

# LGR Update



Updates on Local Government Reorganisation from the joint North Yorkshire local government branches; Craven branch, Harrogate branch, North Yorkshire branch, Ryedale branch and Scarborough branch

**Issue 9**  
**January 2023**

## Nearly there....

***It's a New Year, and the clock is counting down fast to 1 April and the new council. It has been a busy few months, with a busy year ahead!***

It has been a while since our last update to you. We can assure you that is not because we haven't had anything to report, quite the opposite really! We have had an intense few months of negotiations around the draft terms and conditions for the new council.

But remember, if you work at one of the district and borough councils, your current pay, terms, conditions and job description are protected under TUPE. You will only move on to the new terms if you choose to, or if you apply for a new job.

Other developments since our last update is that the TUPE roadshows took place across all the district councils. There were over 40 sessions in total, and we attended them all. We spoke to hundred's of district and borough staff and we hope our advice and guidance was helpful.

The TUPE roadshows were also an opportunity for us to meet face-to-face with all staff, some of whom we may never have met yet due to Covid and home working. We have seen a big increase in the number of UNISON members and activists across all the councils, which helps to make sure that we are fully representative of the workforce and that our voice on your behalf is as strong as possible. If you have just joined UNISON; you are very welcome!

Our priority now must be to make sure that we are the representative voice of the workforce for the new council. Please encourage your colleagues to join UNISON. Share this newsletter in your workplace, and contact your branch if you are interested in being a UNISON rep where you work or if you need membership forms.

### Which branch?

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**IMPORTANT ADVICE: We are advising members not to agree to changes to your contract, job description, workplace (or anything else) in advance of 1 April without first getting advice from your local UNISON branch. You will transfer over in your current role, on your current terms, your current pay grade, etc. It is unlikely you need to agree to any changes before 1 April.**

# Here for you beyond 1 April

***Your UNISON branch and local UNISON reps will still be here after 1 April to support you where you work as the new council takes shape***

There are five UNISON branches covering the eight councils. Selby, Hambleton and Richmondshire are all part of the North Yorkshire branch with NYCC. Craven, Harrogate, Ryedale and Scarborough all have their own branches.

Since LGR was announced, the five branch secretaries (supported by our Regional Organiser) have been meeting regularly to make sure we have a coordinated and united voice representing all our members across all the councils.

Just as the eight councils have been through a process to come together as one, so too will our five UNISON branches.

However, we know that you want the security and stability of knowing that your current UNISON reps will still be here for you after 1 April. So, the five branches have agreed that we will stay as we are until the summer of 2024.

We know that LGR will be far from complete on 1 April, and the hard work is yet to come. By staying as we are, it means your local UNISON branch will be here for you after 1 April just as it is today.

In the longer term there will be benefits for members by us all joining together to form a new branch based on the new council. The new branch will have over 8,000 members and will employ staff in the office to make sure there is always



*Five UNISON branches working together on your behalf. Back row: Andy Adamson, David Houlgate. Seated: Serena Williams, Wendy Nichols and Neil Braham.*

someone available to take your call or answer your email.

So, this year you will have your usual branch AGM in February/March to elect your own branch officers who will serve your local branch through to summer 2024.

In the spring of 2024 the current branches will hold meetings to formally close down, and there will be AGMs for the new branch to elect the new branch officers.

We have agreed that the new branch should be based on an area structure, so there will be local meetings and local convenors for each area. This means we will be able to maintain the local links that you have with your union, and arrange more social events and meetings that are based in the areas.

The key messages are:

- Nothing will change in the UNISON branches until 2024
- From 1 April you will continue to have the support of your local branch and local contacts.
- In 2024 we will come together as one branch.
- The new branch will be area-based to retain the local link.
- There will be plenty of roles for current and new activists.
- We want to strengthen the social side with more events and meetings for members across the new branch.

Please try to get along to your own branch AGM in February/March where you can find out more about our plans.

# New terms & conditions agreed

## 98% say 'yes' to new terms, district staff are protected

For most of last year we were in negotiations with NYCC about the terms and conditions (TCs) for the new council.

Because NYCC will be a 'continuing authority' the TCs at NYCC will become the TCs for the new council.

We started from a position of 'levelling-up' based on the best across all eight councils. This was always going to be difficult because NYCC made it a red-line that they would not agree to things like enhanced overtime rates and essential care-user allowances.

Despite the limitations we faced, we successfully negotiated a package of TCs that are an improvement for the majority of staff who will be working at the new council.

We had to formally ballot our NYCC members, as NYCC staff do not have a choice about the TCs once agreed.

**A massive 98 per cent of our NYCC members voted to accept the new TCs.**

One of our biggest success during the negotiations was to secure changes to the NYCC increment policy. Previously pay progression was based on sickness, which penalised staff who were ill. It was a tough negotiation but we are delighted that this element has been removed. Pay progression at the new council will not include sickness as a criteria.

We also secured guarantees around long-service awards. A number of the district councils have more generous long-



service awards, and members told us that they really value these payments. The new council has agreed to honour these payments for existing district staff, even if you choose to move on to the new TCs.

Finally, it is important to be aware that we view these TCs as a starting point, not an end point. These are minimum levels that we will be looking to improve in the years to come.

## TUPE Measures: our response

**On behalf of our members at the district and borough councils, we formally responded to the TUPE consultation and objected to a number of Measures.**

During the TUPE consultation you will hopefully have been made aware of a number of 'Measures' that the new council proposed. These are changes that the new council wishes to make to your contract as part of the transfer. The new council had a statutory duty to consult us about these Measures.

### 1. Change to pay date

We objected to this and suggested that the new council allows people to remain on their existing pay date. *Response: disagree with our*

*position on this, and the Measure will apply.*

### 2. Change to HR Policies

We requested that all policies are reviewed with us in the first two years. *Response: agreed.*

### 3. Reorganisation of senior leadership.

We objected to this. *Response: disagree, and the Measure will apply. See page 4 for more details about this and why we objected.*

### 4. Statutory designations

We objected and suggested that

only those roles where there is a legal obligation to change them. *Response: disagree, and the Measure will apply.*

### 5. Mental Health First Aiders

We asked that they keep the allowances for these. *Response: agreed.*

### 6. Leave year

We asked that they adopt the Craven system of the leave year being based on the month you start. *Response: disagree, and the Measure will apply.*

## In brief.....

### Check your flexi!

We are aware across the district and borough councils that some of you may have built up a lot of flexi-time and/or TOIL hours. We know of members who have hundreds of hours owing due to staff shortages and the LGR workload.

We have raised this with NYCC who have confirmed that they would prefer staff to take as much time owing as possible before 31 March, but that nobody will lose any hours when they transfer to the new council.

We strongly advise all members to confirm with their line manager the amount of flexi and/or TOIL that they have. An email will do, but it means you have confirmation that you are owed the hours when you move to the

new council.

It is for each council to agree with staff about whether these hours will be paid, taken as time off, or carried forward to the new council. Our advice is just that you get written confirmation from your manager that you have built up the hours.

### Annual Leave in hours

The new council is proposing to move all annual leave to hours rather than days. This currently happens for part-time staff.

We are doing some work looking into the impact of this, and welcome views and feedback from members. Please email Daniel Maguire at the North Yorkshire branch as he is leading on this work (daniel.maguire@northyorks.gov.uk).

## Internal Audit & Veritau

Harrogate and Craven councils have retained an in-house internal audit service, unlike the other councils that have outsourced this service.

We were dismayed to learn, after the TUPE consultation had ended, that the new council is expecting that the staff at Harrogate and Craven should be transferred to Veritau rather than move across to the new council.

We have made representations to both Harrogate and Craven councils, and have also met with Gary Fielding, the Finance Director for the new council.

We have made clear that these staff should transfer on day one to the new council so they are treated the same as everyone else. They should have access to the new terms and conditions that we have negotiated in good faith on their behalf.

We are awaiting a response to our representations, but we will not abandon our members at Harrogate and Craven, and all the UNISON branches are united in doing whatever we can to make sure these staff are given the same opportunities as everyone else.

## Senior Management Restructure

One of the Measures proposed by NYCC for the new council was to start a reorganisation of senior leadership including Heads of Service.

We objected to this proposal. We know, and understand, that everyone wants certainty about senior roles and postholders. However, we were concerned that reorganising senior manager roles at this stage was premature.

We were concerned that it could have put existing postholders at the district and borough councils at a disadvantage if there was a need for a competitive process.

We are also concerned that putting in place Heads of Service before 1 April could lead to decisions being made about how services will be delivered, but without engaging properly with staff. We have been assured that any further changes will be subject to normal consultation with us.

The senior leadership restructure has gone ahead, largely without any problems for our members. We are waiting to see what happens about the next tier which will be Heads of Service level.

If you are affected by any of these changes please contact your local UNISON branch for advice and support. We advise that you do not to agree any changes without seeking advice from your union.