

# **Annual report to SECAMB UNISON Branch AGM from Branch Communications Officer and Labour Link officer Nigel Sweet – February 2019**

## **Communications**

Since our last AGM, communications activity has stabilised. As Communications Officer, I again made several personal appearances during the year to represent our members' views across local radio and television. I covered various issues ranging from how our Trust deals with New Years Eve pressures, to the CQC inspection result, to the resignation of our Chief Executive.

Our Branch has maintained its use of social media to engage with members, recruit new members and expound our union's case to the wider public on many issues. On Facebook, the Branch's own members-only page gets regular news updates but its general use by members has declined. Similarly, the Branch Instagram account has been little used and would benefit from a new, energetic and Instagram-savvy keeper of the Branch account – volunteers welcome please.

Two key Twitter feeds from both our Branch Secretary Pete and myself get regular daily updates, replies and views, and remain the Branch primary route for topical news and views. These are also displayed live updated on the Branch website home page, and various updates to the Branch website include articles from our Equality & Diversity Officers, news and FAQs.

The Branch newsletter is still issued by email direct to members, with some intervening direct member emails to cover urgent or targetted “hot issues” eg. The pay Band lift for SECAMB ambulance technicians.

Finally, the pocket-book diary is still issued by the Branch due to its continuing popularity with those who like traditional “paper and pens”.

It's worth mentioning the crucial importance of union recruitment and the restrictions imposed on this. The key way we have to recruit new members is during the staff induction

days at Crawley HQ, but this is often less than satisfactory and means our Branch membership is not growing as fast as it might.

Another issue that may, I hope, have partial resolution by the time this report is read at the AGM is the boycott of “partnership working” by both GMB and Unite. This leaves both our union and RCN unable to easily raise important member issues with SECAmb at the usual JPF meetings or their follow ups. As fallout from this breakdown in co-operation initiated by GMB and then by Unite, our UNISON Branch and the RCN Branch have been pressured to withdraw from vital Job Evaluation panels and policy workshops. As of 4 Feb, a single meeting to reconcile the situation has been held but relations remain battered and ineffectual. I raise this in my Communications Officer report because it's been linked to my Twitter activities, and is severely curtailing our Branch officers' ability to communicate through “official channels” like the JPF.

Finally, we're always keen to embrace new ways of communicating and would welcome suggestions and ideas from any member.

## **Labour Link**

I represent our members' views as the UNISON SECAmb Branch delegate to my local Labour Party of Worthing West and additionally sometimes at East Worthing & Shoreham Labour Party events, and as a delegate to Sussex Co-operative Party Executive.

The two biggest UK trade unions UNISON and Unite maintain their endorsement of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party Leader and the agreed Labour Party conference decision on Party policy on the key issue of the moment – Brexit. (in contrast to the GMB).

Speculation is rife as I write this report, of another snap General Election being called by Theresa May to again combat internal Conservative Party infighting. If her last snap election result is any indicator, we may well have a Corbyn-led Labour Government in the near future.

Wider political engagement has included with a NHS 70<sup>th</sup> birthday stall at the local Labour Party summer fair in Uckfield in East Sussex, and the offer of further direct engagement from myself to local Labour MPs like Peter Kyle in Hove and Lloyd Russel-Moyle in Brighton.

NS - 19 Feb 2019