

Branch Annual General Meeting Notice and Agenda

Saturday 14th March 2020

**Syracuse University (Faraday House)
48-51 Old Gloucester Street, London, WC1N 3AE**

- 11.00** Informal chat with light refreshments.
- 11.30** Branch Annual General Meeting formal start
- 12.30** Lunch – provided by the branch
- 15:00** Close of meeting followed by drinks at a local venue

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About the Branch

The branch normally meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every month. All members are welcome at branch meetings. Travel and care expenses can be paid where appropriate, so please contact the Secretary for details.

Facebook Unite LE1111 Housing Workers
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Website www.housingworkers.org.uk

Agenda

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Minutes of the 2019 AGM** Accuracy / Matters arising
- 4. Introduction** – Paul Kershaw, Branch Chair
- 5. Special Guest Speaker** – **Kathy Smith - GLL-Bromley Library Striker**



On 6 June 2019, 50 library staff from outsourced GLL in Bromley began indefinite strike action with a massive mandate from members in protest at redundancies and staffing changes.

By the end of January 2020, reps reported victory with 35 jobs saved and some members receiving pay increases back-dated to November 2017.

Kathy will describe how a small but determined group of workers won out against the giant GLL company, and what we can learn from their action and approach.

- 6. Branch Annual Report** – Suzanne Muna, Branch Secretary
- 7. Organising Tips and Strategies** – **Chris White, Unite Organiser**

Chris White has a wealth of experience working in the Organising & Leverage department and has regularly been drafted in to help on our branch campaigns. Chris will share some top organising tips and answer questions on how to recruit and build in some of our most challenging workplaces.

- 8. Finance Report** – Kerry Brier, Branch Treasurer
- 9. Our Legal Right to Information** – **Unite Legal Department**

Our members understand how to apply data protection law (GDPR) in a work setting. But we are finding GDPR increasingly being used both as a means to intimidate members with threats of disciplinary action, and in some cases, to prevent members getting advice from their reps. A legal advisor from Unite will give a briefing on how to combat this trend and stand up for our rights.

- 10. Branch Committee Elections** - More information page 5
- 11. Motions**
- 12. AOB**

Motion received for presentation to the AGM

Motion Title: Morning Star and Transphobia

This branch notes:

1. The appalling discrimination experienced by trans people, including workplace discrimination. Research by Stonewall suggests that:
 - a. One in eight trans employees (12%) have been physically attacked by a colleague or customer in the last year
 - b. Half of trans people (51%) have hidden their identity at work for fear of discrimination
 - c. A quarter of trans people (25%) have experienced homelessness
2. That trans people face constant attacks from the right, both internationally and in Britain. Donald Trump has banned trans people from the US military. In February 2020, the American website LGBTQ Nation reported that 226 bills are proposed around the US which attack the LGBTQ community, many of them focusing on trans people. In both 2018 and 2019 over 20 trans people, mostly women of colour, were murdered in the United States.
3. That the last year has seen a rise in transphobic attacks in Britain. Autumn 2019 statistics showed a rise of 37% in transphobic hate crimes over the previous year. On 18 February 2020 a Sheffield man was jailed for five years for an arson attack on a trans woman's flat.
4. That, as in America, this increase in transphobic hate reflects a shift in attitudes promoted by the right as part of their new "culture war" tactics. The Murdoch-owned Times and Sunday Times have repeatedly recycled transphobic talking points, suggesting that trans women are predators, and that young people are coerced into believing themselves to be trans and should be refused supportive healthcare. On 18 February the Telegraph claimed that "trans extremists" were promoting a "mad" new religion.
5. This branch reasserts its commitment to opposing discrimination against trans people and fighting for equality for members of society regardless of their gender identity.

This branch further notes:

6. That on Tuesday 18 February the *Morning Star* published a cartoon which the paper acknowledged to be transphobic in an apology published on Sunday 23 February
7. That the Morning Star has repeatedly given a platform to writers who call into question campaigns for trans equality, and has not apologised for doing so
8. That the Committee of Management which oversees the Morning Star includes representatives from Unite, GMB, NUM, CWU, FBU, Community, RMT, POA and the TSSA.
9. That unions have policies supporting trans rights and against transphobia.

This branch believes:

10. That the offensive cartoon, drawn by a regular Morning Star cartoonist, could only get printed, and an apology not be issued for five days, because of the failure of the newspaper to consistently oppose trans oppression, though it was more explicitly and crudely transphobic than other materials published
11. That it is unacceptable for a paper funded and supported by the labour movement to promote transphobia in this way.

This branch resolves: to send this motion to the Morning Star and that, until the Morning Star supports the struggles of trans people:

- a. It will provide no financial or other support to the Morning Star
 - b. It will encourage members not to write for the Morning Star
 - c. It will distribute this motion through this union and the wider labour movement, seeking to gain the widest possible support for it
12. This branch recognises the importance of left and independent media and further resolves that any support withdrawn from the Morning Star should be given to alternatives more in line with our principles and policies.

Help Manage our Diverse and Dynamic Branch!

Branch officers help run the branch in the interests of our members. This requires attending monthly Branch Committee (BC) meetings in addition to the monthly branch meetings. The BC implements the decisions made at branch meetings and runs its day-to-day affairs.

Nominations

It is useful for us to know in advance how many people are standing as this will help us in organising for the meeting and contested elections. However, we will accept nominations on the day for all roles except the branch Secretary, Chair and Treasurer.

You don't have to undertake a specific role, but you might want to consider being the Health and Safety, Equalities, Political or other officer if you have an area of interest. If there is only one candidate for any officer posts, the candidate will be elected unopposed.

The deadline for nominations is **mid-day on Friday 13th March**. These should be sent to Paul Kershaw, Branch Chair at kershawpaul@hotmail.com with the following details:

- Name and Address
- Workplace
- Telephone and Email contact details
- Two to four hundred words on what you think you can offer in the role in case if there are contested elections.

To support attendance at branch meetings, travel and carer expenses can be paid where appropriate. Please contact the Branch Secretary to find out how to claim.

We hope to see you at the meeting. If you have any questions or comments about the AGM, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Paul Kershaw or myself.

Regards

Suzanne Muna

Branch Secretary.

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