



*Monmouthshire County Branch
Cangen Sir Fynwy*



**Tuesday 4th February 2020
Room 1, Raglan Training Centre**

**Wednesday 5th February 2020
Mardy Park Resource Centre, Abergavenny**

**Thursday 6th February 2020
Conference Room, The Rhadyr, Usk**

**Monday 10th February 2020
Magor Room 5, @Innovation House**

All meetings start at 12.30pm

AGENDA

Apologies

Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Officer Reports

Honoraria

Approval of the Accounts

Election of Branch Officers and Stewards

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 5th February 2019
Room 5, @Innovation House, Magor

Wednesday 6th February 2019
Mardy Park Resource Centre, Abergavenny

Thursday 7th February 2019
Conference Room, The Rhadyr, Usk

PRESENT

Jan Davies (Branch Secretary)
Liam (Chairperson)
Marie Bartlett (Treasurer)
Sian Stockham (International / Welfare Officer)
Richard Garner (Health & Safety)
Sandra Rosser (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Tracy Finnis (Equalities Officer)

Robin Grant - Steward
Kevan O'Dwyer - Steward
Joanne Davies - Steward
Deserie Mansfield - Steward

Rosie Lewis (Unison)

TOTAL - 72 Members of the Branch

APOLOGIES

Hazel Clatworthy
Debbie Watkins
Eric Small
Wendy Moyle

Liam Perry opened the meeting by welcoming members and introducing the officers and Unison personnel present.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2018

These were received and approved.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

No matters arising.

Officer reports

Officer Reports were received and approved: officers would be available to answer any questions on their individual reports at the end of the meeting.

No reports were received from the sub-branches

Honoraria

The method of calculation of honoraria was explained as a discretionary one-off payment to elected members of the Committee and stewards in recognition of their voluntary work for the Branch, and it was made clear that no person who received a payment could vote on this item.

As a branch we can choose to pay honoraria (within our rules) providing we spend no more than 10% of our income on honoraria payments. For 2019, income is estimated to be £32,000.

At the AGM in 2018, we indicated that we wanted to establish a fairer way of allocating honoraria and presented a proposal which was accepted by our Members, therefore honoraria is now paid as a 50% retainer and an additional amount to reflect the workload undertaken during the year.

The table of honoraria payments was presented to the meeting and were approved unanimously. No potential recipient took part in the vote.

Approval of the Accounts

The Treasurer then presented the Annual Statement of Accounts to the meeting.

Budget

The Budget was presented for 2019 which indicated that central funding is estimated at £36,000 with additional funding of £10,050 from Blaenau Gwent in respect of shared branch office support. The branch has budgeted to spend all of its income in supporting members. Expenditure includes the employment of a branch administrator, office expenses, national and group conferences and education and training.

Income and Expenditure Account

The branch has overspent for 2018 by £637 mainly due to a downturn in income. This would have been significantly more had we not been successful in attracting one off funding from Unison which was directed at branches with low reserves. Marie briefly highlighted the larger areas of spend.

Balance Sheet

Marie highlighted the balance of reserves of £75,838 which although seems high is made up of an industrial fund of £61,779 which has a restricted use and cannot be used for day to day running costs. The remainder of the balance is on the general reserve at £14,059 which is considered to be low by general Unison standards. The intention would be to try and maintain this level of general reserve by living within the existing budget provision.

The accounts were unanimously approved.

Election of Branch Officers and Stewards

Nominations had been sought and all returned nominations to date were presented for approval.

Liam Perry explained the need for more stewards in the Branch and explained that Unison offer training courses to all new stewards and anyone interested would be allowed paid time off to attend. He went on to explain how much stronger a workplace would be if there was someone acting on behalf of members and urged those present to become involved in whatever capacity they felt comfortable with. The Branch offers full support to any new stewards.

We are also looking to recruit young members and get them more involved; the Branch can support with organising a young members group. To be part of a young members group you should be 27 or under.

All nominations for Officers and Stewards presented were elected by the meeting.

The AGM granted the Branch Committee the ability to fill any vacant posts and approve new officers and steward nominations throughout the year.

Mental Health & Wellbeing - (Sian Stockham)

Sian gave Members an overview of UNISON's own charity "There For You".

It provides confidential advice and support to members who may be experiencing financial and emotional difficulties. The meeting was also told that we are able to offer school uniform grants and help with fuel costs to those in need as well as family breaks.

Sian explained that to help fund these payments we run the "There for You" lottery, 50% of all revenue goes back into the lottery. Although members are only allowed to pay £10 a month, branches can pay more.

Sian thanked Monmouthshire branch for their continued support.

Pay Award and Assimilation - (Rosie Lewis)

As part of the 2-year NJC pay claim, the pay structure has needed to be adjusted to accommodate the increases in pay. Unison has been involved in discussions with the Authority to ensure that the new structure complies with equality legislation and that the structure is fit for purpose.

The branch has, with support from the region, undertaken a series of drop ins at a variety of workplaces to consult members on the new pay spine and there will now be a new local agreement to reflect acceptance of these changes.

The branch assessment has been completed which has included an action plan for the year including mapping and possible recruitment of young members to coincide with UNISON'S year of the Young Worker. A discussion on ways to include young members followed and those attending committed to seeking out young workers and talking to them about joining UNISON.

The Regional Organiser thanked the branch for their continued commitment and hard work this year, particularly the contribution from Jan Davies the branch secretary. Reference was made to a lot of work that happens behind the scenes which members are not always aware of, suggestions were made of ways to communicate this to members and this led on to a discussion regarding social media and the impact this can have on reaching out to members.

Members were encouraged to use the branches new website and other platforms for spreading the word.

Questions were invited from the floor, there being none and all matters having been dealt with, the meeting closed.

Chairperson's Report

2019 has been an eventful year with ongoing political controversies and a December General Election. Combined with what seem to have become a perennial issue of under-funding of public services, our members have had to contend with an evolving set of challenges in order to keep services afloat.

Locally, there has been a mixed reception to the proposed funding settlement for Monmouthshire from the Welsh Government for 2020 and beyond. Although the figures show a modest increase, as a county, Monmouthshire is again bottom of the barrel when it comes to actual money. It also doesn't come close to addressing the financial chasm that has opened up over successive years of inadequate resourcing of public services. There are many reasons for all of this, none of which I think it is worth discussing at length here. However, I would like to reassure members that as in previous years, your union at both national and local levels will be fighting hard to protect our members' jobs and interests.

On a more positive note, Monmouthshire branch has made great strides over the past year in expanding our training programme. As well as a host of staple courses, we have recently moved into new areas; I recently attended a course on Neurodiversity, exploring Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and ADHD in great detail and its place in workplace relations. I found the course to be extremely beneficial and would recommend all our members look into what courses Unison offers. The subjects are too numerous to mention here, but I think every member will find something of interest and of relevance amongst the training available.

Moving onto personal matters, it has been a great honour to chair Monmouthshire County for another year. I intend to maintain my involvement into 2020, but as I've mentioned at past AGMs, we Branch officials are limited in number. We have a hard-working and dedicated team of stewards and officers who are always there to support you. However, we are always keen to bring more people on board. If you've ever toyed with the idea of being more involved with your union, get in touch. We provide comprehensive training and support for new stewards and you'll have access to a side of the workplace that most people never see.

Feel free to contact me or anyone from our branch if you're interested.

Liam Perry

Branch Secretary's Report

It's the start of a new year and a challenging one for UNISON members, the services they provide and for the union. The severe financial pressures that continue to hit local government have inevitably led to restructures, collaborations, shared services and various pilot schemes and this is set to continue. The hype may say the end of Austerity is nigh, but in reality there's no change. All of this continues to run alongside the usual representations and advice/support.

With such a difficult financial position, the Authority is continually looking at different ways of working to improve efficiencies and achieve the necessary savings. If there are proposed changes to your sections / departments please contact us. We are not always aware of changes and rely on your help to keep us informed.

There is still a huge amount of uncertainty around the impact that Brexit will have on us and the new government does not instil any confidence that our current worker's rights will be maintained or protected.

The only way to guarantee all health and safety and employment protections would be to put workplace rights at the heart of any Brexit deal. Sadly, this does not appear to be the case.

On 19 December 2019, the Johnson Government published a revised European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill 2019-20. **The new WAB no longer contains clauses on the protection of EU-derived workers' rights.** In the December 2019 Queen's Speech, it was announced that protection for EU workers' rights will be included in a forthcoming Employment Bill. Details of this Bill have yet to be published.

A large part of UK employment law is derived from and grounded in EU law. These include issues such as working time, holiday pay, maternity rights and discrimination. As a member of the EU, the UK cannot currently reduce these rights below the minimum level set by EU law - but they can choose to introduce greater rights.

Under the European Union (Withdrawal Act) 2018, these rights will be saved as 'retained EU law'. These rights will continue to apply after the UK leaves the EU. **However**, unless there are provisions about maintaining existing workers' rights standards in a future UK-EU agreement, these rights could be amended or reduced by domestic legislation after Brexit

UNISON will continue to fight / campaign to ensure that we retain as much of the protection we currently have under EU Employment and Health & Safety legislation as possible and that the forthcoming Employment Bill reflects this.

We now hold regular drop-in sessions at Usk and are starting to hold them at our Raglan Depot, we are open to suggestions if anyone would like to see these sessions in different workplaces. Our recent session concentrated on the Green Agenda and was very well received. Future themes will include free training, stress management and well-being.

Our membership figures are holding steady, but more needs to be done to ensure that those who work for Monmouthshire and are not members, join up! This is not a time to be fighting alone, with all the changes on the horizon there has never been a more important time to be a Unison member.

I have also had the privilege of representing Monmouthshire Unison at Local Government Committee, Joint Council for Wales and at the South East Wales Joint Consultative Committee. Keep an eye on the Monmouthshire Unison website for regular updates.

We are still desperately short of stewards. If anyone is interested please contact me. There is plenty of training available and I would be happy to provide any advice / guidance / support you may need.

PLEASE COME FORWARD - YOUR BRANCH NEEDS YOU !!

Jan Davies



Get active in your workplace

Assistant Branch Secretary's Report

Another year, another decade! What a busy year it has been - and it promises to keep getting busier in the coming months.

It's been hectic trying to juggle my 'day job' with supporting members in consultations and face to face support meetings, and I wanted to take this opportunity to let you all know a little more on what stewards do when we take on the responsibility of supporting members with requests and issues that arise.

When we first get a referral that a member has requested support, we have to establish the facts from the member on what it is they need support and assistance with. This can be done by either having a chat over the phone, or by meeting face to face. I have found increasingly with members off with stress related issues that meeting away from the workplace is best, and if they are not confident with meeting at a café or somewhere neutral then I go to members' homes.

From this initial conversation, we can then look at a plan of action - whether this be setting up a meeting between two parties, carrying out investigations into an issue, or simply giving further support by signposting members to organisations that can assist them further with their issues.

Although we are not qualified counsellors, we as stewards do a lot of active listening, to enable a member to feel comfortable in talking about and explaining their issues to us fully, enabling us to find a way to progress things in the right direction.

Stewards have to at least have basic knowledge of Employment Law, the Equalities Act, and other employment related guidelines to enable us to best advise and signpost members from all areas. Stewards undergo regular training to ensure our knowledge is as up to date as possible, to enable us to give the best advice we can to our members.

Stewards do all of this in their own time - we are volunteers - and we give what we can to support you, our members, with anything that may arise. Comprehensive training and a multitude of personal development courses are available not just for us but all members via the Members Learning Programme - do take a look the next time one arrives in your inbox, you truly can access all manner of courses **for free** as part of your membership.

Do contact our branch office for further information.

As part of my role, I was fortunate to represent the branch by attending the National Delegates Conference in June 2019 in Liverpool - a fascinating week of discussions, with nothing too contentious, though we did get to go through 'card votes' twice, which occurs when standard voting is too close to call if a motion has been carried or not.

The delegates get 'locked in' to the main conference hall, and we have to write how we wish to vote based on the numbers of members we are representing, so it gets a bit intense trying to discuss the options with fellow delegates (I was lucky to have one other person with me as it is always better to be able to discuss the options with a fellow steward), then getting the card into the ballot boxes before they are taken away and counted.

It takes a while for these results to come back, so debates usually carry on after the cards are collected, unless the card vote has a direct effect on the next scheduled debate.

I never realised I would be getting involved in such politics when I became a steward, but it is really interesting to be able to vote on motions which will have an impact on us as a whole going forward. I urge anyone to read up on these events when we do post about them on Facebook or our website, and please do comment - after all, we are representing you, and really do value your feedback!

Here's to the next twelve months - I hope they are all you expect them to be!

Sandra Rosser

Health & Safety Officer's Report

Another year has been and gone, some of the main updates are as follows:

Regional H&S discussions

The greater Gwent region has started a regional H&S meeting every other month to help address some of the common issues faced by all authorities. The first joint venture being the recent violence to staff survey, this was to try and get more detail on what has been happening across the authorities, as most have seen an increase in violence to their staff, both physically and psychologically. The results of the survey are available on our website, (a number of the comments submitted have been removed as they could potentially identify members), the report is to be discussed at the next directorate working groups and Corporate H&S working group.

Agile Working

As usual laptop users, please make sure you take regular breaks, that your workstation is set up correctly and has the right equipment, especially if working for more than a couple of hours in one place, portable laptop stands are available via office services and cost just £15. If you have difficulty getting the above, or would like further information, initially discuss this with your manager, failing that, contact me or the UNISON office, where we can help put you on the right track.

General health and safety

We are always on the lookout for new UNISON Health and Safety reps to help in the prevention of health and safety issues around the county. If you would like to know more please let me know. Alternatively, just taking 5 minutes to look around where you are working and seeing any problems and helping fix them makes a big difference, whether it's the chair that everyone avoids because it can't be adjusted, a wire trailing across the floor, or a pile of boxes.

Richard Garner



Equalities Officer's Report

Everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. The ability to live and work without prejudice is a fundamental right, regardless of your background, colour or sexual orientation.

One of UNISON's main aims is to help workers fight for fairness and equality in the workplace and beyond. Challenging discrimination and winning equality is at the heart of everything UNISON does.

Besides the right not to be discriminated against or bullied, fair treatment also includes equal working conditions and pay.

I have been a member of Nalgo and later Unison since the late 1970's.

I have my reasons for being a member, as do the other 1.3 million members across the public sector. From Unison I have received support when I needed it, reassurance when I needed it and confidence to address issues that were important to me and my colleagues. I became aware that over the years Unison had supported me when I faced difficult work issues, but was I supporting Unison? So, after many years of paying my monthly dues and being a passive member, I stepped forward to become a rep and more recently the Branch Equality Officer.

These are very uncertain times, so many of us work in positions where we are exposed, merely because of the nature of our work, for example we are vulnerable to accusations of bad practice or unprofessional behaviour; this in addition to the unremitting impact of austerity measures and the resulting insecurity and stress in the workplace.

As Equality Officer I have represented the Branch at the National Women's Conference, The National Delegate Conference and I am a member of Unison Wales/Cymru Equalities Forum. I seek through my learning from that group to address issues both in the workplace and in my private life, both formally and informally, when I believe equality is not being observed.

Equality work includes creating self-organised groups for members who experience particular types of prejudice and discrimination. These groups meet locally and nationally to discuss, campaign and organise around the specific issues that affect them. Self-organised groups are for black members, disabled members, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members; and women members. There are also equality groups for young members and retired members.

UNISON is committed to achieving equality in our workplaces, in our union and across society and promotes the understanding that groups of people who face prejudice are stronger through organising together in order to fight discrimination.

Please contact me if you are a Monmouthshire member who would be interested in developing / joining any such group.

In addition, Unison depends on maintaining and developing an active local membership. The Branch always needs and welcomes members who wish to play a more active role. Please contact me for an informal chat if you feel you would like to become more involved.

Tracy Finnis



**TIME FOR
EQUALITY**

Welfare Officer's Report

No report received.

Sian Stockham

Officer Nominations

At the closing date the following nominations had been received:

Branch Chairperson	Liam Perry
Assistant Branch Chairperson	Kevan O'Dwyer
Branch Secretary	Jan Davies
Assistant Branch Secretary	Sandra Rosser
Branch Treasurer	Marie Bartlett
Health & Safety Officer	Richard Garner
Equalities Co-ordinator	Tracy Finnis
Welfare Officer	Laura-Jane Marchrones
Young Members Officer	Vacant
Education Co-ordinator	Undertaken by Branch Admin
International Relations Officer	Sian Stockham
Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator	Undertaken by Branch Admin
Communications Officer	Undertaken by Branch Admin
Membership Officer	Undertaken by Branch Admin
Retired Member's Secretary	Vacant
Labour Link Officer	Sian Stockham

The above-named Officers are nominated unopposed and are deemed elected, subject to AGM approval.

Steward Nominations

Monmouthshire County Council

Mandy Stone

Kevan O'Dwyer

Joanne Davies

Robin Grant

Laura-Jane Marchrones

Helen Cox

Simon Mansfield

Tom Herbert

Adult Services

Grounds Maintenance

Museums Services

Children's Services

Adult Services / Revenues

Deri View Primary School

H&S Llanfoist Depot

Chepstow Comprehensive School

Capita Symonds

Carwyn Davies

Peter Deidun

Haberdashers Monmouth Schools

None received

Monmouthshire Housing Association

Chris York

The above nominations have been received and are therefore elected.

The Branch reserves the right to fill any vacant posts and approve new officers and steward nominations throughout the year



Get Acti>e
2020

The logo features the text 'Get Acti>e' in a bold, sans-serif font. 'Get' is in white on a purple background, 'Acti' is in white on a green background, and '>e' is in white on a purple background. Below this, the year '2020' is displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with '20' in green and '20' in purple.



We still have vacancies for Stewards across all workplaces so any nominations or volunteers would be very welcome. Full training will be offered to anyone volunteering.

Officers of the union take the lead on specific areas of activity and work in close liaison with our Stewards and Workplace Contacts to ensure that we deliver effectively for our members.

Specific training is available for many of these positions so don't feel that you will be on your own if you stand, or persuade a colleague to stand. There is only one qualification for officers, they need to be a member of the union; having an interest or experience of the specific areas of activity would of course be welcomed.

Stewards are the backbone of UNISON; they act as a link between members and the union in our workplaces. All new stewards have the right to paid time off for training which UNISON provides. New stewards also have the backup of more experienced officers should the need arise.

Your workplace will be a much stronger place should you nominate someone to act on your behalf, and remember different stewards get involved to differing degrees, so don't worry if you feel you don't have that much time, just being a presence in the workplace is often enough.

If you are interested please contact Karen in the UNISON Office:

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18 Maryport Street
Usk NP15 1AE

Tel: 01291 675502

Email: unisonmon@btconnect.com

Website: www.unisoningwent.org.uk

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For Text Phone: first dial 18001. Lines are open Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm. Calls will be recorded.

An advertisement for UNISON member discounts on Multi Car Cover. The background is a light blue gradient. In the top left is the 'UNISON living' logo. To the right, it says 'UNISON member discounts' with a small green heart icon. The main text 'MULTI CAR COVER' is in large, bold, yellow and blue letters. Below that is the 'LV=' logo and 'LIVERPOOL VICTORIA'. In the center, three cars (yellow, green, and blue) are shown in front of a large green heart.

An advertisement for UNISON members SAVE with our new ELECTRIC CAR INSURANCE. The background is a solid green color. In the top left is the 'LV= LIVERPOOL VICTORIA' logo and the 'UNISON living' logo. In the center, a green car is shown inside a glowing green heart. To the right, it says 'UNISON members SAVE with our new' followed by 'ELECTRIC CAR INSURANCE' in large, bold, white letters.

UNISON WELFARE



(Charity registration number: 1023552 / SC038305)

UNISON's registered charity provides a unique confidential service just for UNISON members and their families. They offer:

- debt service
- advice and support
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Email: thereforyou@unison.co.uk

www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou



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Look out for the Member Learning Programme January - June 2020

Learning Grants

UNISON wants to help members realise their potential. We offer financial support to members taking part in various educational and learning opportunities, as well as learning discounts from a number of providers.

- Open University Awards
- Learning Grants
- Grants for School Support Staff
- Grants for Care Workers

The number of grants is limited and they are awarded on a first come, first served, basis. Contact the branch office for further information.

Learning online - UNISON's learning site

Sometimes you just want to sit in a chair with a cup of tea and learn something new, at your own pace and in an environment where you feel comfortable.

Online learning can offer you just that.

Any UNISON member can use their [My UNISON](#) account to log in to our online learning site and enrol themselves in e-notes (quick, interactive online modules) on a wide range of topics. These give a useful overview of the subject and direct learners to further resources.

Recently added e-notes include: **Dyslexia Awareness, Introduction to Apprenticeships, and The Role of the Union Learning Representative.**

Follow the Branch on Social Media

Join the conversation and keep up to date with all the latest Unison news.



Find us by searching **Unison Monmouthshire** on Facebook and Twitter



www.unisoningwent.org.uk



Monmouthshire County UNISON

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