



BRIEFING

FOR BRANCH ACTIVISTS AND MEMBERS

January 2013

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Pay 2013

It is expected that negotiations will continue later this month and that an update on these will be available to the TU Side and NEC Staffing Committee which both meet at the end of January.

Recruitment and Selection

The rollover of Fighting Fund/Campaign Organisers' contracts and the filling of the new FFO posts have been raised with the TU Side Officers and they are following this up at a meeting with the AGS (Regions).

The matter of whether or not UNISON is delaying the filling of vacancies continues to be an issue with different reports being received from parts of the organisation. The Trade Union Side have asked for a written statement to be given to us so that this can be circulated to

Senior Stewards to ensure that there is consistency of how vacancies are approached across the union.

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Flexible Retirement

As part of negotiations on developing a flexible retirement Policy some discussions have been held with management to seek to clarify the situations whereby a request or the opportunity to apply for flexible retirement may arise and the process that may be followed by management in approving these applications. The Trade Union Side is still some way off having something that can go to the Trustees of both the Unison and Cohse Pension Schemes for their consideration as to how the proposals will be implemented for their Schemes.

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Mileage and Overnight Expenses

The TU Side Officers have held their first meeting with management to discuss the concerns of the HMRC in respect of the payment of the current mileage rates, daily and overnight allowance that are paid by UNISON. Further detailed information has been sought from management on their proposals to change the rates, to ensure that they fall in line with non taxable allowance rates published by HMRC, so that it can be established what impact this may have on staff.

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Staff Training

Concerns raised at the last Branch Committee and at the TU Side, have been pursued by the TU Side Officers and a meeting of the joint staff Training and Development Working Group has been convened at the end of January.

Domestic Abuse Policy

Management have indicated their keenness to have early discussions on introducing a domestic abuse Policy for UNISON staff and are seeking to set up a joint working party with the view of having a draft Policy available for the joint Staff Negotiations Committee meeting in March. The drive to have a policy for UNISON staff was started by Acts.

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March Recruitment Initiative

Some staff will already be aware of the decision to hold a major recruitment initiative in March as the start of a broader and longer recruitment strategy. As a consequence of this managers have been asked to ensure that as many staff as possible are available to support the campaign. As a consequence of this there have been rumours that all annual leave for this period has been cancelled or will not be approved. The TU Side Officers have raised this with management who have advised that clearly they will be seeking maximum coverage and input from staff to support this initiative. Annual leave will not be approved unless it has been previously agreed – therefore there is no requirement for staff to cancel agreed leave, that they have particular reason for requesting leave at that time, that something unforeseen has arisen requiring them to take leave or that they have a valid reason for the request. The initiative is not limited to March but is an ongoing project however the intensive staff input is required around its launch date. The TU Side Officers will continue to clarify issues related to this matter.

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Health and Safety and Stress Survey

The Trade Union Side on the national Staff Health & Safety committee have rejected the latest draft of the stress Policy. Despite some progress having been made around previous drafts the final proposed version was felt to fall well short of a meaningful Policy.

The issue of the volume of work and the associated pressures has been identified by Acts as a key factor in giving many staff stress. Management has agreed to look at how a joint stress survey can be conducted and both management and the Trade Union Side will use the results from a recent stress survey conducted amongst staff in the South West Region as effectively a “pilot” to assist in considering how and when to best undertake a wider joint survey.

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Political Fund Ballot

UNITE'S political fund ballot process will start on 15 April. Members should watch out for their ballot papers.

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UNISON Centre ACTS Constituencies

Changes have been agreed to the UNISON Centre Acts Constituencies to reflect the changes in the management structure. No new elections of existing Stewards are envisaged; although this can be addressed should any issues arise between existing Stewards. The

changes will come into effect as from 1 April. Further details will be issued to members in UNISON Centre.

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Branch Employed Staff meetings

The Branch Committee will be submitting a Rule change motion to this year's AGM proposing that that meetings of the Branch's Branch Employed Staff Sub-Committee be convened "as and when required", rather than currently, every two months.

Regional Senior Stewards are to be asked to convene a meeting for the Branch Employed Staff in their Constituencies to discuss Branch Employed Staff issues. It's hoped this will lead to greater involvement from those members employed in UNISON Branches, where falling membership within Branches is starting to have detrimental effects on these members.

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ACTS in Detail and Education Courses

Details will be circulated shortly publicising how the Branch is structured and how decisions are made. Additionally, information on the role of the Trade Union Side and how industrial relations are dealt with, at both national and Regional levels will be drawn up. The Branch Education Officer will publicise how members can access UNITE and local TUC training courses.

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New ACTS Application Form

An updated Branch membership application will shortly be circulated to all new Senior Stewards and a PDF version will also be made available to upload onto the Branch website. When the new application forms are received, Stewards need to destroy supplies of the old forms as they contain out of dates subscription details.

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Briefly...

Equalities

A briefing note will be issued which will provide a flavour of the role of the Branch Equalities Officer.

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Branch Young Members Officer

Francesca Lee (SMS) has now been elected as the Branch Young Members Officer.

Affiliated Organisations

The Branch Committee have been unable to find contacts from the Branch Committee to support “Justice for Columbia” and “Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign” to whom the Branch is affiliated. These vacancies will be circulated to Senior Stewards to establish whether any members are interested in filling these roles.

Information on the various organisations and campaigns that the branch is affiliated to or supports with donations is available on the branch website <http://uniteinacts.com/links.php>

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BRIEFING is intended to provide stewards and members of the branch with accurate and up to date information on branch policies and activities as well as details of external campaigns supported by the branch. It is sent to all branch activists who have a valid email address listed in the branch directory. Activists are encouraged to forward it to all of the members that they represent and to print off and display copies in the workplace. If you have any comments on the contents or problems receiving or reading them please email us at feedback@uniteinacts.com

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