

MANCUNION

THE UNISON NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY 2 MARCH /

WEDNESDAY 3 MARCH

ALL MEMBERS

WELCOME

INSIDE THIS SPECIAL BRANCH AGM ISSUE:

**FINAL AGENDA & MOTIONS FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
BRANCH OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT**

A former Labour Prime Minister famously remarked 'A week is a long time in politics'.

Last year few at our AGM could have foreseen the dramatic events that unfolded since last March. The Covid pandemic has had massive impacts on every aspect of our lives, our families and our communities.

Whilst the Covid pandemic has been a worldwide phenomenon it is a tragedy the UK government mishandling and incompetent response has led to the UK having the worst death rate in Europe.

Sadly, a number of branch members have died during the epidemic and our thoughts are with their families and friends.

We have had a year of unimaginable challenges in terms of how we live and work.

Whilst much of the economy has been shut down to various degrees during the last twelve months large numbers of our members have continued to work delivering face to face key services to the public.

Throughout the year the Branch has worked to ensure safe working environments and work practices to best protect our members.

Large numbers of members have where possible worked from home which has been challenging adapting to new working arrangements often combining remote working with child care and home learning where schools have been impacted.

We have also had to adapt as a branch how we deliver for our members in this crisis.

Given it was not possible to hold physical workplace meetings the branch has communicated directly with members on a greater level by email, issued more newsletters and circulars and seen near constant use of video conferences and virtual meetings etc.

Apart from Covid issues the branch has still responded to all the usual work-related issues which have not gone away during the pandemic.

The last year has seen a change of General Secretary and the next few months will give all our members the chance to elect a new National Executive Committee who they believe can best lead our union for the next two years.

It is important that members use their vote so that our leadership reflects the views of as many members as possible.

Despite the Council demonstrating time after time how vital the work of our members is, due to a combination of reduced Council income following the reduction in economic activity and insufficient government funding later this month we will see approximately 100 members leaving the Council, mainly in Corporate Services, via voluntary severance or voluntary early retirement.

One of those leaving will be Pat McDonagh our Branch Chair who would like to thank all members, past and present, for their support in the past.

I would like to recognise the contribution of our Branch Officer team, our Branch Executive, and our stewards in all our employers for their hard work on behalf of our members and meeting the

challenge of working in different ways on behalf of our members.

The branch also wishes to place on record our appreciation for the work of our Branch staff Miriam Fanning and James Crowley who have continued to work hard for our members in difficult circumstances.

Our AGM this year will be held virtually on an aggregate basis with two opportunities for members to join in the meeting and have their say and I hope as many members as possible will take part.

Finally, I would like to thank every member for their continued membership and support for the branch.

In tough times we all do better when we stick together.



IN MY VIEW EVELYN DOYLE BRANCH SECRETARY

FINAL AGENDA FOR BRANCH AGM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

5:00PM ON TUESDAY 2 MARCH 2021

OR

12:45PM ON WEDNESDAY 3 MARCH 2021

I write to remind you that the Branch Annual General Meeting will be held virtually online via Microsoft Teams at: **5:00pm on Tuesday 2 March 2021** or **12:45pm on Wednesday 3 March 2021**.

Any members planning to attend the virtual meeting will need to register for a free ticket on Eventbrite by visiting this link: <https://www.unisonmanchester.eventbrite.co.uk>. During registration you will be asked to provide your name, email address and membership number if known so that further details on how to join the meeting can be sent to you in due course.

Due to the current national lockdown in place we ask that any queries you have regarding the virtual meeting, motions / rule amendments and other notifications as outlined below are submitted to the Branch via our contact email address:- unison@manchester.gov.uk.

The agenda follows this notice.

Amendments to Motions

Any Motions / Amendments to Rule to the Annual General Meeting should be proposed and seconded by UNISON members and received via the Branch inbox no later than **10.00am on Friday 26 February 2021**.

Disabled Members

Please advise via the Branch inbox no later than **10.00am on Friday 26 February 2021** of any other requirements that might need to be arranged to enable disabled members to participate at the AGM.

Aggregate Annual General Meeting

The AGM is being held at different times over the two days to give members a better opportunity to attend at a time best for them. The business of the AGM will be the same at both meetings and any votes will be aggregated at the end of the meeting on **Wednesday 3 March 2021**.

Please make every effort to attend this important meeting.

Yours Sincerely

Evelyn Doyle - Manchester UNISON Branch Secretary

FINAL AGENDA FOR BRANCH AGM

FINAL AGENDA

1. To note the aggregate AGM held on 4 and 5 March 2020 was inquorate
2. To receive the Branch Annual Report (included in this newsletter)
3. To approve the Branch Development Plan
4. To approve the audited Branch Financial Accounts
5. To receive the Branch Nominations for the election of the following Branch Officer posts:

A. Branch Secretary

Evelyn Doyle Children & Families

B. Assistant Branch Secretaries (7)

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------------|
| (1) | Cath Baggaley | Growth & Neighbourhoods |
| (2) | Pete Banks | Chief Executives |
| (3) | Carl Greatbatch | Children & Families |
| (4) | Edward Redmond | Children & Families |
| (5) | Jane Slater | Chief Executives |
| (6) | Jane Wilcox | Growth & Neighbourhoods |
| (7) | Rena Wood | Children & Families |

C. The following nominations for Branch Officer posts have been received:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| (a) | Branch President | Mo Baines | APSE |
| (b) | Branch Vice Presidents | Nixon Tod | The Manchester College |
| (c) | Branch Treasurer | Cath Baggaley | Growth & Neighbourhoods |
| (d) | Equality Officer | Sonia Stewart | Chief Executives |
| (e) | Communications Officer | Leon Sullivan | Chief Executives |
| (f) | Education Officer | Leon Sullivan | Chief Executives |
| (g) | International Officer | Blue Costello | Children & Families |
| (j) | Honorary Auditors (2) | Neelam Nayar | Corporate Services |
| | | Paul Muir | |

6. Guest Speakers

- Evening session on 2 March 2021 - TBC
- Lunchtime session on 3 March 2021 - Andrew Western - Green City Portfolio Lead for GMCA and Leader of Trafford Council

7. Motions



FINAL AGENDA FOR BRANCH AGM

MOTION ONE - PUBLIC SECTOR PAY FREEZE

This AGM notes that during a time of international pandemic, once more local government workers rose to the occasion alongside other key workers in the NHS, care, transport and retail to keep essential services running and to support lockdown policies that were the front line in reducing infections and allowing time for a vaccine to be developed. We are therefore appalled that the Conservative government has announced that the reward for this vital and lifesaving service will be yet another local government pay freeze.

This is not only an insult to all our members who worked tirelessly and selflessly on the frontline, but also demonstrates that the Tories are still wedded to the internationally discredited idea of austerity that has done so much damage to this country over the last ten years.

This AGM agrees that Manchester UNISON Branch should continue to oppose pay 'offers' which in reality continue to result in further cuts in real living standards for our members and calls on the Branch to campaign for action at every level of UNISON to provide the fair and equitable remuneration that our members deserve alongside the funding that the sectors that they work in so desperately need in order to have a fair and equitable recovery from the pandemic and the damage done by the current government's mishandling of it.

Proposed by the Branch Officers

MOTION TWO - FOR A GREEN RECOVERY

This AGM recognises the unprecedented impact the COVID-19 global pandemic is having on our society and economy as well as commending the invaluable contribution made by our front-line workers who have provided vital service, selflessly, throughout this pandemic we believe that a fair, just and green economic recovery strategy is required in the aftermath of this crisis.

Just as Manchester led the world into the first industrial revolution, the time has come again to harness the technologies of the future. The lesson from previous recessions is that swift and targeted Government investment and coordination in order to stimulate the economy and support job creation can lead to a stronger and more secure recovery. Extensive research has also documented how investment to combat the climate crisis now will prevent substantial economic costs in the future.

Alongside the TUC we call for:

- a clear and funded pathway to net-zero that maximises the opportunities to protect and create jobs
- the workers most affected by the move to a net-zero economy to be given a central voice in planning the transition
- all new jobs in the green economy to offer 'fair work' with good pay, skills, pensions, health and safety and trade union recognition
- workplace 'transition agreements' to be agreed between employers and unions to ensure a fair transition. Also support for union-led sustainability initiatives in every workplace

FINAL AGENDA FOR BRANCH AGM

MOTION TWO - FOR A GREEN RECOVERY

- increased funding for learning and skills to prepare workers for the transition and provide a clear pathway to new jobs

This AGM agrees that an economic recovery strategy must not only recognise but also demonstrate that we value our front-line workers and want to protect them, and the most vulnerable, through any impending recession. We know that workers' rights, and public services must be protected, and we believe that existing economic challenges must be tackled by a just transition to a more high-skilled, regionally balanced and sustainable economy which works for workers, their families and for the environment.

Proposed by the Branch Officers

MOTION THREE - COVID

The UK has had the highest reported excess death rate in Europe and the largest fall in GDP among G7 countries. The UK government has been incompetent in its response through its delay in locking down; the inadequate supply of PPE; the lack of mass testing; and the dysfunctional contact tracing system.

However, Austerity had stretched the NHS to breaking point even before the pandemic, while outsourcing had reduced the state's capacity to function. The shredding of the UK's social safety net, combined with the spread of low-paid, insecure work, led to thousands of people being unable to self-isolate and unable to absorb sudden losses of income. The country's dysfunctional housing market left entire communities trapped in overcrowded housing.

"This is not a time for ideology or orthodoxy," Rishi Sunak declared in his first Covid press conference in March 2020. Yet ideological opposition to public services has been a recurring theme running through nearly all of the government's actions. Sunak's July mini-budget claimed to be "unencumbered by dogma", yet it rejected large-scale public job creation in favour of wasteful subsidies to private companies protecting their profits.

Rejecting the obvious need to increase state capacity, the government instead poured billions into disastrous private companies and even resisted using existing public laboratories for testing.

Sunak promised to do "whatever it takes to support our economy through this crisis". Johnson said that the government would "put its arms "around every single worker". They have been back-peddalling ever since. A temporary life-raft was one thing, but as the crisis drags on, they fear a permanent shift in people's expectations of government – perhaps even a reinforcement of the need for social provision and public services.

The government is determined to squash the notion that the state has a duty to ensure universal access to the basics of a decent life illustrated by their attitude to free school meals for vulnerable children.

FINAL AGENDA FOR BRANCH AGM

MOTION THREE - COVID

Underlying the chaos of the government's U-turns, contradictory signals and constantly changing rules, there is one consistency in terms of whose interests are protected and prioritised. Johnson's primary constituency is not working-class voters in the "red wall"; it is private capital – those who make money by owning and speculating on assets.

In housing, private renters have been thrown under the bus, government refusing to extend the ban on evictions, or even to implement its manifesto promise to end "no fault" evictions. However private landlords have been almost uniquely shielded from the effects of the pandemic and still have the right to recoup any unpaid rent in its entirety.

The Government's premature attempts rush people back to the office in August was widely mocked as an effort to "save Pret". But it was really about protecting city centres built on inflated commercial property values – and the corporate landlords who benefit from them.

The Governments complete failure to deal with Covid effectively is not only a question of individual error, of amateurism or ineptitude. It is also the consequence of decades of undermining public services, the privatisation of our NHS, the casualisation of labour with insecure employment and an epidemic of low pay and poor living standards.

Contracts were dished out corruptly to the private sector without any tendering process for PPE that did not work, nightingale hospitals to be run by private sector companies with abysmal past records using tens of billions of public monies. A stark contrast can be made between the utter failure of discredited private companies paying consultants a million pounds a day only to fail to deliver any effective track and trace organisation and the success of the vaccine roll out being delivered successfully by our NHS and local councils.

And now the Government have the gall to declare an investigation into this horrendous failure 'would not be in the public interest'! At some point in the future Covid will be managed if not eradicated. But if the slogan 'build back better' is to mean anything it must be better for the vast majority of people not the already super rich whose wealth has only increased during the pandemic.

As part of the recovery process UNISON needs to campaign with others to secure:

- An end to privatisation of our NHS.
- A cessation of cuts to local government and instead real investment in local services which have been so vital in this crisis.
- Opposition to further proposed public sector pay freezes and significant pay increases to restore living standards.
- Investment in decent affordable social housing.
- Increased devolution with the resources needed to deliver key services and develop local and regional economies.
- An end to the financial exploitation of students.
- A radical increase in investment in public infrastructures to deliver well paid employment and a greener environment.

Proposed by the Branch Executive Committee

BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

CATH BAGGALEY - SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES



COVID Update

This report is very different to previous annual reports. It is difficult to know where to begin with an overview of the last twelve months in our schools, from the first lockdown in March to the re-opening of schools to all pupils in September to the current lockdown, the challenges our schools have faced is unprecedented.

In March schools provided childcare for vulnerable pupils and those of key workers, numbers were limited as both parents had to be key workers. The vast majority of our support staff were working on a rota basis, they were also providing cover during the school holidays even when many were on term time only contracts.

The government have highlighted on many occasions their complete lack of understanding of the work our support staff carry out, they are the backbone of the school with many headteachers stating they could not run their schools without them.

A classic example of this was Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education in his letter to

schools on 31st March 2020 praised only the work of headteachers and teachers, showing a complete disregard for our support staff. UNISON issued a press release on the back of this advising the government not to forget the support staff for their valuable work.

Schools re-opened in September; support staff were anxious about the return with many informing us they did not feel safe in their workplace. We liaised with the local authority and schools in order to ensure robust whole school risk assessments were in place, we advised our members that they were entitled to an individual risk assessment and if needed an occupational health risk assessment.

Members were also advised as to the protocols regarding PPE. The majority of schools at some point had bubble closures due to positive COVID cases amongst staff and pupils.

Fast forward now to 4th January 2021; On Monday 4th January the Prime Minister executed yet another U-turn after pressure from UNISON and other Trade Unions and made a decision to close schools, this was a typical last-minute announcement causing our schools to revisit measures already in place for pupils to return after the Christmas break.

The first DfE guidance was issued at 10.55pm on Monday 4th January, further guidance has since been issued; guidance this time differed from the last lockdown in that whilst schools would still remain open for vulnerable and key worker children the definitions had changed. Only one parent had to be a key worker and any child with an Education, Health and Care plan were identified as being vulnerable. Bubble sizes were also not identified.

This led to more parents requesting places for their children in the primary and secondary sectors, special needs schools were inundated with requests for places.



BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

CATH BAGGALEY - SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

Understandably our members were concerned and anxious about their workplaces being safe particularly due to the new and aggressive COVID strain. We advised our members to ensure their school risk assessment has been revised in light of the new strain and that they also request updated individual risk assessments.

We questioned headteachers as to whether it is absolutely necessary for our members to be on site; whether they could work from home or attend on a rota basis only, we have been really clear that we need to reduce transmission.

The North West Region has been at the forefront of raising the issues our members are facing with our National Education Secretary, Jon Richards, in order that these issues are raised with Government Ministers.

January in the North West Region was extremely busy, with numerous emergency meetings being held locally, regionally and nationally.

The North West Region held a Schools Support Staff webinar on the 7th January, which went out live on Facebook and also YouTube, we were the first region to hold a live member meeting and it was very well attended.

We arranged in conjunction with Hazards, Keeping Schools Safe webinars, these meetings were also live via virtual platforms.

Other webinars organised for our members include the following; Health and Safety, Mental Wellbeing, Pupil Behaviour to name but a few, all of which were very well attended and, in many cases, oversubscribed.

Nationally, regionally and locally we have ensured our members have the most up to date guidance, amid extremely tight deadlines. Government advice invariably tends to come out very late, this then has to be interpreted

and sent out to members. We regularly send out advice notes and FAQ's to our members, we have also provided in-depth health and safety checklists, which we have shared with schools and local authorities.

Aside from the concerns our members have raised with regards to anxiety, the redefined criteria in respect of being critically vulnerable and health & safety issues, throughout this pandemic, our members have been further impacted by the following:

Schools introduced staggered start and finish times; however, some parents congregate on pavements outside of school, not complying with social distancing measures.

This has proved extremely frustrating for our hard-working school support staff. Who have done and continue to do everything they can to ensure that they, their colleagues and pupils remain safe whilst in their bubbles, they are also acutely aware of families who are not adhering to the government guidance and this causes further anxieties.

Members having to stay at home because their own child's school has been subject to bubble closures, again it is the impact of this for anxious members i.e., will their headteacher be supportive and allow them to work from home, the impacts of further bubble closures.

Lack of breakfast and after school club provision in their own children's schools.

School bubbles have to be rigidly adhered to, yet children from all bubbles can go on the same school bus.

Government advice has not been decisive and many find it completely confusing and frustrating, they ask employers to be understanding but offer no additional funding to support our schools.

BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

CATH BAGGALEY - SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

Lateral Flow Testing & Vaccinations

Lateral flow testing has now been made available within both secondary and primary phases, including our special needs schools and pupils within the secondary sector.

Secondary staff are tested on site, whilst primary colleagues are able to test themselves at home, again there is no rhyme or reason with this government decision. UNISON were keen to support members undertaking these tests, if they so wished. However, we did not support the daily contact testing as it was felt it produced flawed results, secondary school staff and pupils who were identified as close contacts of confirmed cases could be tested daily for seven days. If they had returned a negative test they were allowed to stay in school. UNISON's advice was that members should still self-isolate.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) have since issued advice that rapid covid tests were not authorised to keep close contacts in schools. The MHRA said it "continues to advise that close contacts of positive cases identified using the self-test device continue to self-isolate in line with current guidelines."

Our members in special needs schools are now able to receive the vaccine, which our members have welcomed.

Member Representation

Understandably the main focus over the past twelve months has been related to pandemic issues, however, we are also back to business as usual in many respects albeit in very different circumstances. Virtual platforms are now used to support our members in meetings and whilst this can be challenging it is becoming the new norm.

We have continued to support our members throughout the last year in many areas, TUPE transfers, Disciplinary Hearings and Grievances to name just a few. There has been a dramatic increase this academic year with individual representation at AMR's, many of our members are suffering the effects of pandemic related anxiety and increased workloads, this is impacting on their health and wellbeing.

And Finally...

I always end my annual report with a big thank you to all our school stewards and contacts for their continued support in distributing information, providing support to our members and keeping us informed of any issues arising in their schools, this year again this goes without saying, however, I would like to add to this year's report.

Support staff are integral to the smooth running of a school from reception to back office staff, teaching assistants, pastoral support, technicians, cleaners, catering staff, caretakers and facility staff to name but a few. They have shown their absolute dedication to their schools during this pandemic, going above and beyond on so many occasions.

We will continue to support and provide regular updates to our school members in these extremely challenging times.

There is no end in sight to the challenge's schools are facing, we just have to hope we can all keep safe.

**Cath Baggaley (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Schools and Academies**



BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

JANE WILCOX - SCHOOLS



2020 was a year like no other for the members I support, who work in primary schools and for employers providing adult social care.

Manchester schools were open throughout 2020, due to high numbers of vulnerable children and the many parents who are key workers in our city. So, we have been supporting our members who are in the workplace: cleaners, caretakers, teaching assistants, admin and other support staff, trying to maintain as normal an environment as possible for pupils, while keeping everyone safe. We've also been there to support our members who have had to shield, working in isolation at home. The extra hygiene precautions on site and new ways of delivering lessons remotely has meant more work for everyone.

Unfortunately, the school funding crisis continues alongside the COVID crisis. This has meant further compulsory redundancies, particularly for members working in before and after school clubs. These are mostly women workers, often with school age children, who live in the communities their schools serve. We have been there to support, represent and negotiate for our members when this happens.

In the care sector, our members who support vulnerable adults have had to adopt new ways of working almost overnight, making their already demanding jobs even more difficult and stressful. We have supported them in fighting for the PPE and working practices they need to keep their service users and themselves safe.

They are still scandalously low paid and poorly treated because they work for companies who don't recognise trade unions and therefore don't have to pay or treat them as well as local councils and health services would.

Last year I reported that many of the attendance management review meetings where I had supported members had been the result of workplace stress, as budgets and staffing were cut while demands and expectations increased.

Now, in addition, the impact of the pandemic on many of our members' mental wellbeing has been catastrophic. The strain on those caring for vulnerable dependants has been particularly great. We have been there to support them at their welfare and attendance management meetings.

Last year I also reported that the continued attrition of NHS services meant such lengthy delays for members waiting for treatment that they risked dismissal. It pales beside 2020, as the almost total suspension of all but the most urgent NHS services since last March has seen us supporting members through attendance management processes who would almost certainly have been back at work had their operations and other treatments gone ahead.

Clearly this last year has been unprecedentedly difficult but I have been awed by the way our members have risen to its challenges, maintaining such high standards of care for the vulnerable in our communities and for the children in our schools. I have never been prouder to serve my colleagues as their UNISON representative.

BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

JANE WILCOX - SCHOOLS

The defunding of schools you don't have to pay fees to attend, the privatisation of social care and the piecemeal dismantling and selling off of health services is a political choice not an economic necessity. Even if this government had not mishandled their response to the pandemic, our underfunded, largely privatised services would have struggled to cope.

The fight for fairer pay and better funding for public services has never mattered more. If you want to join us in that fight, consider becoming a UNISON steward if your workplace does not have one.

**Jane Wilcox (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Schools**

RENA WOOD - SCHOOLS



This pandemic period my workload has mainly revolved around advising school members about the Government and Public Health England guidance. Many members were fearful of the threat of Covid 19 and the impact to them and their family members, some of whom are extremely clinically vulnerable.

The constant changing climate has impacted on our members fears and anxieties but despite this they have soldiered on. Many of them, despite working on Term Time Only contracts have volunteered to work during school holidays to ensure that vulnerable children and key worker children are supported during this difficult time.

Some schools have been very positively working with UNISON on conducting the individual Risk Assessments and their agreement that members can wear masks and PPE equipment. Some schools have responded to us by relying on Government and PHE guidance rather than the more robust demands that UNISON has consistently raised at a national level with the DfE.

The role our members, contacts and school stewards have played is invaluable and without them my function as an Assistant Branch Secretary would have been very difficult.

The constant changes in Government advice has had a draining and negative affect on our school members but despite this adversity, they have maintained their professionalism, commitment and hard work. This support has been crucial in supporting the vulnerable children who, alongside our School Support staff have maintained their attendance throughout this pandemic.

There have been an increased number of queries from our Care home members seeking advice on being furloughed and some unscrupulous employers have been exploiting this situation.

One employer in particular Dolce, have cut our members pay by 20% and failed to properly consult. These are our kitchen staff members in schools on low pay and part time hours. We have submitted Grievances in support of members and Dolce's response has been hostile and unhelpful. National negotiations are ongoing.



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RENA WOOD - SCHOOLS

The Government have to date failed to provide the adequate funding to Local Authorities to deal with the pandemic, this alone has a direct impact on school budgets and therefore possibly affects jobs and Terms & Conditions.

Once again Local Government workers are treated as the poor relations to other Public Sector workers despite us keeping the country going. The nation recognises the role of the NHS and the medical support they provide but without Local Government workers, the nation would come to a standstill which is why our Local Government

Pay claim for 2021 is very important.

If the Conservatives had an adequate and fair Tax system that ensured big multinational companies like Starbuck, Amazon and Facebook and many others paid their fair share our Local Government pay claim would be more than affordable and there would be enough money to fund all our Public Services that the majority of our members rely on.

**Rena Wood (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Schools**

PETE BANKS - NEIGHBOURHOODS, GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT



Well, I don't need to tell you that this last year has been unlike any other. In Neighbourhoods, Growth and Development like all directorates, UNISON members have been on the front-line ensuring services have continued to be provided to the residents of Manchester.

In particular, I want to thank members in the cleaning and catering sections of this directorate who have continued to work through this year. They have done a brilliant job ensuring other

workers can continue to provide a service and in as safe an environment as possible.

Libraries

The stewards in this section of the Directorate deserve a special mention for the continued good work they have done throughout the year supporting members who have continued to provide a limited service to the community.

The local stewards and I have been in regular contact with senior management to insist all that can be done is done to ensure the safety of the staff and customers using this service.

Manchester Fayre

In my report last year, I stated "UNISON has recently called upon the Directorate to instigate a review of the reasons schools are giving for opting out of our services with a view to retaining and growing the service in the future."

Unfortunately, my concerns about this service came true this year and MCC have decided to no longer provide this service to Manchester Schools. This is of great disappointment and

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PETE BANKS - NEIGHBOURHOODS, GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

concern to UNISON, but the issue has been the long drip drip effect of schools slowly leaving the provision making the service more and more expensive for the council. UNISON will continue to make the case for an in-house service in the future and will also continue to represent our members in whichever employer they work for.

Housing

The biggest news in this area has been the decision taken by MCC to bring back into the council Northwards Housing. While UNISON supports this service being brought back "in-house" we also understand some of the uncertainty for some members regarding their future role in the service.

The vast majority of members will continue to provide the service they do now. We will continue to work with MCC to ensure a smooth transition for this service and support our members fully through this period.

At Wythenshawe Housing we have seen

some great work by our stewards supporting members in that service including, with the assistance of this branch office, negotiating a much-improved annual pay award for this year.

Other Stewards and Contacts

It's impossible to mention all stewards and contacts in a short report like this but thanks to them all (you know who you are) for continuing to provide a great service to our members through this difficult year.

Call for stewards

While the current dedicated and hard-working stewards UNISON have already do a great job, we are always in need of more. If you are interested in becoming a steward or would just like to be a point of contact for distributing UNISON information in your area please contact me at the branch office or by emailing me at pete.banks@manchester.gov.uk.

**Pete Banks (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Neighbourhoods, Growth & Development**

CARL GREATBATCH - ADULTS AND SOCIAL CARE

This has been an unprecedentedly difficult year for so many people in our city and at times it has only been the extraordinarily dedicated work of the members I represent that has kept our vital services running.

This year has demonstrated again that the work done to integrate health and social care was vitally needed, especially in the teeth of Tory mandated cuts that left both halves without the resources they needed in the build up to the pandemic.

The pandemic ensured that the largest amount of negotiating over the past year was spent in

deciding who needed to be in and who should work from home. This has been an extraordinary change in some areas, with huge numbers of staff shifted out of the workplace practically overnight.

It should be noted though that in both Adults and Homelessness this has been in no way the norm and that the majority of our workforce has continued to work directly with our service users, citizens and the public throughout. Not only has this meant the need for a dual track approach to defending members' rights, with huge numbers of risk assessments needing to be negotiated, overseen and monitored for



BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

CARL GREATBATCH - ADULTS AND SOCIAL CARE



people's usual workplaces and for working from home, but it has also meant a constant need for assessing new and rapidly developing situations in order to provide services to our most vulnerable members of society while protecting the rights of workers and helping to keep them as safe as possible.

The greatest example of this has probably been the vast efforts put in by members to ensure that all rough sleepers were provided with safe accommodation at the start of the first lockdown. Pulling on expertise from across the council, the hard work of colleagues from commissioning, public health, health and safety, business support and homelessness themselves (and many others who volunteered to get involved) the rapid response was incredible and myself, stewards and members worked to help make the emergency provision as safe as was possible.

And these efforts have been visible across the area I cover during the past year, from the reablement workers who have been working in citizens homes throughout, Social Workers and Primary Assessors who have been keeping the

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INT) going, Disability Supported Accommodation & Short Breaks maintaining safe places to live for our disabled residents and citizens, Commissioning and Public Health Staff who delivered a vital support to social care providers across the city and helped to support our union's work to ensure that frontline workers in the private sector had Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and funds to pay workers to be able to isolate, Business Support ensuring that all services can keep providing the support and many, many more than I have space to mention here.

At core of any of this trade union work being successful have been the stewards, contacts and members who have been in touch and worked alongside the branch to offer support, intelligence and expertise.

While I talk about this in every annual report, in this particular year of lockdown it would simply have been impossible to even know about some of the issues that we have managed to resolve if it was not down to members getting in touch and ensuring that we work together to defend our rights and keep members as safe as possible. Please keep this going and let me know if you want to be more involved in how we work together.

Although the pandemic brought some delays, there has been continued work and negotiations with our NHS colleagues in the Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO) and Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC).

While important in its own right, as the centre for discussions about ongoing integration and joint-working, it also proved invaluable as we moved to mass testing and, most recently, mass vaccination of both workers and citizens. Again, our members were at the forefront of delivering these services, both as part of their contracted job as well as volunteers and temporary redeployees.

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CARL GREATBATCH - ADULTS AND SOCIAL CARE

The whole city is a better place for their efforts.

We start 2021 with a huge number of challenges, with central government underfunding of local government continuing, redundancies in the private and third sector starting to bite, long postponed restructures and reorganisations starting and all under the shadow of the continuing coronavirus pandemic.

However, what this year has proven is that we can work together to ensure that we defend ourselves and keep this city running in the toughest of circumstances.

**Carl Greatbatch (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Adults and Social Care**

EDDY REDMOND - CHILDREN AND EDUCATION



On the 11th March 2020 1215 people were tested for Covid-19 in the UK and on the 23rd March 2020 the Prime Minister of the UK, Boris Johnson made an announcement to the nation that people may only leave their homes for "strictly limited reasons".

Alas, "strictly limited reasons" means if you are a front-line worker you could leave your house and go to work. This confusion which has been a constant theme throughout the last year with statements and U-turns.

This has led to a high level of anxiety for the members facing the challenges of Covid-19 while in the workplace and for members in Children's services.

The workplace is the local community.

Meetings were held with NHS England, management and Unison. These meetings were held on a weekly basis and changes were made at our request to the numbers and members of staff who had to bravely go into work while the spread of Covid-19 increased and the inevitable deaths followed of friends, family and neighbours.

On the 17th March the Government's Chief Medical advisor told MPs that 20,000 Covid-19 deaths would be a good outcome. As of the 2nd February 2021 the number of recorded deaths by Covid-19 was 112,660.

Staff attended work and questions were asked regarding PPE and safe working environments. Members requested meetings with Unison representatives to raise their concerns. On-site visits were requested by members and visits were made.

To check that arrangements were in place to ensure member safety was high on the agenda,

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EDDY REDMOND - CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

I've personally made over 50 site visits to area teams and outlying offices. Numerous meetings were held regarding the risk assessments of the buildings and the work practice to ensure your safety was a priority.

On numerous occasions members contacted me with the latest statement from the Prime Minister Boris regarding them being allowed to not go into work. Explaining his waffle and the misleading statements and translating that into

hard facts was as frustrating for me as it was for the members.

Overall though I have to say that despite the difficulties involved in the year, I have never been prouder of the members I represent, as they have worked tirelessly this year keeping Children and Families as safe as possible.

**Eddy Redmond (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Children and Education**

JANE SLATER - CORPORATE CORE / GMCA



I am sure this won't be the last time you have read we are in unprecedented times, we are building back better, the new normal or you are on mute.

MCC Corporate Core and the GMCA

This has been one of the worst years I and many of you will have experienced. If we anticipated problems from a Tory government for another 5 years, none of us expected this.

Local Government stepped up and overcame the difficulties that the lockdown brought us and we turned out quality services to residents. We have been rewarded by cuts to services again and the promise of pay freezes.

We are again waiting for the financial settlement and again local government will be at the bottom of the pile in public service.

The year has been busy supporting our members individually or collectively, there have been several redesigns, and more to be expected when we have the outcome of the settlement.

There has been a significant amount of individual member representation, from supporting staff through stress risk assessments, management of attendance interviews, capability procedures and hearings, disciplinaries and complaints.

Members have work extremely hard this year and have gone over and above they are still experiencing increased workload as a result of the legacy reductions in the workforce because of the continued cuts to council funding.

Due to COVID-19, many of us have been working from home, services that were never envisaged as being able to be delivered from

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JANE SLATER - CORPORATE CORE / GMCA

home, have been due to members commitment.

When we start to return to work over the coming months when it is safe to do so, we all know we will be working very differently, we will see many continuing to work from home and also some hybrid and some who will want to be back in the workplace continually.

It was amazing to see the contact centre run the service from home, something we have asked to happen for years and ICT staff turned this around in weeks which has allowed that direct support from members to residents.

We are currently going through efficiency savings and some staff have put in requests to leave the council, once we know the outcome of this, we know that there will be a redesigning of services that will deliver the highest level of service to Manchester residents.

Over the next 12 months, we hope that there will be better understanding of Covid-19 and that we can get back to the new normal and members in the Corporate Core know there will be no reduction to their representation as we have continued to deliver representation at all levels.

We know that members are worried about the impact of Brexit on the public sector, we officially left the EU on 31.1.20 and we were all expecting that at 31.12.20 we would know what the new deal would look like as we were promised

an oven ready deal at the last election. This government will not be advocating workers' rights or have a second thought for councils after their latest attack on our pensions.

They had no time for getting Brexit sorted in the Autumn, but had plenty of time to rush through our pension changes and get them in place before the financial settlement knowing they would again reduce the settlement and that councils would need to make staffing reductions.

We are continuing to work closely with the Combined Authority (the Manchester Branch is the Branch that the GMCA sits in) and the stewards in Churchgate house have been getting more involved in day to day UNISON business.

As a Branch, we need to encourage stewards and members to recruit their colleagues to UNISON, we need strength in numbers to get real change.

We need to continue to encourage members to sign up to the Labour Link fund so that we will have better influence on the Labour Party so when they do become the next government they will be taking UNISON's ideas into parliament.

**Jane Slater (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Corporate Core / GMCA**

SONIA STEWART - EQUALITY OFFICER

Equalities

Challenging inequalities in all areas continues to be one of the Branch's key priorities, with additional challenges being encountered during 2020, in the emergence of the coronavirus

pandemic and still a dominance in 2021.

Key Issues

Some of the key issues around equalities highlighted during 2020 included:

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SONIA STEWART - EQUALITY OFFICER



Covid-19:

- Individual risk assessments related to working from home and for key workers who could not work from home and had to work from various workplaces
- Lack of government planning around equality impact assessments
- Disproportionate negative impact of Covid-19 on Black workers and communities
- Challenges around home working and childcare affecting working parents and particularly women
- Reasonable adjustments for disabled people working from home not always high on the agenda
- Rise in mental health conditions, isolation, suicide rates, domestic abuse and employee disputes.

Other:

- UNISON nationally campaigning for the Government to take tougher action on sexual harassment within the workplace
- Call from the Equality and Human Rights Commission for tougher action from employers on harassment in organisations
- Partnership working in relation to the Greater Manchester Workforce Race

- Equality Strategy, with the aim of building a workstream around improving race equality
- UNISON producing a quick guide to language and disability
 - The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations, known as Jack's Law, came into effect
 - The death of George Floyd and the far-reaching outcry and reverberations which followed
 - Joined up working with the LGBT+ national committee and others re: UNISON's equality work fully reflecting the issues of LGBT+ members.

Branch Self Organised Groups (SOGs)

The Branch Self Organised Groups continue to operate, providing a safe space for members to come together to discuss concerns, celebrate achievements, provide support, work closely with the Branch towards common objectives and to make progress in helping to eliminate inequalities.

If members are interested in becoming involved in the SOGs please contact:

Black Members:

Sonia Stewart / Damian Daley
sonia.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk /
damian.daley@manchester.gov.uk

Women Members:

Dawn Warriner
dawn.warriner@manchester.gov.uk

Equality Matters

The Equality Matters Branch newsletter continues to keep members up to date on matters of equality including updates and community engagement. The latest issue is now available on the Branch website at www.unisonmanchester.org.

Sonia Stewart (Branch Equalities Officer)

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CARL GREATBATCH - LABOUR LINK

As the North West's delegate to UNISON's national Labour Link Committee, I have had a busy year taking our position to our headquarters and being involved in discussing, and lobbying for, our trade union priorities with Labour Front Bench politicians.

These discussions started with the newly elected deputy leader, and former North West UNISON Convenor, Angela Rayner and have also included the Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds, Shadow Justice Secretary David Lammy and Shadow Home Secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds.

These meetings are a vital part of the link directly from our members to the Labour Party and help to ensure our priorities are included in the policy making process.

Locally the Link supports individual members of UNISON to be actively involved in Constituency Labour Parties (CLP) and the soon to be founded Local Government Committees (LGC). The LGCs will be vital in ensuring trade union involvement in local government, there are new rules involved about how local election manifestos are written for instance, and if you are interested in how these will work and want to be more involved then please get in touch with me as soon as possible!

We have a difficult few years ahead with the Johnson led Tory government mismanaging everything from the pandemic response to the funding of social care, so we need as strong a presence in politics as possible.

Carl Greatbatch (Labour Link Officer)

LEON SULLIVAN - COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



2020 has not been business as usual for anyone and there will be even more challenges in the future. From an education perspective, members are now able to attend virtual courses.

If you are interested in becoming a steward we have a comprehensive training structure to support you, in addition we are looking at recruiting more health and safety reps. There are lots of add on courses as well so you can specialise

in things like mental health and employment law. We also have a wide range of other courses for members. If you're interested get in touch via unison@manchester.gov.uk.

On the communications side of things my key goal is still to increase membership engagement with the union. We have active Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (we're not quite at TikTok yet) pages and we're discussing a new website and the potential to have regular, virtual meetings open to all our members.

What this will mean for you is a much greater ability to put your views to Manchester Branch so we can prioritise what is important to you. We'll also be able to provide you with loads more (hopefully!) interesting, relevant and useful information.

Democracy is at the core of UNISON and a good branch does its utmost to ensure the members' voices are listened to.

Leon Sullivan (Communications Officer)

