



Our newsletter is free to all members.

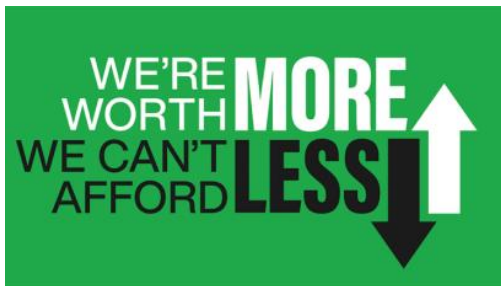
If you're not a member, we want you to join us. Either follow the links on-line from our blog on Staff Central, or ask us for a paper membership form.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

July 2022

Welcome to our July newsletter, especially if you've not read it before.

This month will be dominated by the build up to our pay ballot, over the pay rise due at the start of August 2022. We've been offered 3%, rising to 8% for those at the bottom of grade 1, but the additional increases at the lower scales are only there because the employers know that they can't pay our cleaners and catering workers less than the minimum wage. At Brighton, the University has agreed to make sure that all employees are paid at least the real living wage, after the pay round has ended, but at a rate of £9.90/hour, given current rates of inflation, this is still nowhere near enough to live on. (If inflation stays high, the real living wage next year could make grade 1 no longer applicable.)



A 3% increase, when inflation is currently 11.7% (RPI, or 9.1% CPI) is wholly inadequate, and represents a massive real-terms decrease in your pay. We've been clear to reject this and campaign for a more meaningful offer that we know the employers and the government can afford, if money is

found for public services. Dispute meetings are taking place, but we're not expecting a massive revised offer, so we're planning for a pay ballot, starting on 22nd July. **At that point, every UNISON member working directly for the University will receive a ballot paper, posted to their home address.**

As always, **every vote will count**, because we need to achieve a turnout of 50%+, so please make sure you vote and let us know when you have done. We'll be chasing up every member and every vote, so getting the ballot paper posted back as soon as possible and passing on the message to others will be really helpful.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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Lessons of the pay disputes

Most members will know that we have taken a total of five days of strike action during December, March and April, over pay. Up until December last year, strike action was something that we'd threatened, over various issues (redundancies in Information Services and closure of all Nurseries), but never taken, for various reasons. For the pay awards due in August 2020 and 2021, we participated in national ballots, done on a disaggregate basis, and succeeded in gaining a legal strike mandate (by getting over the 50% turnout threshold).

This allowed us to strike locally, demanding that the University paid a bonus or went back to the employers' organisation and put pressure on them to reconsider their pay increases (worth 0% and 1.5% respectively). Other University branches, also took action and some have been successful in winning bonus payments. Other universities, notably Sussex, have made bonus payments anyway, perhaps in recognition of the fact that many people will find more attractive work elsewhere.

What hasn't happened though, is any movement here, and we have to be honest about the reasons for that, whilst recognising the efforts and sacrifices all our members made in taking strike action, many of the first time.

Our picket lines were well attended and the demonstrations and protests were lively and encouraging. Many activists stood out in the cold and rain for hours and once members recognised that we were able to pay strike pay of up to £50/day then momentum built. It would have been a risky strategy, but we could have taken more action for longer if we'd timed it correctly.

There were, however, factors pushing against us, in no particular order:

1. The University of Brighton is not in a good place financially.
2. Many people still working from home cut across how the strike looked and how effectively we could talk to people in the run up to it.
3. We don't have enough members.
4. Not every member was sufficiently on-message to respect the democratic decision to strike.

1 and 2 are not something that we could have done much about. The financial situation at the University goes from terrible, if we want a pay rise, and manageable if they want a brand new head of whatever to manage something, but it would have been easier to extract a one-off bonus if the University hadn't made £10m deficits consistently for several years.

That said, under different circumstances, UEB would have been quick to settle if we'd have caused as much disruption as we know we did for a longer time. Strike action is always a war of attrition, based on who backs down first. Their tactic of ignoring it, after the initial, inevitable bouts of disappointment that we're letting the students down etc. were effective, from their point of view.

3 and 4 we have to do something about. More members will materialise when we're doing something, especially as we can't carry on accepting massive pay cuts. What we really need to do though, is reinforce how a trade union operates when we've voted to take strike action, and we'll work on this more if and when we have to do it again.

Whilst a longer debate is necessary, we know that strike action is difficult and there's no guarantee of victory, but it's often the right thing to do, even if it doesn't gain immediate results. The period opening up is going to test the whole train union movement and we need to be part of that.

2022-23 Pay

This is the final offer that's been made by the employers and what it really looks like with 9% inflation.

Final Employers' Offer for August 2022 applied to Brighton

Grade	Spinal Point	Pay from August 2021	Hourly Rate	Pay from August 2022	Hourly Rate	Increase	Real change with inflation at 9.0%
1	5	17,901	9.28	19,333	10.02	8.00%	-1.00%
	6	18,212	9.44	19,578	10.15	7.50%	-1.50%
	7	18,529	9.60	19,863	10.30	7.20%	-1.80%
2	8	18,852	9.77	20,134	10.44	6.80%	-2.20%
	9	19,209	9.96	20,400	10.57	6.20%	-2.80%
	10	19,623	10.17	20,761	10.76	5.80%	-3.20%
	11	20,092	10.41	21,197	10.99	5.50%	-3.50%
3	12	20,600	10.68	21,630	11.21	5.00%	-4.00%
	13	21,135	10.95	22,149	11.48	4.80%	-4.20%
	14	21,686	11.24	22,662	11.75	4.50%	-4.50%
	15	22,254	11.53	23,144	12.00	4.00%	-5.00%
	16	22,847	11.84	23,715	12.29	3.80%	-5.20%
4	17	23,487	12.17	24,285	12.59	3.40%	-5.60%
	18	24,174	12.53	24,948	12.93	3.20%	-5.80%
	19	24,871	12.89	25,642	13.29	3.10%	-5.90%
	20	25,627	13.28	26,396	13.68	3.00%	-6.00%
	21	26,341	13.65	27,131	14.06	3.00%	-6.00%

Everyone at grade 5 or above would receive a 3% increase, or a 6% real-terms cut, and that assumes inflation stays at 9%, which it probably won't.

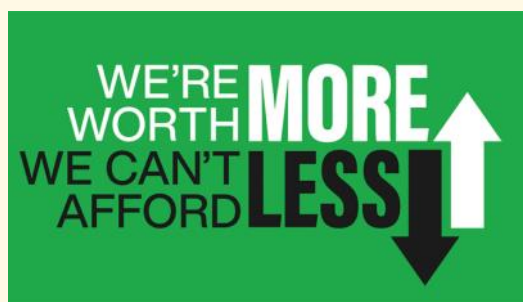
It's difficult to overstate the size of this. For years we've been arguing over only getting 1.5% when inflation was closer to 1.8% etc. but the numbers now are totally off the scale! A 10% pay increase for everyone now, and that's £1,790, rising to £2,634 for those detailed above, would only bring pay up to where it should be, ignoring years of pay "restraint" i.e. cuts.

If we don't take action over this, then you'd have to ask, when would we?

A trade union has to defend its members from imposed pay cuts and so whilst we recognise that the University of Brighton is not overflowing with cash, we have to campaign for a pay rise which at least allows University employees to keep their heads above water. Many people are increasingly desperate and we have a duty to defend them and their dependents.

If the University can't afford to pay us what we need then we're happy to jointly campaign for the necessary funds from the government (not by increasing tuition fees, although the fact that they've been frozen in real-terms with no compensating funding is part of the problem.) This is not just about quietly lobbying behind the scenes, but about putting real pressure on the government by openly and loudly calling for proper funding, and supporting our right to strike to secure what we need.

UEB have to decide which side they're on - whichever far-right politician ends up in power, or their own workforce.



Why we think you need to join a trade union



If you're reading this, the chances are you're already a member of UNISON, but whether you are or not, it's in all our interests that we strengthen our branch and our union by recruiting more members.

Trade unions are not groups of people who moan about everything, or clubs for lazy workers. We're organised workers who see the need for workplace organisation that's based around mass membership and collective interest.

We support all members with their individual problems at work, but the main reason we're all members is that we can do so much more when we have the weight of hundreds of members with us.

Many people working at the University will be concerned about what's round the corner. Universities like ours are facing all kinds of uncertainty. Public services in general are being cut, sold off and privatised. Workers' terms and conditions are being attacked as those in charge are forced to run things as "efficiently" as possible. In short, we're all expected to work harder for longer and less money.

The entire system means we have to fight back. Trade unions are about working people seeing that we're much stronger together. You can fight and win on your own, but you're much more likely to win if you're fighting alongside hundreds and thousands of other people like you.



Please make sure you join a trade union and stick up for your rights at work.

If you're already a member, please ask those working alongside you to join as well.

You can join UNISON on-line, or ask a steward for a paper membership form.