

**Waltham Forest UNISON Retired Members' Group**

**Meeting held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 1-30pm at Sports & Social Club**

**Waltham Forest Town Hall, E17.**

**Minutes of the meeting**

**Present**

Bev Wess (Secretary), Claire Weiss (Minutes), E. Cooper, Radua Vivahsawny, June Bradfield, Sandra Macpherson, Pam Allbury, A. Khander, M. Atkins, G. Atkins, D. Hodges, K. Bullock, A. Roberts, W. Roberts, Pam Thompson, Hilda Lewzey, Dave Tufton, Gordon George, Fred Gibbs, Stan Cordell, Eve Hart, Brenda Wingrove, John Birns.

**Welcome** Bev Wess welcomed everyone to the well-attended meeting. In the absence of Len Weiss, Stan Cordell kindly agreed to take the chair.

**Apologies for absence were received from**

Len Weiss, Jan Dorkings, Terry Russell, Thomas Perry, Gladys ?, Julie Huff, Galvarino Araya, Elizabeth Ellis, Anthony Miller, Steve Sharp, L Ainsworth, Carol Smalley, Julia Thompson.

Please note that we have been asked by the UNISON Branch Office to return a slip or send an email, when responding to an invitation to this meeting, rather than making a phone-call to them.

**1. Minutes of the previous meeting** (Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013) were agreed as correct.

**2. Matters arising**: the Secretary has liaised with the UNISON branch office as agreed.

**3. Report from Retired Members' Annual Conference October 2013**

Our delegate, Pam Allebury gave a full report and outlined the presentations and discussions of some key points as below:

- Details of the new 2-tier State Pension system from 2065 (albeit, none of us will be around to receive it). UNISON is aiming to get the basic raised from £144pw to £178pw.
- Universal and means-tested benefits issues – Winter Fuel Payment; Bus Passes; Board & Lodging while in Care; Social Care Fund, effect of individuals' property assets during lifetime.

- Health issues of over 50s – prostate cancer importance of early reporting/detection; osteoporosis treatment some controversy over current drugs and side effects.
- Domestic abuse – the campaign to encourage reporting is on UNISON website. The wider issue affects all genders and ages and there is a campaign to make Elder Abuse an offence.
- Membership – growth to 164,000, but this may include deceased members unreported to UNISON.
- Conference format – felt to be too long/tiring and limited time to discuss or participate. Question as to whether UNISON members in employment are interested in us.
- Next Conference 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014 at Southport, Lancs.

Our delegate was thanked very much for her full and interesting report. In discussion the following items came up:

- The National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) Dignity Code, concerning the way elderly and vulnerable people should be treated by public, social and health agencies, was outlined by Claire, who will circulate the document and details of arrangements for its national launch on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2014. The local Waltham Forest Branch of NPC has lobbied LBWF Cabinet Member Cllr Angie Bean, who is likely to support or even promote a local event leading up to the national launch, subject to Council approval.
- Details of the Fuel Poverty Action Group were given.

#### **4. Report from Greater London Regional Seminar**

Bev gave a report on this event, reminding members firstly that an official report has appeared in the Regional Newsletter recently circulated by email/post. Bev recommended particularly the presentation given by UNISON IT Department on 'Choosing a Computer'. She will circulate the handout.

Bev mentioned the retraction given by UNISON on the presentation at the seminar by someone who turned out to be an insurance salesman. Nevertheless, he had spoken about some key issues including the effect of property assets on individuals' entitlement to funded social care.

The access to legal advice facility offered by UNISON (via Thomsons) came up in members' discussion of this part of Bev's report and some members recommended this. Others mentioned certain scams whereby companies demand a percentage of the legacy in return for writing 'free wills'.

Claire had also attended the regional seminar, and reported that she had asked a question of the UNISON South-east Regional Health Services official

Jay Williams following his presentation that had omitted to mention current anti-cuts campaigns at the north and east London hospitals including Whipps Cross. Len, also attending, was dissatisfied with his reply that had indicated the local UNISON health service branches were acting on incorrect information, and so Len contacted Dave Knight. A letter has been sent to the London Regional by the Branch.

## **5. Dates of next meetings and future activities**

- Opportunities to nominate our delegates to both the Retired Members' Annual Conference and the Greater London Regional Seminar will come up during the Spring. This year's delegates would like to encourage others to consider coming forward.
- Stan, from the Chair, suggested that some events could take on a more social aspect, and to this end he appealed for volunteers to come forward to act as Social Secretary. Please contact Bev Wess if you are at all interested, or know someone who is!
- Several members signed up to helping in the UNISON Branch office during week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> January when assistance is required to stuff envelopes.
- Dates of next four meetings in 2014: the Secretary and Chair were asked to liaise and propose dates.

## **6. Closing Remarks**

Stan thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting, thanked the Secretary for the work involved and for arranging the excellent refreshments, and wished everyone a happy festive season.

Proposed dates for 2014 meetings. Mar 11<sup>th</sup>, June 10<sup>th</sup>, Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, and Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Also, we will need someone different to take notes/minutes for the next meeting, please volunteer. Bev