

## University of Leeds Branch Bulletin

### LUU Pay Offer

LUU staff members have agreed to accept the offer of a 2% salary increase following annual pay negotiations\* on behalf of UNISON members in LUU. Members were consulted at a group meeting before Christmas where the figure was welcomed. However, it was noted this increase fell short of years of low increases which have failed to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living. Members also shared their views on the pros and cons of one-year or two-year pay settlements and the possibility of returning to national pay bargaining, in line with the majority of other HE staff. Also, morale in some areas has been low and it was pointed out that "a decent pay rise would show we are valued as staff."

An email consultation in the New Year found a majority of members were willing to accept the 2% offer and this has recently been confirmed to the employer. As a result, we expect the rise to be paid in the January salary. UNISON is still pressing for LUU to join many other employers in the HE sector to pay the accredited Living Wage to all its staff.

For further information about UNISON in LUU, contact the local rep, Kath Owen at [K.L.Owen@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:K.L.Owen@leeds.ac.uk) \*(These negotiations take place separately and at a different point in the year to national pay bargaining for the majority of HE staff)\*.



*Branch & Yorkshire region members present a blank cheque to Shadow Minister (Education) Gordon Marsden to highlight the rising pay gap in HE.*

### Fair Day at Parliament

Eleven of our branch and Yorkshire & Humberside regional members visited Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> January to meet MP Gordon Marsden (Blackpool South), Shadow Minister (Education). Our members were there to discuss UNISON's campaign for 'Fairness, Transparency and the Living Wage in HE'.

Representatives of the various branches each spoke to a particular point and the Shadow Minister asked questions and took notes before making suggestions as to how we could further prosecute the campaign. He agreed to contact various regional colleagues within Labour to seek their support for the campaign. This suggestion ties in well with our agreed next step, that of a letter from all the regional branches to all the regional Labour MPs with HE institutions in or near their constituency. At the end, the Shadow Minister was handed a petition with over 1,000 signatures and shown our large 'blank cheque for VCs' (see picture).

### Branch pledges support for LCC & FE

FE staff pay freezes and major restructures were the hot topic at our activist's meeting on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. Much of the discussion centred on eleventh-hour negotiations which had just taken place at Leeds City College. LCC UNISON steward James Dean attended the meeting, providing a full update of the issues that staff at the College were facing.

He gave details of the recent drastic proposals and the agreement reached between staff and the Principal / HR. The outcome prompted UNISON members to call off planned strike action at the last moment.

James told those attending that the proposals included removing around 40 full-time equivalent posts by restructuring staff time, including making some staff term-time only, resulting in lowered grades in some cases. About 293 members of staff were to have been affected, causing great concern for many members. Most people were being forced to reapply for their jobs, be put forward for new ones at short notice, and take equivalent pay cuts.

Inspired by action taken at Barnsley College, the stewards took a look at the finances behind the proposal, to present their own version of cost-saving, as an alternative to such drastic staff cuts.

Their first official ballot had a turnout of 50%, with 75-80% in favour of industrial action. The impending strike action threat meant that a meeting with the principal and HR was eventually agreed. After a couple of hours of negotiation, the College came back with an alternative offer – on the condition that UNISON recommend it to their members. The offer agreed to 'work to avoid' compulsory redundancies, made allowances for grade renegotiation timescales and provided a compensation scheme for those who were accepting a pay cut. The final vote by UNISON members was 60% in favour, 40% against, therefore the offer was accepted and the impending action called off.

The group also discussed what was next for FE – the government are imposing 'area reviews' to investigate combining (and reducing the size of) FE colleges in the same region. FE staff pay was discussed following a repeated national offer of 0%. FE colleagues need support and it was agreed that HE UNISON members would support them, as what happens to FE is likely to happen to HE, or at least have some wider knock-on impact.

Our activists' group welcomes all members to get involved in its future campaigns

### UNISON Christmas Do

We had a good turn out at our first Branch Christmas Do at the Old Bar on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> December. Members were treated to free drinks and party food and got to meet their branch committee members and colleagues from all parts of the University.

Those members who stayed out a bit later were roped into a pub quiz which they almost won. Thanks to all those who attended and for all the positive feedback.

To see photos from the night please visit [www.leedsuni-unison.org.uk](http://www.leedsuni-unison.org.uk)