDUCATION

In 2016 the Region ran 52 activist education courses, plus a branch officer training weekend, training 232 new stewards and 48 new Health and Safety reps.

All courses:

Men attended: 289 (39%)

Women attended: 455 (61%)

BME: 82 (11%)

Health and Safety Course:

Men attended: 30 (63%)

Women attended: 18 (37%)

BME: 7 (15%)

Organising Stewards Course:

Men attended: 102 (43%)

Women attended: 135 (57%)

BME: 17 (7%)

In 2016, Regional courses provided 2,360 training days, with only 7 courses being cancelled, compared to 25 in 2015.

Cuts to Government funding for trade union activist training will require changes to delivery of the Regions programme during 2017. The July 2016 ETD Committee considered this and established a working group to respond to an NEC report and consultation paper. The working party met on 1 and 26 August and submitted a response on 31 August. On 10 November the Committee met with the Head of LAOS to consider the situation and to go through its response including future funding, standards and use of lay tutors, for which the Committee has sought guidance from the NEC on payment.

To ensure adequate resources are available for activist education, the Region arranged training for all Area Organisers in 2016 so that they can help deliver core activist training, as well as TUC tutors. Lay tutor training was also arranged in July to support the development of tutors to run local training.

2016 RECRUITMENT

13,320 new members joined the Region in 2016, virtually identical to the number recruited in 2015.



This was 87% of the annual recruitment target; but due to a high number of leavers, our membership dropped overall, with the total number of leavers 3,581 higher than those joining.

However in the final quarter of 2016 intensive RMS data cleansing work was undertaken to comply with requirements of the Trade Union Act. We are awaiting the final line count figures for 2016 detailing all full members paying subscriptions, which are expected to show the actual loss of paying members was much less than 3,581.

In 2016:

28 / 114 branches met or exceeded their recruitment target.

15 / 114 branches maintained or grew their membership.

Community, Higher Education and Police & Justice Branches exceeded their 15% recruitment targets, while Health branches were close to target. Business & Environment and Local Govt were well below their 15% target.

Online joiners made up 69% of all new members. Local Govt and Community were highest (over 75%) with Business & Environment and Police & Justice the lowest (under 45%).

The number of joiners not from the public sector was 30%.

FIGHTING FUND LOCAL / AREA ORGANISERS

There were eight fighting fund organisers working with branches through most of 2016, supporting Branches to identify and support new activists as well as to recruit new members. Following interviews on 20 & 21 October, three new fighting fund local organisers commenced work with Branches on 5 December 2016.

BRANCH HEALTH CHECK

The Health Check report developed by the ETD Committee has measures divided into 5 summary areas: organising, participation, equality, systems and communications to identify high performing and struggling Branches across these measures. The systems measures were updated at the end of June and were considered by the ETD Committee on 9 July.

The report provides an overall score based on the individual measures for each Branch across these five areas. As well as identifying the top scoring branches to be able to share good practice, the ETD Committee uses the report to identify and focus attention on the lowest scoring Branches, with the 6 lowest all having organising plans supported by Regional staff to help them improve, with reports going to each Committee meeting.

JOINT BRANCH ASSESSMENT (JBA)

UNISON moved JBA's from the first to the last quarter of the year in 2016, to ensure that planning is undertaken before the start of the year and action plans, with resources identified to deliver them are taken to Branch AGM's.



Reports on outcomes of 2016 JBA's were considered by the ETD Committee on 9 July. Recognising the pressure Branch Officers and Regional Staff are under, questions were reduced, with action plans all focussed on the same four key areas: the TU Bill, campaign activity, stewards' development and members' communication.

The Committee considered employment arrangements covering the 49 branches employing 80 staff, including 43 administrators, 25 caseworkers and 7 organisers and developed further questions and advice on pensions and HMRC requirements on self employment to include in the 2016/17 assessments.

The 2016/17 assessment commenced in November. Due to the requirement for activity based budgeting agreed at the 2016 national delegate conference, a new section was included on finance and budgeting. New sections on equality and an expanded section on Branch employed staff were also included, while Branch action plans continue to focus on campaign activity, stewards' development and members' communication.

BRANCH ORGANISING NETWORK DAYS

The ETD Committee undertook a survey monkey consultation with Branches and stewards to identify the type of event, location and timing that would help stewards to undertake their role and support Branches. The survey had 217 responses from activists across 80 branches. 86% of respondents responded positively that they would be interested in attending an event.

Two Branch Network days were held in 2016. The first on 26 March covered the Proud to be in UNISON campaign, role and responsibility of Organisers, case protocol and management and the EU referendum. The second on 5 October covered submitting motions to conferences, NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plans (STPs), Branch assessments and a briefing on the new UNISON stress case protocol by Thompsons.

The ETD Committee planned to hold an event to support Branches with the practical work to address the implications of the Trade Union Act, particularly in relation to changes to DOCAS in 2016; due to the delay in draft regulations being published, that was delayed into 2017.

BRANCH ORGANISATION

The Committee considered various proposals to change and improve member organisation in 2016. These included arrangements for probation members, moving private and community members based in Bucks, back into the new Bucks Area Branch and Wokingham joining the new Central & East Berks Branch. It also agreed to Lewes and Eastbourne Branches merging in early 2017.

The Region ended 2016 with thirteen Branches with less than 100 members, ten are Local Government Branches, four having dropped to less than 53 members.



The Committee is overseeing a review of small branches and supporting measures to improve local organisation and encourage sharing of resources. This included working with two Higher Education Branches to join local Health based branches with their own section to ensure retention of their identity and autonomy over their employment and service group matters. A meeting of the Local Government Committee District representatives and representatives from the Branches with less than 100 members was held on 28 April to consider future viability and organisational options. This was followed by a meeting for Surrey District Branches on 27th July, with a further Surrey meeting to be held on 30 January 2017.

The Committee also considered criteria for branches to continue to operate and identified the following as the relevant factors; ability to appoint to key Officer roles, participation in lay democracy, organising campaign activity, communicating with and organising members, and undertaking recruitment activity.



The Finance Committee's role is to oversee and control Lay budgets and expenditure in the region.

The Finance Committee works closely with other Committees with responsibility for the monitoring of Regional Pool and General Political Fund monies, and ensures appropriate budgets are set to achieve the region's 2016 Objectives and Action Plans. All committees' budgets are submitted to the Finance Committee for approval, with a reasonable action plan and projected expenditure.

Expenditure for all committee budgets is regularly scrutinised, and committees may be asked to consider reviewing under-spends and adapting future budgets or committee activities as needed.

Requests for additional funding or budget virements are considered, approved or re-directed to alternative sources for funding, particularly when the activities may have a particular campaigning objective which goes beyond the remit of a specific group.

All committee chairs and secretaries have received training in 2016, which included information on formulating budgets and action plans. The committee have also worked towards getting branches live on OLBA, and using this system consistently. This has been successful, with almost all of the region's 114 branches now live on OLBA.

Final expenditure reports show that committee budgets have not overspent, and adjustments have been agreed to 2017 budgets where necessary and reasonable. Final action plans for each lay budget group are to be finally agreed at the first Finance Committee of 2017 on 23rd January.

The region has circulated letters requesting donations to our Campaign Outreach Fund, the balance of which stands at £29,637.84 as of 31st December 2016.

The balance of all funds as of 31st December 2016 was **£485,237.11**, comprising:

General Fund £160,587.49
International Fund £20,331.48
Industrial Action Hardship Fund £177,874.92
Regional Campaign Outreach Fund £29,637.84
Regional Campaign Fund £96,805.38



The Publicity and Campaigning Committee met four times in 2016.

Considerable focus was given to reviewing the process for agreeing regional pool bids, including the facility to agree bids of up to £1000 via email, and to developing clearer guidance to branches on accessing the regional pool. The existing guidance was clarified and reissued to all branches at the end of 2016:

Regional pool funding applications should be made in the context of the Framework for Joint Branch/Region Assessments and Action Plan and meet UNISON's branch development and organisation objectives. Examples of the sort of things that can be applied for can be found below:

- Recruitment materials and incentive schemes
- Campaign materials
- Stalls at events
- Temporary staff to carry out recruitment campaigns (see protocol for engaging staff via regional pool funds)
- Publicity materials

The first meeting of the Publicity and Campaigning Committee of 2017 will be **Friday 3rd March**. Therefore Branches, Regional Committees and Groups should note that for a Regional Pool bid to be considered at this meeting all bids needs to be recieved by **Caroline Butler** in the Guildford Office by **Friday 3rd February**.

Over the year the following bids were agreed:

GPF –

Brighton and Hove £3720

LGBT £7800

Regional Pool -

West Berkshire £500

West Sussex £9441.42

Milton Keynes Area £20000

Oxford University and Colleges £450

South East Energy £1310

Healthcare committee £21079

Ashford £258.75

Surrey County £500

Kent Local Government £2369.28

Kent Local Government £2220

Surrey County £500

Buckinghamshire Area £500

Southampton District £23000

Joint bid – Sussex Community Health, Sussex Police and Justice, Chichester, Adur and Worthing, Arun and West Sussex £22470

The Open University £18,748.80

SSE (England and Wales) £8773

Berkshire Healthcare and Community £1000

Berkshire Healthcare and Community £3228.96

Milton Keynes Health £1000



The regional Editorial and Communications Committee met 3 times throughout 2016 and produced 3 South East Campaigner magazines.

Pete Dearden was elected by the Committee to attend National Delegate Conference to produce the daily regional newssheet which was well received by delegates.

The regional website project has been a huge success with 15 branches running active websites and several more in the build process.

Welfare Committee

The regional Welfare Committee held 3 meetings during 2016 and started the planning for the introduction of a Welfare Awareness Month.

15 new Branch Welfare Officers were trained in 2016 and the Committee would like to thank all the branches and committees that sent donations to UNISON Welfare.

Health and Safety Committee

The Committee held 3 meetings during 2016; unfortunately the meeting scheduled to take place in December was cancelled. In addition to the scheduled meetings the Committee held a training day event in September, on the theme of Campaigning and Recruiting around Hazards. The event included discussions on identifying obstacles to becoming a H&S rep, identifying H&S issues affecting members in specific sectors and how to recruit and retain members. Over 20 H&S reps attended the event held in our Guildford office.

Tracey Harding, UNISON's National Officer for H&S gave a presentation on the work that our national office are doing, and was able to answer lots of questions from our reps. Thompsons provided an update on Personal Injury and Health and Safety, and again was able to answer quite a few queries that reps had.

The Committee is in the process of designing a 'Health and Safety Reps' Pocket Guide', which is designed to give members an outline of what is involved in being a UNISON safety rep to encourage them to get involved. The Committee has secured funding for printing of the guide, which will be in circulation early in 2017.



The Committee met 3 times during 2016; unfortunately the planned December meeting was cancelled.

As well as the scheduled meetings, the SEIRC held a joint seminar with Eastern Region in September. The outline theme for the event was 'migrant workers' rights', although the agenda was more varied as it included presentations from our colleagues at UNISON national office, Show Racism the Red Card, as well as guest speaker Hasan Bhargouthi, Director of Democracy and Workers' Rights in Palestine.

Rosa Crawford, TUC Policy Officer, outlined the main issues around the Immigration Act. Chai Patel, from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants spoke about the erosion of labour rights and the impact of other legislation on those rights. Anti Slavery International's Director Aidan McQuade talked about the Modern Day Slavery Act, that it would only succeed if enforced. UNISON Eastern Region member James Pearce set up Phone Credit for Refugees following a visit to the Calais Jungle. James highlighted how important it is for migrants to be able to have access to their phones, not just to keep in touch with their families when leaving home and travelling hundreds of miles, but especially so for unaccompanied minors.

During 2017 Branches are being encouraged to affiliate to Justice for Colombia. JFC was established in 2002 by the UK trade union movement, from where most of the organisations funding still comes. Although the Colombian Government has made recent commitments to a peace deal, the situation for human rights defenders has not yet improved. JFC still requires funding in order to continue to challenging the appalling human rights crisis in Colombia.

The Chair and Secretary to the Committee (Suzanne Tipping) met with international colleagues at UNISON national office and from around the regions in the first of what are to be regular information sharing events.

Three newsletters for Branch International Relations Officers were despatched, containing information following each of the meetings and relevant national news items.

Affiliations and donations were made to

- ACTSA (Action for Southern Africa)
- AIUK (Amnesty International UK)
- Burma Campaign
- ICTUR (International Centre for Trade Union Rights)
- Trade Justice Movement
- Fairtrade Foundation
- Cuba Solidarity
- Justice for Colombia
- Nicaragua Solidarity
- Palestine Solidarity
- Campaign Against Climate Change
- Stop Aids Campaign
- WaterAid/PAWS
- Labour Behind the Label
- Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
- Phone Credit for Refugees



Local Government Committee

The 2015-16 Committee was elected at the September 2015 conference and AGM and met on 25 February, 9 April and 21 July.

The Regional Local Government Spring Conference took place at UNISON Centre on 2 February 2016; with speakers including John McDonnell MP, Angela Rayner MP and Heather Wakefield. The conference had workshops on local and national pay, increasing participation and the Trade Union Bill.

The Regional Local Government Autumn Conference and Committee AGM took place on 16 and 17 September in Woking with speakers including Carol Ball, Vice-Chairperson of the National Service Group Executive and Anneliese Dodds, Labour MEP for South East England. Workshops, discussions and briefings were held on pensions, social and home care, devolution, pay, TU Act, housing, shared services and Further Education.

The new Committee was elected at the September 2016 conference, when Serena Powis was re-elected as Chairperson and Billie Reynolds was elected as Vice-Chairperson. The new Committee met on 10 November.

Local Government National Conference

New delegates training was arranged and held from 4pm before a well attended Regional Delegates Briefing at 5.30pm on Saturday 18 June in Brighton, before the start of the Conference.

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS):

UNISON representatives have been appointed to all nine South East LGPS Boards. An SE LGPS Forum has been established to support Board and Committee members to undertake their role, with 3 meetings held during 2016.

The Government announced in 2016 that all 89 LGPS funds must join with other funds to establish Common Investment Vehicles (CIV) with at least £25 billion in assets, resulting in the 9 SE funds being part of 4 different CIVs. Meetings of LGPS Board, Committee and Panel representatives on CIVs have been established to coordinate this work. ACCESS CIV covers East and West Sussex, Kent, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Surrey has joined a CIV named Border to Coast covering 13 funds including Warwickshire and the North. Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire have joined with the South West in the Brunel pool. Berkshire has signed a letter of intent to join with the London Pension Fund Authority and Lancashire.

The Committee encouraged all members to support a UNISON Parliamentary petition, which eventually received over 105,000 signatures to force a parliamentary debate on LGPS investments, seeking to ensure that they be in the scheme member's interest and not, as the Government proposed, in accordance with their foreign policy.



Despite the debate on 24 October, the government brought in Regulations from 1st November 2016 covering investment of scheme members' pension funds. UNISON supports pooling with qualifications including TU nominated representatives appointed to the CIV governance structures and work is continuing seeking UNISON representation on all CIVs.

Cuts

The government announced plans during this parliament to end contributions from the taxpayer (through revenue support grant) towards the cost of providing local services from 2020/21; a cut of £7.089 billion; £987 million from South East. Local authorities will become reliant on council tax and business rate income.

As a result Councils continue to struggle to balance their budgets and are increasingly charging for services and using reserves. The Conservative-run Oxfordshire County Council was criticised by the Prime Minister after proposed savings of £69m in 2016/17 which it said went beyond its "worst-case scenario" and is aiming to save £361m by 2020. Its Leader has said he is "desperately sorry" and admitted the cuts to services like children's centres "would have a real impact on people and communities" because planned reductions in government funding were "much worse" than feared.

Branches are increasingly reporting cuts fatigue, having to negotiate and consult on ever more difficult ways to balance the books, including shared services, privatisation, redundancy, going into partnerships with neighbouring councils and transferring staff under TUPE and COSOP to the other councils to provide joint services, including a merger of Lewes and Eastbourne, resulting in proposals for a branch merger.

There has been an average 19% fall in South East spending per resident since 2009-10. Average spend per resident in the South East today, at just £628, remains among the lowest levels in the country. Low levels of South East funding over many years mean that our authorities are struggling to meet service and infrastructure pressures. In social care, the South East faces the greatest challenges as South East authorities have the UK's largest elderly population; with 788,000 residents aged 75 and above.

Cuts to budgets are also affecting private sector providers and Local Authority Trading Companies as funding is squeezed, with standstill or reduced budgets to provide the same service leading to proposals for changes and/or cuts to terms, conditions and pay. Privatisation continues across the Region, including 5 councils signing a contract for services on 1 April 2016. Four councils in the South East (Hart, Havant, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire) and one council in the South West (Mendip) jointly tendered for a range of back office, parking and facilities services which will be provided across all 5 councils by Capita and Vinci which intends to subcontract further to Indigo and Arcadia. Multiple shared service arrangements are also being progressed across the Region. East Sussex and Surrey County councils established a joint public sector partnership, 'Orbis' to deliver integrated business services including finance, procurement, property, IT, HR, legal services, internal audit, payroll and pensions to both authorities, with Brighton and Hove subsequently joining at the end of the year.



The Committee has this on the agenda as a standing item to share information and good practice and ensure that Branches are aware of developing proposals and new tenders for services.

Devolution/Combined Authorities

Devolution proposals were developed across the Region in 2016 and will have a significant impact on service delivery and Branch organisation. Branch meetings were held in Oxfordshire, Kent and Hampshire & Isle of Wight to develop UNISON's response and to seek a common position. A workshop was also held at the autumn conference.

Proposals include:

- Three Southern Counties (3SC), a partnership of the 3 County Councils, together with 23 District and Borough Councils, 3 Local Enterprise Partnerships, 2 Police forces, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority, the South Downs National Park and 12 Clinical Commissioning Groups in Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex. A separate Greater Brighton devolution bid is also being developed. This includes Adur, Lewes and Mid Sussex DCs and Worthing BC, the universities of Brighton and Sussex, the Coast to Capital LEP and South Downs NPA.
- Five District Councils in Kent are considering creating a single local authority for the east of the county. Ashford BC, Canterbury City Council, Dover, Shepway and Thanet DCs are exploring options for the best way to deliver services across "three tiers of local government".
- In Oxfordshire, all Councils agree that it is time to move to unitary local government, but not on how many. The District Councils propose abolishing all six of the existing local councils and the creation of 3 new Unitary Councils that would be responsible for running all of the local services. These new councils would come together to form the Oxfordshire Combined Authority. The County Council commissioned its own a study and announced on 17 August 2016 its proposal to create a single "Strategic Unitary Body" for Oxfordshire which would replace existing districts with area committees with a County-wide Unitary Authority.
- In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight public consultations were completed in late September. On 14 November 2016 Hampshire County Council Cabinet decided not to pursue any option for a combined authority. At the beginning of July, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, and Isle of Wight Council, along with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership announced their own plan to set up a new combined mayoral authority to secure extra powers and funding.
- In Buckinghamshire authorities are also at loggerheads about how devolution should happen. Buckinghamshire County Council has published plans to create a single county unitary, abolishing the county council and the four district councils. Buckinghamshire's District Councils support re-organising into two unitary councils, putting them on a collision course with Buckinghamshire CC.
- There have also been early stage discussions between Milton Keynes with Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.



Schools

Stars in Our Schools events were organised and supported across the Region, including in Oxfordshire, Surrey, Hampshire, Reading, Wokingham and Slough. In Surrey one school arranged a celebration breakfast where children and parents nominated a member of support staff as their star. In Berkshire and Oxfordshire schools held a SIOS coffee and cake break. In Wokingham there was an event which included children writing letters & poems about their school stars which they read out in assembly. In Oxfordshire schools special assemblies were held and in a variety of events staff received goody bags and certificates as well as stress toys.

Social Care Forum

Social Care Forum meetings were held on 22 March, 28 June and 29 November. Issues discussed include the impact of social work reforms, health and social care integration, the National Care Forum, Save Care Now, the Ethical Care Charter, Social Work Watch on 21 September and Sustainability and Transformation Plans. Overall the meetings have been well attended, with an increase in the number of attendees throughout the year. Alan Clyne was the Chair up until September at which point Cathy Roblin was elected as the new Chair. At the Local Government Conference in September, Cathy delivered a workshop on 'The Children and Social Work Bill 2016 and the impact on the profession'.

NJC Pay

Regional meetings for NJC Branches were held on 6 and 26 January and at the spring conference on 2 February to consider a 2 year offer. 34 Branches on NJC pay then responded to a formal consultation. At the NJC Committee on 27 April, the offer was accepted. On 23 August 2016 Branches were asked to consult with their members on the contents of a 2017/18 claim. The Regional Local Government conference on 17 September held a workshop to consider this and the steps required to mobilise support.

Local Pay

The Committee oversaw work across 36 Councils on local pay, including 29 Districts, 3 Unitaries and 4 County Councils. Nearly all settlements were for between 1 and 2%. A model local pay claim was developed for the Branches on local pay and circulated in October.

Further Education Pay

Members in 23 Colleges across the Region were balloted in support of industrial action in response to the employers' offer of a 0% increase for 2015/16. The ballot closed on 29th January 2016 and resulted in strike action being taken on 24th February.

The UNISON National Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges Committee met on 3 October to consider its recommendation for 2016/17 and agreed to recommend an offer of 1% or £250, whichever is greater as 'the best that could be achieved by negotiation'.



The FE Committee worked with Branches on consultation in October and November. 70% of members voted to accept the offer which also included producing joint guidance on closing the gender pay gap, a reminder for colleges on their obligations, joint agreement on the transfer of temporary staff to permanent contracts and a recommendation that colleges consider implementing the Living Wage.

In December 2016 the Sixth Form Colleges Employer (SFCA) made a final offer of 1% to all pay points, which the deletion of the lowest points (10,11& 12) so that point 13 would now become the lowest point at £14, 778. For staff currently on point 10 this increase will be 6.4%. The SFCA also commits to working with UNISON to review the NJC support staff pay spine, with a particular focus on the lower pay points. The negotiators have recommended this offer to members as the best that can be achieved through negotiation and 6th Form college members are currently being consulted on whether they wish to accept the offer (ended on 13th Jan).



The first three months of the year saw the NHS deficit increase to £2.3 billion.

UNISON's National Health Conference took place on 25- 27 April at the Brighton Centre, and debated policies on a variety of issues, with pay and terms and conditions taking centre stage, alongside motions on pay determination across the UK, an Agenda For Change Refresh, and the Living Wage.

Following the Brexit vote the Tories confirmed that the NHS won't see an extra £350m a week now or any time; instead the Tories started the business of drawing up Sustainability and Transformation plans (STPs) for 44 foot print areas of the NHS in England so that the NHS doesn't end up with a nearly £3bn deficit as it did in 2015/2016.

Trust bailouts in 2015/2016 reached £2bn- nearly double the previous financial year and these are loans that have to be repaid. A third of Trusts needed these revenue bailouts to be able to pay creditors and staff; current deficits stand at £580m and are expected to grow in spite of STPs.

At the last general election the government said that they would fully fund the NHS – then committed £8billion when all the signs suggested that £30billion was needed just to keep the NHS going. Top of NHS England's savings list is to maintain the 1% cap on pay growth until 2019-20. Other ways of closing the gap will see the likely closure of many local community pharmacies and "implementing income generation" schemes.

Meanwhile, the number of patients waiting for an elective procedure reached a nine year high with more people waiting in 2016 than since 2007, and those waiting for more than a year also higher than at any time since December 2012.

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust is to be split up, with its learning disability services being transferred to Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. Southern Health's chief executive, Katrina Percy, will stay on but other organisational changes are expected.

NHS Trusts in other areas of the country are now experimenting with 'inducing' staff not to join the NHS pension scheme by offering higher salaries to those who opt out. This worrying development has not been seen yet in the South East, but we need to remain vigilant that these, and other creative ways of cost saving which serve to further penalise staff in the long term, don't become more widespread.

The Regional Health Committee organised a seminar at UNISON Centre on the 9th December to provide a briefing for branch activists from health and local government.



Kathy Symonds and Andy Stenning were re-elected as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. In addition to two regional delegates, all five branches are registered delegates to attend the National Police and Justice Conference in October.

The Committee held a special meeting in August to discuss the Police Staff Council Part 1 *Pay and Reward* proposals. The Committee voted to reject the Police Staff Council Pay and Reward Review proposal following responses received from branches. However based on responses received from all regions across England and Wales, UNISON's national Police Staff Committee agreed to recommend to members that they vote to accept the proposals in a ballot due to be held in early 2017 (further detail on the ballot and proposals contained below).

The Committee agreed to appoint a Police and Justice Fighting Fund Area Organiser for one year from November 2016 (further details on role contained below).

The topics of discussion at the Committee's annual seminar included branch use of social media, pensions, along with recruitment and retention of members. Speakers included UNISON Assistant General Secretary, Roger McKenzie. Sussex Police and Justice Branch presented a session on recruitment methods and good practice.

During 2016 the Committee said a fond farewell to Sally Erricker, Lucinda Gwynne and Carol Lee.

Recruitment and organising

The Region has five Police and Justice branches, containing over 4,500 members. By the end of 2016, 710 new members had joined Police and Justice branches and 902 left; with reinstatements factored in this was a net loss of 208 members. 20 new stewards had been recruited by December 2016. Sussex Police and Justice Branch had the best recruitment rate within the region and Kent Police successfully elected a full complement of branch officers at their branch Annual General Meeting.

Bargaining and negotiations

Nationally members voted to accept the 2016 pay offer of a 1% on all pay points and a 1% increase to Standby Allowance.

Police employees within Surrey Police and Kent Police Branch are not in the National Police Council and their members voted in favour of acceptance of a 1% pay award for 2016/17.

National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Companies continue to undertake extensive national reorganisations. These will result in changes to roles, terms and conditions and in some cases, relocations and redundancies at local level. Members voted against industrial action on pay.



Police staff members within Sussex Police and Justice Branch and Hampshire & IOW Police and Justice Branch will be balloted in January 2017 over the Police Staff Council Part 1 *Pay and Reward* proposals. These proposals were the result of national negotiations on changes to the Police Staff Handbook. The proposals cover changes to holiday, maternity leave, working time and a variety of allowances.

Each branch has supported members through a range of local workforce reorganisations, negotiating several concessions on the original proposals. Restructures of IT services have been completed at Kent Police and of Vetting staff at both Surrey and Sussex Police. Sussex Police and Justice Branch have supported members through employer reorganisations of PCSO's and of Criminal Justice staff. Hampshire & IOW Police and Justice Branch successfully resisted attempts by Hampshire Constabulary to vary at local level unsocial hours payments outside of national handbook conditions. A shared services collaboration with Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Fire and Rescue has proven problematic and resulted in significant payroll problems. Surrey Police Branch have supported members during several Independent Police Complaints Commission investigations.

Police forces across the south east continue to undertake collaborative working. The collaboration pairings of Police forces are Kent and Essex; Surrey and Sussex and Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary.

Campaigns

Despite the organisation of a seminar attended by Jack Dromey MP and Labour's Police and Crime Commissioner candidate for Sussex, the Police and Crime Commissioner elections saw a clean-sweep across the region for Conservative Party candidates. Independents were replaced by Tory candidates in Kent, Hampshire and Isle of Wight and Surrey. Incumbent Tory PCC's retained their seats in Thames Valley and Sussex.

A Fighting Fund Area Organiser has been appointed to work predominantly in Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Sussex. Their focus will be on organising probation members and they will seek to increase the number of active UNISON representatives, whilst building the overall membership. It is hoped that probation members will be better placed to utilise the trade union facility time available to them as a result of the project. This appointment will also provide casework and negotiation support to members within non-Police employers, where existing facilities agreements for police staff do not presently extend.



A number of meetings of the South East Regional Forum took place during 2016 attracting representatives from a variety of employers. A record number of regional delegates attended the Community Conference earlier in the year. In 2017 the Forum meetings will be held in different locations to make it easier for activists across the region to attend at least one meeting. The venues are Brighton, Guildford and London.

The effect of government cuts continues to be felt in the community sector, with some organisations attempting to cut terms and conditions, downgrade staff or replace them with volunteers. In the region the impact of 15 minute visits by home carers is an issue both for the carers and their clients. Direct payments mean that some clients do not ask for help when they need it as they fear losing hours of support that they need for another purpose.

The voluntary sector is under threat, with some employers saying the care system is on the verge of collapse. Local authority commissioners affected by budget cuts have shifted the balance when assessing bids increasingly towards cost rather than quality. Client needs are assessed to either cut their support or move them to a different setting to move the bill.

A big concern is funding the increases due under the minimum wage legislation as there is no clarity on where the money will come from. Owing to the low rates paid by commissioners, some of which are insufficient to cover basic current staffing costs, any extra sums will cause a problem for organisations already struggling. While there is always a bidder for services at whatever price, the serious pressure on costs could mean that reputable organisations will be driven out of the market to be replaced by those for whom short term profit is key.

The sector continues to be at the sharp end of government cuts, with members reporting employers cutting services to the minimum and not replacing staff. This can place members at risk, where some organisations expect staff to conduct risk assessments on unknown clients on their own. The generally poor terms and conditions in the sector has also resulted in some staff not being given full information in order not to deter them from working with particular clients, thus potentially putting both them and vulnerable people at risk.

The forum has now agreed a budget for 2017, to include provision for dedicated newsletters to members in target employers. The aim is to improve organisation by increasing the number of members and stewards, with the aim of increasing influence within the employers. The target employers are Clarion Group (Affinity Sutton/Circle), Dimensions and Welmede/Avenues Trust. The latter two organisations are planning to merge and confirmation is expected very soon. Both will retain their own identity within a group structure. While Welmede is Surrey based, Avenues Trust operates in parts of the South East as well as in London, parts of West Midlands and Eastern Region. We have a good relationship with all three employers.



At the start of 2016 we launched a campaign at the University of Brighton where the university planned to close the Hastings campus. A protest, which UNISON took a lead role in organising, took place on Wednesday 13 April. We also launched a Living Wage campaign at the University of Southampton. UNISON members in higher education were balloted on whether they wished to take strike action over their employers' pay offer, which would see most staff receive a 1.1% increase.

The union's higher education service group executive called on members to reject the offer and take strike action to get the employers to improve it. This followed the results of a consultation with members in which more than two thirds of those who responded voted to reject the offer.

Our regional representatives on the Service Group Executive put together a newsletter using national materials, that was despatched to branches. Members in HE who have signed up for electronic communications also received a link to the newsletter content posted on our regional website.

The ballot closed on 19 September, and the national Higher Education Service Group Executive met on 20 September to determine the course of action in the light of the ballot result.

The national Service Group Executive decided not to call our members out on strike action in support of their pay dispute. This was a difficult decision, given the results of the ballot. The ballot produced a small majority in favour of action, but on such a low turnout that the SGE decided that industrial action was not sustainable. All of the other HE unions who balloted around the same time as us also elected not to take industrial action. (UCU voted in favour of action earlier in the year).

This decision was reflected on in the national HE branches' seminar held in our region over October 20-22. Our delegation to the branches' seminar heard an inspirational organising story from London branch colleagues, as well as presentations from the TUC and Hope not Hate, before working on a range of organising and bargaining priorities.

Locally, Brighton University looks set to close its Hastings campus whilst our members at the Student Union have rejected an inadequate pay offer. Solent University is to close its Warsash Maritime Academy. These are just a handful of examples of the contraction of the sector that has already begun.

On a more positive note, most of our HE branches substantially exceeded their recruitment targets this year, helped in part by the fantastic efforts of two Fighting Fund Local Organisers. Thanks to branches' hard work, we end the year fit and ready to fight for our members' futures in 2017.



The Committee met twice during 2016. As well as conducting business, meetings also heard from invited speakers on Area reviews. All meetings were open to UNISON members based in colleges as well as Committee members.

2016 was a busy year for the sector and particularly challenging issues being faced by members at the time of writing are:

- Pay - particularly in FE colleges, where industrial action followed the 0% pay offer
- The impact of the Area reviews and the uncertainty this has caused across the sector has been stressful for sector workers
- The college mergers proposed by the completion of Area review has, and will lead to further job losses.

Due to retirement and redundancy committee numbers have fallen off. We intend to arrange all meetings in 2017 at colleges where there is a reasonable level of membership but where reps are not engaging regionally. It is hoped that this will encourage more interest in becoming committee members. Once the regional committee regains a good level of members, focus will be to continue on increasing membership density in the regions colleges. Our annual meeting will take place in the spring at a venue to be decided. We hope to find a speaker on the benefits of getting actively involved in your union.

The Region was represented solely by the Chair at the 2016 National FE and Sixth Form Colleges Seminar, on the National FE and Sixth Form Colleges Committee and Regional Local Government Service Group; also attending the Service Group Conference.

Recruitment firstly to the committee and as members continues to be a priority in meeting the challenges facing the sector.

We are facing very difficult challenges ahead. Mergers are bringing together colleges that come under different branches with all the implications this brings. Communication is vital and increasing activism is an important part of helping to bring members from different branches together, helping to smooth the way and enabling branch reps to work together.



The Committee are using meetings to share information and strategies. The areas discussed are recruitment, training courses and development of representatives, communications, pay and representation.

The Committee agreed to share information on recruitment strategies. Walk-arounds of the workplace have been discussed as a way of meeting staff and raising the profile of UNISON. Branches looked at the ideas of lunch bags at staff events to promote UNISON and put in literature. The Proud to be in UNISON campaign materials have been promoted and the tools to raise visibility using the Proud to be UNISON T shirts assessed. South East Energy branch have organised adverts in local bus shelters. South East Water conducts new staff inductions allowing small groups of staff 15 minutes to hear about UNISON. Southern Counties Water branch has recruited 4 new women stewards who are benefiting from training. The UNISON factsheets on equality and materials for the Women's Health Pack have been promoted at meetings.

Ideas for mentoring stewards by getting them together for briefings, educational opportunities and Women's Officer training have been promoted. Means of communication have been considered including setting up a website via the region or using Dragon Print to despatch. Branches are using Facebook and Twitter to varying degrees. The Committee meetings have provided a forum to share information on pay negotiations.

The branches are all providing representation for sickness absence, performance and disciplinaries.

Committee meetings continue to provide a forum to share best practice and ideas.



The year started with a well attended delegation to national women's conference. The number of delegates was slightly higher than the previous year and there were also a good number of visitors and women attending for the first time. All three South East motions were carried addressing issues on abortion rights, tax credits and violence against women.

During 2016 the women's training courses were all well attended with 10 of the 11 women's courses running for women members and women activists. There were also two successful applicants for the new low paid women's learning bursary. The number of women who attended the women's training courses during 2016 was 112.

In 2017 we will be piloting a new course on 'sexual harassment in the workplace'. This follows research undertaken by the TUC and the Everyday Sexism Project in 2016 highlighting the fact that only 1% of women report sexual harassment to their employer.

The women's committee have had very well attended meetings throughout the year and welcomed Beth Bickerstaffe as new Regional Head of Equality to the June meeting. At the AGM in October the committee thanked Julia O'Connell for all her hard work over the last two years as Chair of the committee and welcomed the newly elected Chair Cathy Roblin. The motions as discussed and developed at the regional women's forum were all agreed. Six motions were submitted to national women's conference but one was rejected. The five motion are Sickie Cell; Women against the Cuts and grassroots campaigning; sexual harassment in schools; WASPI and women's retirement; Protecting the rights of EU women in social care.

The committee want to focus their energies on campaigning during 2017 and will reconvene their campaigning sub-group. There will be an emphasis on developing strategies to better take account of how women members are being affected by attacks on terms and condition with particular attention on workplace policies covering pregnancy and maternity rights, workplace domestic abuse policies and achieving proportionality in the regional structures.

At the end of September the committee held the regional women's forum in Eastbourne which attracted over 50 women delegates from across the region. The women's forum also coincided with the start of Black History Month and to celebrate this, the Forum kicked off with the film about the Grunwick dispute of 1976. The guest speakers included Professor Elizabeth Anionwu who was one of the main campaigners for the Mary Seacole; Anneliese Dodds Labour MEP South and Megan Dobney, Regional Secretary of the South East Region TUC.

There were 4 workshops covering issues such as the disproportionate impact on women of the attacks on terms and conditions; proud to be in UNISON; sexual harassment and violence in schools; and a workshop focussing on how women have organised to bring about legislative change e.g., equal pay act, sex discrimination act. Self organisation is an excellent way of increasing the participation of women members and of the 52 attendees at this year's Forum, 34% were attending for the first time.



The Black Members' Group held four committee meetings during 2016 and organised a residential Black Leadership and Motion Writing course on September 16th for South East Black Representatives.

The event was very well attended and resulted in a number of motions being submitted from the region to UNISON's National Black Members Conference. Subjects of the motions include: *Bullying of Black Members in the workplace*, *Stop and search of Black people*, *Why Sickle Cell matters*, and *Career progression of Black workers*.

This is a positive move for the Black members and other self organised groups as this will increase Black member leadership and participation to the National Black Members Conference in January 2017. It is hopeful that this will also empower representative involvement in other levels of the organisation.

October was Black History Month, and the committee's work focussed on organising an event on Saturday 15 October 2016 at UNISON Centre in London. Unfortunately, despite booking a number of high profile speakers, the event had to be cancelled because of low registration numbers.

The UNISON National *10 good reasons to have a Branch Black Members Group* card flyer was branded with the UNISON South East Regional logo to make it more relevant to the UNISON SE Black Members. The card flyer was circulated via Branch Despatch to encourage Branches to consider setting up their own Black members self organised group.

In 2016 there has been a steady increase in the amount of black members that have attended RBMG meetings, have completed Stewards training and have expressed an interest in setting up a BM SOG groups in their branches and specialised in-house training for black members in their branches as well as support mechanism for black members that have experienced a rise in racist incidents post Brexit.



During 2016 the Committee focussed on our regional communications and how accessible they are to members and activists. The Committee was introduced to the idea of 'accessible by design', whereby accessibility is considered at the start of the process so that time needn't be spent producing additional documentation at a later date.

The Region also set up Task and Finish groups to consider accessibility of our meetings. The outcomes of these two areas of work have been worked together into minimum access standards, which are to be implemented in 2017. These minimum standards will ensure our communications are easier to read and understand so that participation in regional events and meetings will be more inclusive.

The Disabled Members' Committee designed an 'Access Passport', to be used by delegates to request adjustments above and beyond those available as minimum access standards that they require in order to attend and participate fully in Regional events and meetings. The passport will also be introduced during 2017.

This year's regional training event was held in June, at a venue in Brighton. It was well attended and many of the items were themed around internal processes, such as writing motions, as well as access needs. Natalie Ntim from our National Office gave a presentation on the role of Standing Orders at Conference, and our guest speaker Rory Heap introduced a discussion on disability and language. The 2017 training event will be held on 2-4 June at The View Hotel, Eastbourne.

One motion was submitted to National Disabled Members' Conference. The motion was aimed at encouraging the implementation, maintenance and use of hearing loops. Unfortunately the motion was not reached on the agenda. Last year's motion, which was also not reached on the conference agenda, regarding raising awareness of self identification, has been progressed by the National Disabled Members' Committee. If members identify to the union that they are disabled, branches will now be able to update the Web Access Membership System with this information. National will also be producing materials to encourage members to update us with their details.

Unfortunately for the Committee both Vice Chairs left at the end of 2016, in order to pursue their careers, and the Committee would like to thank Jen Jackson and David Yates for the work they put into developing guidelines on accessibility as well as the support that they gave to the Committee, we wish them both well for the future.

Sarah Barwick was re-elected as Chair for 2017, with Laurence Ward as Vice Chair.



The £7,800 secured by the Regional LGBT Committee via a National Equality GPF bid was used to support our Pride activities across the region throughout the summer period including UNISON as a main sponsor of Reading Pride where Maggi Ferncombe, Regional Secretary attended as a keynote speaker. The funds were also used to secure a UNISON presence in Margate, Oxford, and Winchester where there was good attendance by UNISON members.

During the year work has continued to create the first multi-branch LGBT Group in Oxford. Members from all branches and service groups based around Oxford are meeting regularly to organise discussions and campaigns.

The Regional LGBT Committee met on 22 October and considered which motions to prioritise at the National LGBT Conference in Llandudno in November. The region had a good presence at the Conference and arranged a get-together for new and experienced delegates. Lucy Power and Kurt Henney attended the Conference as delegates from SE Region and moved the regional motions on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Transitioning to Best Practise.

The AGM was held on Saturday 14 January in London with a guest speaker from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners as an early start to LGBT History Month being held in February.

The committee have agreed to continue meeting in London on Saturdays during 2017.



The Young Members AGM was held on the 21st March at UNISON Centre. Whilst the turnout was low, a number of Young Members volunteered to sit on other committees i.e. Women's Committee, SERTUC Young Members Forum, and Labour Link. Lucie Jones was re-elected as Chair and Chelsie Wheelwrite was elected as Vice-chair. Unfortunately no one was elected to sit on the Regional Committee.

5 Members from the Region attended a Confidence Skills for Young Women Members training course at UNISON Centre in February.

11 Young Members from the Region attended the National Young Members weekend in Leicester, in May. The main issue raised by Young Members at the weekend, from within the Region and Nationally, was housing. Those that attended from the region agreed to start a campaign to cap housing rents; they called it the 'Cap It!' campaign. The campaign has been promoted on the web site and in the Campaigner and has received a great response from organisers and branches. This included a petition and survey on housing via the SE regional website, Facebook and Twitter posts, and leaflets and posters sent to every Young Member Officer in the region. The graphics were also made available to all Communications Officers in the region. The campaign will be continued through 2017.

The Forum held a one-day training session in London on the 17th September. This was held jointly with Greater London and applications were opened to South West and Eastern as well. The training focused on campaign planning with speakers from the TUC, NUS and UNISON attending.

Throughout November for Young Workers' Month, the Forum ran an online awareness campaign focussed on Rights and Wages, Benefits of Trade Unionism; Mental Health; Bullying and Harassment. There were information sheets for each theme as well as Twitter and Facebook posts that were shared across our various social media accounts.



2016 was another productive and fulfilling year for the South East Region Retired Members Committee, introducing a new Chair, Ginny Eaton.

Among their many achievements this year, the retired members group successfully continued to strengthen ties with our twinned union in France, the CGT. This included inviting someone from the CGT to meet with members of the committee in London, and a trip to Lille for two of the committee in December, in which much knowledge was gathered and shared. We hope to continue building this relationship, and learning from the CGT into the coming year.

Campaigning has been a strong focus this year, with a strong engagement from the whole committee on fighting the TU Bill and many members of the committee lobbying their own MPs. Following on from the success of 2015's training day on social care, the retired members group were involved heavily in campaigning for the Save Care Now campaign. Members have taken the campaign ideas back to branches and made a real difference; in particular, many thanks to Sue Pitter for such dedicated campaigning on behalf of social care.

UNISON's National Retired Members Conference took place in Southport in October, and thirty two members from South East branches took the trip to participate in this.

Members of the committee have been involved with their local National Pensioners Convention (NPC) groups, as well as attending the NPC annual Pensioners Parliament and Campaigning Day. Committee members continued to play an active part in SERTUC's Pensioners Network. Janet Cullup represented the committee at National Delegate Conference in June.

The committee have successfully involved themselves with various other groups in the region, including a new agreement to attend Labour Link meetings. As ever, the committee have taken positive steps towards working together with the young members of UNISON, and have been kept updated with the young members' events and campaigning issues, including the regional housing campaign, Cap it!

One of the real highlights of this year has been the regional Retired Members Network day, which was open to all members in the region. This day included a talk from regional manager Tony Jones, on the threat of STPs; a topic which sparked a great passion among the group. Debbie Abrahams MP gave an interesting talk on pensions, and took questions from the floor, covering a diverse range of issues.

The network day also included a workshop on using social media as a campaigning tool, which is an area the retired members have developed this year, improving communication and outreach, and even introducing their very own Facebook page.



Work has also begun on the production of a new handbook, specifically for retired members in the region.

In December the AGM was held at UNISON Centre, and heard updates on STPs, as well as receiving an informative presentation from committee members on their trip to France to meet CGT colleagues. As ever, we managed to successfully raise money for charity, with over £100 raised this year through raffles and sweepstakes by the South East retired members.

The committee look forward to continuing their successes and developing projects into 2017.





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