



ANNUAL REPORT

Reports to the
2023 Annual General Meeting
from Branch Officers for 2022

Report of Branch Secretary – Mike Vaughan

Hello and welcome to the 2023 AGM of the Staffordshire Branch of UNISON. When I sat down to prepare my AGM report, I was shocked to reflect upon how quickly the past 12 months have gone by. What was equally startling for me is that it is now 3 years since I first became Branch Secretary. It has been a very challenging time for all of us but especially our low paid members who are constantly on the frontline of looking out for the most vulnerable in our Society. We have survived the worst of Covid, although its negative legacy remains a significant burden, we are having to endure a government deliberately running down the NHS and the welfare state and we are struggling to survive a cost-of-living crisis brought about by the inept handling of the economy by the Government and a certain Russian malcontent. Billions of pounds are being lost through tax avoidance and there are more millionaires and billionaires in the UK than ever before. I do not mind anyone making money but if you have excess wealth then you should morally share it with those less fortunate than yourself. The best way to do that is by paying more income tax on corporate profits and thus benefitting Schools, the NHS, the Police, Children's Services, Local Councils etc. Millionaires, Bankers, and Energy companies would still have more money than you and me even if they paid more tax on their wealth.

My job is rarely dull, but I do struggle to keep on top of the demands placed upon the Branch. There just aren't enough hours or hands available to deal with the demands for representation from members abused by their employers. Bosses have always tried to coax or demand more effort from their workforce at a reduced cost but even some employers are struggling to make ends meet and so this oppression of staff has escalated in recent times. This in large part explains the awakening of industrial action across the Trade Union movement. Strikers are just ordinary people like you and me who have finally stood up and walked out of their workplace because they have had enough of poverty wages and uncertain employment and the constant strain of worrying about providing food and paying for energy.

Membership of UNISON is growing but this needs to increase further so that we become even stronger than we currently are. We are a force to be reckoned with and employers will take note if we stand up for ourselves, but we need to do even more for our members and that is why we need all of you to talk with non-members about coming on board. They will benefit and you will benefit. We have enhanced communication with our Branch members over the past 3 years. Please look at the Branch website, our Twitter account, and our Facebook page to see what we get up to and join in with anything of interest to you. We have all participated in this, but I need to especially thank Dan Watson, our Communications Officer for his sterling work here in improving our social media profile.

Many of our members are now employed by private sector organisations doing work which was once organised directly through local government. The Government privatised Schools, Social Care, Council cleaning and catering, leisure services and most Children's and Adult residential care units to make their friends richer with the

resultant suppression of wages and terms and conditions and the reduction in provision of direct services to the working class. We badly need a change of Government. We now have more foodbanks in the UK than branches of “McDonalds” and thousands of children go to school hungry every day and we are the 6th biggest economy in the world. Shameful.

I was delighted that the Branch was successful in securing funding for a MAT Organiser. Holly Moore is doing great work in visiting Academy Schools, increasing membership, and in raising issues with and on behalf of existing members. Also, recruiting new members and Stewards so that issues can be dealt with locally and speedily.

We have had a year of positives and negatives. There has been illness amongst the small group of Branch activists, we are greatly missing Nigel, who is still off work but we have helped to save the jobs of many members facing redundancy. We have successfully pushed back against and challenged unfair employment rights abuses by Managers and employers and represented members facing excessive workloads, bullying or discrimination. I was proud to closely work with a member in May 2022 who took his employer to an Employment Tribunal and was victorious in claiming disability discrimination and unfair dismissal. The member won a sizeable financial settlement because of the way he was treated at work. I am also proud to be working closely with another member who is claiming indirect and direct sex discrimination and denial of a redundancy payment by her employer. That member has successfully gone past the Employment Tribunal preliminary hearing and is planning with me for the full hearing in November.

UNISON's framework of legal support for members causes concern to the Branch and needs to be formally reviewed and overhauled. I am standing to be elected to UNISON's NEC this year and a major reason for me taking on this additional workload if I am elected is because I want to ensure that members facing significant adversity at the workplace have their case reviewed properly by a legal professional and not supported or rejected solely based upon UNISON's view whether they can win the case or not. Industrial organisation is vital, but UNISON needs to recall that it was set up to be an issue-based campaigning Union fighting for principles of justice, fairness, and equality.

I represented a member who secured a decent financial settlement after a senior manager sexually harassed her. Also, a member who has a disability yet was being threatened with dismissal. The employer failed to follow their own procedures properly and after I pointed this out that member remained in their job. I have supported members seeking a regrading after they were erroneously downgraded following a restructuring. They were left with more and more complex work yet were being paid less than before. How does that work to anyone's satisfaction?

I am seconded by the County Council to my role as Branch Secretary, but I have built up so much time owing that I use some to assist the other activists in coping with the

growing amount of casework. I enjoy casework, especially when you secure an improvement at work with a member, but it is demanding emotionally and physically.

I work 2 shifts per month out of office hours to keep a mental health warrant active. Working with members directly keeps me aware of where I came from and why I want to make a positive difference to the lives of ordinary working people. It is also why I have been proud to attend and support in my free time the picket lines of the CWU at Royal Mail sites, UCU at University sites, the RMT and ASLEF outside Rail Stations and UNISON colleagues outside Leisure Centres.

The Trade Union movement and the working class may just be beginning to stand up for itself again. I sincerely hope that in 2024 I can reflect upon a raft of industrial victories.

My other UNISON activists will each provide a report to the AGM so I shall not steal their thunder, except to shout my thanks for all that they have done over the last 12 months and all that they will do in the coming year on behalf of the UNISON members in Staffordshire. My thanks also goes to the admin team, without the very welcome support of Ann-Marie, Suzanne, Chris and Sheena I would not be able to do my job....although I don't like it when Ann-Marie kicks my shin occasionally!

The Branch will be moving into new premises later in 2023. We have outgrown our current base, there has never been enough car parking available, and the internet coverage is not great. Please watch the Branch website for details of the new office.

UNISON is only as strong as the sum of its parts, and we do need the membership to play a key part in the work we undertake on your behalf. You may well enjoy yourselves!

Stay safe, stay healthy and stay with UNISON!

Mike Vaughan
Branch Secretary

Report of Assistant Branch Secretary – Kate Salter

In keeping with recent years, 2022 has been another challenging year for our Branch and our members.

We have gradually returned to working from the Branch Office where possible, and we continue to strike a balance between home working, working from the Branch office and attending physical meetings. I feel our members benefit from having some face-to-face interaction with us, and this is especially important around matters of a sensitive nature.

Working from the Branch more frequently has been a real advantage in many ways, which were once taken for granted. The technology is better and the interaction with colleagues is a real boost to morale and this is difficult to replicate with virtual meetings and telephone conversations.

2022 was, as usual, another incredibly busy year, however some gaps in staffing have now been addressed with the recruitment of a new member of staff within the Admin Team, a new Private Sector Caseworker and a dedicated Academy Organiser. I was involved in the recruiting process for these roles, and I'm delighted to report that the 3 new colleagues have fitted in really well and are completing tasks to a consistently high standard. We were very specific in our application requirements, as we needed to ensure we have the best candidates in post, and it is very reassuring to be able to state with confidence that our careful recruiting has definitely paid off – the calibre of all 3 of the new team members is excellent.

I have advised and supported members through many grievances, disciplinaries, TUPE transfers, restructures and absence management meetings. The Local Authority have made the welcome decision to bring some services back 'in house', including the Household Waste Recycling Centres, some Highways staff and there are ongoing consultations regarding other services. The view at the Branch is that these decisions are the best outcome for these services and for the staff within them, and we hope this is the beginning of a growing trend.

Health & Safety at work remains an ongoing concern for many of our members, Nigel and I have continued to attend virtual meetings with the Deputy Director for Education and the Health and Safety Lead at Staffordshire County Council to consider H&S matters in Staffordshire schools.

I attended the National Delegates Conference, which took place in Brighton, a change from the virtual conferences in the pandemic years. Brighton was glorious as always, however the business at conference itself was somewhat stifled by issues some delegates wanted to raise regarding UNISONs NEC. I also attended the Regional Schools Forum in Birmingham in May with Nigel, which was useful and informative.

Together with Mike, our Branch Secretary and my ABS colleagues I regularly attend the Green Book, Change and Strategic Forums to gain knowledge of the changes planned to the services delivered by Staffordshire County Council, and the short-, medium- and longer-term objectives the employer is seeking to deliver. We have an opportunity to challenge, question and influence any plans raised in the forums, which we robustly engage with.

The Cost of Living continues to be a real pressure for many of our members, and I have supported a number of referrals to There for You and to the LA administered Household Assistance fund, which has assisted some of our members. This year's pay award negotiations and subsequent ballot were a disappointment, and due to low numbers of responses, we were unable to apply further pressure for a better outcome.

Together with Ann-Marie, our Office Manager, I have been actively involved in the refurbishment of the newly acquired Branch office premises, located a couple of miles north of the town centre. The degree of refurbishment needed was fairly minimal, however the legacy of the pandemic meant it was initially difficult to source and instruct the appropriate trades people, however we are now making very good progress and are very excited to be nearing a potential move date.

We really do have an excellent Administrative Team at the Branch, who we all rely on to keep the Branch running as smoothly as possible - thank you to the Admin Team for your consistent and highly valued assistance, which is gratefully appreciated.

2023 will no doubt bring challenges; however, the Branch remains strong and resilient and is here to offer support, guidance and advice to all members. Best wishes to all for a happy and healthy year.

Kate Salter
Assistant Branch Secretary

Report of Assistant Branch Secretary – Mandy Dancocks

It has been another incredibly busy year.

I have supported and continue to support members through various small and large restructures / TUPE's in core county services and schools. In each restructure I answer members queries, provide advice, and attend 121 meetings with them when required; I work with members to provide an official UNISON response which also includes counter proposals. Working together we do get changes to the proposed structures for example such as the inclusion of more full-time roles, or the removal of annualised hours contracts. Although a step in the right direction I am always disappointed when we do not get more.

I have supported members who have been temporarily redeployed from their place of employment to other areas of the business. Together, with Mike Vaughan, Branch Secretary, I have attended meetings with the council regarding inappropriate placements with serious health and safety risks within a service that has caused detriment to our members. This situation seems to be improving and I am now ensuring that our members voices are heard so that this situation does not occur again.

In terms of casework, I have and continue to support and represent members through all HR processes. I have supported and represented members subject to disciplinary action and in all cases the individuals have remained in employment. I have supported and, in some cases, written grievances for individuals and groups of staff to obtain change. Some are still in progress; others have achieved outcomes such as financial settlements or HR processes being applied to other members of staff. I have supported and represented members at all stages of the Managing Attendance at Work Policy. This has led to members staying in employment or being successful in their application for ill health retirement.

An important aspect of my role is to support the Branch Secretary to ensure we work with the Council and Headteachers / Governors to influence employee relations at a strategic level. This is achieved by attending various strategic meetings and working through agreed areas of work, challenging appropriately. I have worked closely with Council colleagues to review Human Resources policies and the new Domestic Abuse Policy. I have sought to advance the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda at every opportunity.

In order to give the best service that I can, I have tried to expand my knowledge by attending a variety of training sessions e.g., NJC Job Evaluation training, Hay Job Evaluation training, Domestic Abuse Champion training and a range of equality and diversity linked training.

Recruiting new members is incredibly important for all of us, as numbers give us our strength. I have attended a couple of recruitment events and tend to gain more joiners

when working on restructures. A challenge to you is how many of your colleagues can you persuade to join us? Or perhaps you would like to become a workplace representative? All things to think about.

I enjoy my role and look forward to working with you in 2023.

Mandy Dancocks
Assistant Branch Secretary

Report of Assistant Branch Secretary (FRS) – Tim Wareham

Hello Members,

It's now five years since I started out as Assistant Branch Secretary and Learning Rep for Staffordshire UNISON (Fire & Rescue Service). My original motivation to stand for this position came from my passion for equality and an intense drive to ensure that a consistency of approach is adopted and applied across the organisation. My moral compass remains steadfast and I believe that the code of ethics, if adopted and applied consistently to all, will guide us through these chaotic and uncertain times.

I think that the majority of the workforce also believe in our ethical principles, but I have witnessed behaviours that, if left unchallenged, could result in an insidious infestation - group-think and dehumanisation that if left unchecked would corrode the foundations on which this Service has, in the past, been so proud of.

I care deeply about the people who provide a service to the communities of Staffordshire and I believe that with sensible challenge there are some that are willing to look at alternatives and consider alternative ways of working.

As I have said before, Change is inevitable – but it needs to be managed effectively, and not used as a cover to rush through inappropriate practices policies and procedures. I will continue to keep the increasing numbers of meetings, boards and task and finish groups on my Radar to protect the Members interests. However, I rely on you to be my eyes and ears – please please please contact me if you hear of anything that concerns you.

This year, I've represented individuals in areas that I've found fatiguing, not just because of the additional burden placed on me by representing them, but because of a seemingly growing reluctance to objectively consider individual's circumstances, illnesses, and requirements. There have been more grievances raised this year than previous years and these are more protracted – not complicated – just more drawn out.

External pressures on finances and political direction have bled into working conversations and I attended parliament in an attempt to lobby my MP to push for additional funding for the public sector. I've listened to the leaders talk about a deserving workforce but did not feel this was recognised – with a reluctance in rewarding staff for the work through the COVID epidemic, colleagues in the police received an additional day's leave along with other colleagues within the council. My request for similar recognition fell on deaf ears – both with the senior managers and the Commissioner refusing my request. It's the little things that our people value. HMICFRS certainly made the point that the way in which the Service looks after its people has deteriorated since it's last inspection visit.

I've seen an increased number of staff leaving the Service for better paid jobs in neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services and believe that this is just the start. The Service has agreed to continue to pay the real living wage, and this has proved beneficial to a significant number of staff on Grade 3 and new starters on Grade 4.

I've reflected on my union activities within the last twelve months. My highlights? Some of the successes I've had have made an impact on the Members and will continue to impact in the future. We continue to discuss ways to progress a more objective Job Evaluation system, Flexible working seems to have provided mutual benefits but there still remains some reluctance and bias in this area which prevents acceptance. I continue to approach these issues in the hope that the service can settle issues in an adult and fair manner.

My disappointments? Probably the lack of legal support when cases are not settled through internal procedures. Probably the lack of active participation by the members – What would be a real eye opener for the Service? That every Delivery Group or even better, every Station had a Union Rep.

Still to come... There are difficult times ahead – further cuts, single governance (?) But onwards with energy! I will continue to organize where I can, be involved when wanted and support when required.

I'll conclude my report with a request – I want UNISON to be more active in the workplace we need more reps – Members please! Consider becoming more active. – support your colleagues and strengthen your voice. I'll be chatting to you soon!

Tim Wareham
Assistant Branch Secretary (FRS)

Report of Branch Area Organiser – Adrian Watts

Although being a Trade Union Representative is always challenging, I sometimes sit at my desk and scratch my head and wonder did COVID-19 ever really happen? well it certainly did and it was an unbelievably difficult time to be a Trade Union Representative, but the implications ripple far and wide long after the Downing Street cabinet briefings and newspaper headlines have disappeared. The working landscape has perhaps changed forever with lots of people working from home and choosing to do more things online which also has significant ramifications for the economy.

We as a branch have received numerous new members into our branch, as their parent branch folded. We gained members at East Borough Council and South Staffordshire Council along with members from the Cannock Chase Branch. We have also inherited members into the Branch who work for a charity. Unfortunately, since we have no stewards in these areas, wage negotiations, restructures, consultations, and TUPE transfers have fallen into my remit. Despite asking for volunteers for the role of stewards there has sadly been no takers. This has inevitably curtailed our programme of organising events, and needless to say wage negotiations will once again be starting all over again very soon.

It is also worth noting that the rise of the national living wage to £9.50 per hour in April 2022 and the further rise in April 2023 to £10.18 is putting pressure on pay grades above them and in some case eroding differentials and this is something that we must ensure the respective employers address as this is no fault of our members.

Meanwhile we have recently seen numerous unions up and down the country take industrial action to try and curb the worst excesses of the cost-of-living crisis, where sadly more and more people find themselves through no fault of their own, in work poverty. All the pay offers I have negotiated on (Newcastle and Stafford College Group, Chartwells, IHL and Entrust) have all been put to the democratic process of a ballot and our members have elected to accept the pay offers made. This is contrast to the situation in pockets of UNISON in the northwest and even the considered and usually very moderate RCN taking to the picket lines over their respective pay offer.

Trade Union members are being told by government that they must take a significant pay cut when negotiating pay, else they will be fuelling the already high inflation rates. However, Trade Union members are now waking up everywhere, to the fact they are struggling to make ends meet after years of below inflation pay awards, whilst large corporations have made obscene profits.

The members are and always will be the union and it is their will that will govern the action of their union.

Adrian Watts
Branch Area Organiser

Report of Branch Caseworker – Paul Wilshaw

It has been another difficult year for many of our members within the private sector with aggressive employers looking to use their capability and disciplinary processes all too readily. The evidence over the last 12 months suggests that some of these employers continue to predetermine the outcome of the investigatory/disciplinary process from the outset. Examples include but are not limited to the absence of investigation reports, selecting only witnesses to strengthen their case and calling our members in for 'fact finding' interviews without prior notice. The most blatant example occurred quite recently within the care sector when one of our members was called in for a 'fact finding' interview and received her disciplinary invite the same afternoon with 48 hours' notice to attend. Upon our involvement employers appear to backtrack and attempt to follow correct procedure/policy from thereon, however it does raise the question as to how many non-union workers lose their jobs unfairly.

Health and Safety issues for are of particular concern for our members employed in the childcare sector with several facing verbal and physical abuse on a daily basis. A recent case involved one of our members repeatedly raising a concern of violence towards staff with no action taken by the employer to address this. This resulted in a member of staff going on 'sick leave' for several weeks after sustaining broken ribs in a further assault. Prior to our involvement there appeared to be no use of the accident book and hence risk assessments were not updated to protect staff and other service users alike. The employer also had to be prompted to report the above incident under RIDDOR. Alarming pregnancy/maternity discrimination continues to cause issues in the private sector due to a combination of hostile employers and ignorance. Examples include:

- Attempting to force an employee onto 'sick leave' rather than considering maternity suspension.
- Filling an employee's position whilst on maternity leave (settlement reached with regional input).
- Failure to act upon OH and GP advice including the failure to carry out risk assessments and failure to involve the employee when they are done.
- Attempting to force our member who was 15 weeks pregnant and classed as high risk to reapply for her job. This decision was reversed upon our involvement.

Fortunately, once the employer become aware of UNISON involvement, they surprisingly take a different approach!

Adrian and I also deal with East Staffs Borough Council and South Staffs Council who tend to follow their own policies on the whole which is to be expected. We were able to conduct events around health and safety and mental health awareness at both of these and although we saw these as recruitment opportunities, the actual footfall is poor within council offices due to their home working policies. South Staffs Council seem to be highly receptive to working with us and we have agreed to formalise our meetings with them moving forward.

In 2023 I anticipate more of the same issues as different employers come onto the scene due the constant bidding for cleaning and catering contracts in particular. On a more positive note, I have been able to make some useful contacts within the private sector and some of these managers including HR, although in the minority, appear willing to discuss and resolve issues prior to escalation.

Paul Wilshaw
Branch Caseworker

Report of Multi Academy Trust Organiser – Holly Moore

Having returned to the Branch in September 2022 to take on the new role as Branch Academy Organiser, I got stuck into the mapping and planning of attending Academies to recruit new members and recruit new stewards. It has proved difficult leading up to Christmas gaining permission from head teachers to attend but so far, the visits have been successful. The visits have given me chance to build relationships with Head Teachers as well as colleagues from the trusts.

Throughout the visits a few issues have been raised by existing members, mainly around cover for support staff and the staff that have been on temporary contracts for several years. These issues have been taken back to the trust who are looking at rectifying these issues.

Overall, I am pleased to say that the majority seem to have a good team of staff who seem generally happy within their workplace.

To date I have recruited 26 new members and 1 new steward. I am pleased with the recruitment but a little disappointed with the recruiting of new stewards. This is a challenge, but I am hopeful that at least 3 further members are considering the role and hopefully they will apply.

I am lead officer on 5 Academy Trusts and have been attending the trusts NJC meetings which are proving to be a real asset to my role and building relationships with the trusts which is key to make for better working environments for our members.

A lot of trust's are updating their policies which is generating some work for us to go through and agree these policies and we have had three trusts sign up to the Trade Union Recognition Agreement which is really welcomed.

I will be doing some work around violence in the workplace which is alarmingly becoming more and more frequent. The next few Regional Recruitment weeks will be based on this theme particularly in special schools.

Going forward I will continue to visit academies to recruit, I will support and mentor any new stewards that I recruit, I will continue attending JNC meetings and have plans for providing training opportunities for school support staff members.

It will be an ongoing challenge particularly with the cost-of-living crisis but we will work hard this year to educate employees with the importance of being part of a trade union and the benefits we offer to them.

Holly Moore
Multi Academy Trust Organiser

Report of Health & Safety Officer – Mike Vaughan

The Branch has interacted regularly with the County Council and other employers in relation to health and safety concerns and developments over the past 12 months. Our routine working and planned relationship with the County Council is based upon cooperation and shared interest and has facilitated some benefits for members.

We do not have such a harmonious working relationship with many private sector employers unfortunately. Stress and anxiety are common to many of our members working across social care and/or in related workplaces. Workloads are high, staff shortages are routine, and some Managers are bullies, uncaring or incompetent; or a combination of all three. The cost-of-living crisis and the austerity led run down of public services has created a malaise across Society and many of our members witness the adverse effects first hand. This takes a toll both physically and emotionally.

We are about to initiate a Branch campaign investigating the causes of the reported increase in incidents of violence towards staff within Special Schools across Staffordshire. If you work in a Special School and are a UNISON member, please look out for our questionnaire and pass your views on about how your welfare and safety is valued and guaranteed by your employer.

Please get in touch with the Branch Office on unison@staffsunison.org.uk if you are a UNISON member and have any health and safety issues to discuss. Thank you.

Mike Vaughan
Health & Safety Officer

Report of Equalities Co-ordinator – Mandy Dancocks

My year has been dominated by working on restructures, unpicking the equality considerations involved and challenging the employer appropriately on community impact assessments.

I continue to influence the Council equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda. At every meeting/opportunity I challenge around the public sector equality duty. In terms of statistical data around case work – I challenge the council to provide a narrative around the way that some groups are represented in HR processes more than others.

On a day-to-day basis I provide support to colleagues around issues of discrimination/equality considerations. I have worked very closely to support and represent members raise concerns or grievances where they feel that they have been treated differently; this has led to positive changes for UNISON members and the employer changing working practices.

The council has reviewed many of its HR processes this year. I have worked hard to ensure that equality considerations were reflected. Some but not all have been.

I have tried to stay connected with this changing agenda throughout the year by attending appropriate webinars organised by the Equality & Human Rights Commission, UNISON and TUC.

The equality, diversity and inclusion agenda are gathering pace within the Council. It is my intention to keep influencing this throughout 2023. It is also my intention to ensure that schools are adhering to this agenda.

Mandy Dancocks
Equalities Co-ordinator

Report of Communications Officer – Dan Watson

After the unprecedented challenges faced by the public sector during the global pandemic, we could have been forgiven for being optimistic as we returned to normality.

Unfortunately, the governments self-made hurdles that have been thrown in the direction of those who work with and support the most vulnerable people in the country have led to standoffs, ballots and strikes.

Getting the message across to members has been a big focus of my time as Comms Officer this year. We need to help our members understand why we need to make a stand and empower them to do so. After all, millions of workers can't be wrong, and a few select (and extremely wealthy) members of the cabinet right.

Our branch's pay campaign placed emphasis on the simple unfairness that we are being asked to pay for the pandemic through previous pay freezes, and then accept huge real terms pay cuts because the government spectacularly imploded the economy in a matter of days and somehow cannot afford to pay a fair wage to people facing enormous increases in their bills.

This all before we even discuss the issues of our country being woefully unprepared for any external factors that might impact its citizens (pandemics, wars etc).

While UNISON did not want to focus on campaigning for industrial action, we as a branch chose to do just that and the campaign was relatively successful, with Staffordshire bucking the national trend in the ballot, even if it meant that collectively we voted to accept the pay deal of £1925 fixed increases to all SCPs.

The campaigning starts early this year, as UNISON hopes to secure a deal before the 1st April and avoid us having to wait for our backpay several months later.

It is good to see that the major public sector unions have agreed a joint pay claim early this year.

I am standing again as a workplace steward and health & safety rep, also staying on the H&S committee as I have done for a number of years.

Looking ahead to this year I anticipate private sector members also being part of campaigns for better pay and conditions as sub-contractors, academies and investment funds continue to exploit workers for bigger profits.

With the added complication of continuing attempts to erode the rights of workers, changes to EU rules to our detriment and attempts to introduce laws that prevent unions standing up for their members; I anticipate another busy year.

Dan Watson
Communication Officer

Report of International Relations Officer – Mike Vaughan

I took on this role because I am very interested in the international development work of UNISON and wanted to be a recipient of relevant information across the Branch. I am committed to the campaign to free the Palestinian people from oppression and poverty. I am also appalled and embarrassed by the cruelty and disrespect shown to refugees by the UK Government after their political actions overseas have contributed to those same refugees being forced to leave their birthplaces to seek safety elsewhere such as in the UK.

I attend the UNISON Regional International Forum meetings but have to admit to not having found the time to organise any campaigning events in 2022. I hope that this will be different in 2023. Certainly, international development and cooperation is vital if we are to see a happier and more stable world. This would also benefit the work needed to combat climate change.

As the largest Trade Union in the UK, UNISON has a vital role to play here. Thank you.

Mike Vaughan
International Relations Officer