



LAMBETH UNISON

ANNUAL REPORT

AGM 2024

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Welcome from your Chairs

Gary Whiting and Samuel Kamara, Co-chairs

Lambeth UNISON branch chairs are pleased to present its annual report for the year 2023, outlining the branch duties, activities, achievements, and impact within Lambeth Council and to our members. As the leading trade union and the largest representing our members across various teams, Lambeth UNISON remains dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights, interests, and well-being of its members.

Firstly, we want to thank all our members for the continued trust they give us in Lambeth UNISON to represent their interests. We also want to thank all our activists, reps and officers for their dedication and commitment to our members. There is no perfect family and facing bumpy rides along is part of what makes us strong and steadfast. We fall and we rise. Despite the challenges, we kept going as it is perfectly normal. In the end, we get the job done.

We give special thanks to Juliet Blake, our branch administrator and Paul Fitzgerald our returning Officer and volunteer for their ever presence and support.

Our thoughts for the members and their families that we lost this year and best wishes to those that lost family members.

In 2023, Lambeth UNISON continued to operate under a robust organisational structure, led by dedicated Stewards and elected representatives. UNISON's presence in Lambeth Council remains steadfast, with a network of Self Organising Groups and committees actively engaging our members and advocating for their rights. Like in every organisation and Lambeth UNISON is no exception with challenges both within and without. However, thanks to a great teamwork between the Co - Chairs in managing our commitments to our members.

Throughout 2023, Lambeth UNISON experienced steady growth in membership, reflecting the trust and confidence placed in the hands of a dedicated team of trained and experienced representatives in all areas of the organisation. The increase in membership numbers underscores Lambeth UNISON's effectiveness in representing a diverse workforce in Lambeth Council. Our success rate in achieving results from various activities and duties such as representation, campaigns, social engagement and to name a few speaks volumes.

Despite the economic challenges, Lambeth UNISON maintained a reasonably sound financial position in 2023 by meeting its commitments for example sending delegates to Black members conference, Local and National Conferences and funding the Black workers AGM. Through prudent financial management and resource allocation, Lambeth UNISON successfully met its operational needs while continuing to invest in member training needs.

Lambeth UNISON undertook a range of duties, activities and initiatives aimed at empowering members, promoting workplace equality, and advocating for social justice. These efforts included organising workshops, stalls, and campaigns on issues such as fair wage, workplace safety, diversity and inclusion. Our dedicated Shop stewards are visible for our members to interact and share any concerns. We are always prepared to listen and act on our members concerns when instructed.

We had a very successful campaign for the 'Year of the Black Worker' with events and stalls throughout the year. We are now well into this year's campaign for the 'Year of the LGBT+ Worker' where we will be raising the profile and rights of our LGBT+ members and confirming our allyship and commitment to intersectionality.

In 2023, Lambeth UNISON achieved a significant milestone in advancing the rights and interests of members in the Lambeth. We reached 50% threshold to strike action on pay. We were the only two branches to reach this threshold. Thanks all for voting in the PAY ballot. The union's advocacy efforts are continuing to push management, that will lead to a tangible improvement in working conditions, contractual agreements, and access to essential services for our members. It has been a tough and challenging time in the past year and there is still a long way to go in our quest to always be there for our members.

Despite notable achievements, Lambeth UNISON still faced challenges such as employment practices, legislative changes such as union anti- strike laws and external pressures affecting workers' rights. To address these challenges, UNISON keeps the momentum through frequent campaigns and other ways of voicing our position. This is being achieved through our partnership-building initiatives with other unions in the process.

Lambeth UNISON strengthened its partnerships and collaborations with local organisations, government agencies, and community groups to amplify its impact and extend support to vulnerable workers. By leveraging collective resources and expertise, these partnerships facilitated greater advocacy.

Looking ahead in 2024, Lambeth UNISON remains committed to its mission of representing and empowering our members. Lambeth UNISON will continue to prioritise member engagement, advocacy, and community outreach efforts to address emerging challenges and uphold the rights and dignity of all workers.

In conclusion, Lambeth UNISON Annual Report for 2023 reflects the organisation's unwavering commitment to its members within and without. Through collaborative efforts and advocacy. Lambeth UNISON will continue to champion the rights and well-being of workers, ensuring a fair and equitable workplace for all.

Solidarity for 2024, get active and continue the fight for change. UNISON keeps us strong. Comrades, the best is yet to come. Watch the space as we aim to start and end 2024 on a high. United we stand and divided we fall. Unity is strength.

Dan Jeffery, Vice Chair

It's been a year of hope and struggles, but also one that is a wakeup call for the worker's movement and progressive politics. Globally right wing and even fascist forces have been on the rise.

Sometimes things that are happening on such a huge scale are overwhelming, but I think the Lambeth UNISON branch is very good at taking the advice to, "think globally, act locally". The branch got the best turn out in the country for the strike ballot against another year of real terms pay cuts (less than inflation offers). While it was disappointing that the national ballot fell short of the required 50% turn out, our branch showed what can be done. There is no doubt that the decades of having a fighting branch, rooted in socialist politics, was a key reason the branch continues to be an inspiration. We need the attitude and outlook of Lambeth UNISON, and branches like Barnet UNISON, to spread throughout the union. Until the government knows they will have a big fight on their hands, we will continue to get paltry pay increases.

Many branch activists have also been at the forefront of the movement in opposition to the genocidal attacks that Israel continues to carry out in Gaza. The branch has a proud tradition of building international solidarity from Syria to Ukraine, and with the Palestinians. I would encourage members to continue to attend the local and national demonstrations.

The branch also continues to take on workplace issues, which is obviously at the core of what we do. Successful job evaluations, including for lower paid workers, have been won by Lambeth UNISON, as well as successful outcomes in the raft of grievances and disciplinaries the branch takes on for members. The branch is currently building for action to secure a decent living wage for the security staff employed by Equans. They have a very tough job and carry out a vital role for all of us in the civic centre and colleagues in council buildings throughout the borough. Hopefully there will be a lot of solidarity from all of us if it comes to strike funds and picket lines.

As always equalities are at the heart of what Lambeth UNISON does. Lambeth UNISON has been key in exposing the institutional racism that exists in Lambeth, and despite some positive moves from the employer (when pushed!), there is a lot more work to be carried out. This includes in Lambeth as a borough where statistics concerning the police and the black community continue to be shocking.

2024 is also the Year of LGBT+ Workers in UNISON. There have been growing attacks on the lesbian, gay and trans community in recent times, both in the UK and internationally. Right wing movements continue to try and marginalize and scapegoat the LGBT+ communities. It is vital that the union movement gives practical solidarity and hopefully the branch can put this at the forefront of our work in 2024.

Solidarity to everyone for 2024 and may the local and international workers movement go from strength to strength.

Branch Secretaries Reports

Ruth Cashman and Jocelyn Cruywagen, Branch Secretaries

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

After medium term decline UNISON London region has done amazingly well and hit the union's 1% growth target for 2023, with London's membership growing by 1,203 members by the end of the year. Whilst overall Local Government service group membership was in growth, it unfortunately fell short of the 1% growth target, likely due to it being service group with lowest level of strike action. Lambeth UNISON overshot our recruitment target many times over making top ten recruiter of all UNISON Branches in London (over 100 branches!). We are very proud, given our additional membership was despite all our Lambeth College members transferring to LSBU Branch. We wish all the workers at Lambeth College well in their new branch!

We need to build on this success. This year we have set ourselves the ambitious target of 10% membership growth.

Doing the Lambeth walkabout! Convenors, stewards and officers of the branch will be visiting all our workplaces to say hello to current members and try and recruit some new ones.

STEWARDS & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Recruiting and supporting the development of new stewards is essential for a positive future to the Branch.

We welcomed new stewards through the year – names.

We will be arranging branch-based training for all our activist, including an away day for all Officers and Stewards.

CAMPAIGNS

Year of the Black Worker

2023 was the Year of the Black Worker. UNISON's Year of Black Workers is underpinned by the desire of 'establishing legacy to generate change', and the national Black members committee hope to develop legacy campaigning work across several areas, including:

- The ethnicity pay gap, which shows the difference in the average pay between staff from ethnic minority backgrounds in a workforce, compared to 'white' staff;
- The TUC anti-racist manifesto;
- Implementing the NHS and social care workplace race equality standards;
- Ending the hostile environment for migrants, including removing the international health surcharge;
- Implementing UNISON's race discrimination protocol.

Pay

The 2023/2024 pay campaign ended with a below inflation settlement.

- An increase of £2,352 on Inner London pay points up to and including spine point 50.
- Above these pay points on the respective London pay spines an increase of 3.88% will apply.
- Allowances, including overtime rates, will be increased by 3.88%

UNISON balloted 345,000 members in Local Government for strike action in June-July but only Lambeth Council (us!) and Knowsley Council in the North West got over the 50% turn out needed for action. Unite then balloted a month later and also failed to get a high enough turn out. We were then informed that the GMB were balloting their members in September-October and they also didn't achieve the turn out needed under the current vicious, undemocratic anti union laws to organise action.

So the joint trade union side representatives met on 1 November and agreed to accept the employers pay offer. It would have been far better for the other unions to all ballot at the same time as UNISON and it is a real shame that wasn't organised.

UNISON has made clear that "pay in local government remains a major concern for UNISON, and we're planning a strong, positive campaign for a fair pay rise in 2024." Whilst the anti-union laws stay in place a national pay campaign will require a resolute get the vote out campaign for any action.

In January the Branch met to consult on proposals for this year's pay claim/

The NJC Committee (joint union committee for local government) proposes that the 2024 pay claim is for:

1. An increase of 10% or £3,000, whichever is the greater
2. A commitment to reach a minimum rate of pay of £15 an hour over the next two years, with a clear plan for how this will be achieved
3. Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government

Our branch responded that the pay claim should be higher to reflect loss of real wages since 2010. As soon as we know more about the pay claim, we will hold a special meeting to update you.

Anti Union Laws

The passing of the Tories' Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act is a major new shackle on our right to strike, already heavily restricted. The new law allows the government to set a "minimum service level" in six industrial areas (health; fire and rescue; education; transport; nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste management; border security).

In 2015 our branch launched the Free Our Unions campaign.

We are working with other unions with in Free Our Unions:

- Campaigning to demand employers refuse to issue work notices
- Wider political campaigning, including a national demonstration
- Preparing direct defiance
- Placing demands on Labour

Abortion

In June this year, Carla Foster was sentenced to two years in prison for having an abortion after the legal term limit of 24 weeks. The case highlighted just how limited and fragile our abortion rights are. Activists from the branch joined the protests for abortion rights in London. Our Young Members Officer is working with other young members to campaign on the issue.

Gaza

Over 26,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the current war began. 65,000 people have been injured. A large majority of the dead are civilians — Israel's own claim for the number of Hamas fighters it has killed is 10,000. Over 80% of Gaza's population is now displaced. Health crises caused by the destruction of healthcare infrastructure, damage to basic sewage and water systems, and lack of essential supplies and provisions could ultimately kill even more than direct military assault. Branch activists have been attending demonstrations and vigils for a ceasefire. This year's AGM will debate the branch's policy on Israel/ Palestine.

Simon Hannah, Assistant Branch Secretary

Last year was a year of massive pay strikes by many unions as inflation peaked at around 11.8% in January and February 2023. There were 3.9 million strike days as workers took action as the inflationary spike ate into our incomes and forced more workers into poverty. People say that trade unions are a thing of the past... until the issue of wages comes up! Trade Unions are the best collective response that working people can have to low pay and it is important that we flex our industrial muscle to prove we can fight when needed.

I was immensely proud of the strike vote that our union branch delivered in 2023. We got the biggest vote for strike action 89% on the highest national turn out of any UNISON local government branch in the country.

Other UNISON branches look to Lambeth UNISON as a flagship branch that gets the job done. We pulled together, voted and showed what can be achieved.

Sadly only Knowsley also got over the 50% turnout threshold that you need to pass to get the mandate for strike action. You cannot have one two branches taking action on a national pay claim as it won't get anywhere.

If there is another pay ballot this year over the pay claim then we will expect every Lambeth UNISON member to do their duty and vote as they did last year. We are liaising with the branches to help them with their turn outs.

We have to show that Local Government workers are up for an industrial fight, otherwise the government will just walk all over us and we will constantly suffer from low pay and over work.

As well as the pay campaign I have been supporting the branch secretaries with their work around the day to day tasks to help the union branch function. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to make things happen.

Office move

I was helping with the never ending saga over the office move. When the unions were kicked out of Blue Star House the Council had no adequate plans for where to house us. It took two years (!) to find suitable accommodation.

We now have an office in 4-07 in the Civic Centre and G-03 in the Town Hall come and say hello!

Membership Report

Erin Healy, Membership Officer

Lambeth UNISON has 2088 members made up of 1785 full members, 300 retired members, and 3 unemployed members. This is an overall increase of 42 members since our last AGM.

Our membership includes:

85 disabled members*

85 young members

687 black members*

1312 female members*

675 male members*

7 not known/other/prefer not to say gender*

A comparison against previous years:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
All	2013	2134	2066	2057	2035
Black*	552	619	646	646	664
Female*	1319	1384	1360	1360	1322
Male*	682	723	633	633	637
Disabled*	n/a	56	59	59	80
Young	29	38	37	37	37
Retired	405	412	325	325	300

**self-identifying characteristic*

We represent members across 189 employers including 108 with only one member and 73 with under nine or fewer members. Our largest employer is Lambeth Council and the remainder of our membership is in schools, day centres, nurseries, and outsourced services.

Our employers with ten or more members are:

Employer	Number of members
L B Lambeth	1254
Serco	30
The Dunraven Educational Trust	29
Ofsted	27
Excelcare	23
Pinnacle Group Limited	15
Equans UK & Ireland	14
Bouygues E&S FM UK Limited	10
Harrison Catering Services Limited	10

Since mid-November 2023, we have been sending welcome emails to new joiners on a weekly basis with their membership number, link to Unison online, and contact information for their convenor.

Labour Link Report

Samuel Kamara, Labour Link Officer

Hi, my name is Samuel Kamara. I was your new Labour Link officer for 2023.

On 18th July 2023, we held a nomination meeting for the National Labour link Committee for the Greater London seat. A single nomination was received from Phoebe Savidge and she was duly elected by our Labour Link branch. There was an overwhelming support from members for her nomination.

The Labour Link is to be revived as most of us are aware not much has been happening. However, a lot of work is being done to get this group back on track. In achieving this, few contacts from signposting were made with successes. As a result, an online meeting is to be held on Tuesday 6th February 2024 from 12:00 – 12:45.

We have a speaker: Andrew Berry. Islington UNISON Branch Labour Link Officer. Agenda:

1. Submitting delegates to CLP- please come to the meeting if you are interested in being a delegate to your CLP. We can send as many delegates as possible to your CLP.
2. Regional Labour Link forum and elections 2024
3. Regional Labour Link committee nominations 2024 -2026
4. Elections of delegates to the National Labour Link forum
5. Delegates to Labour Party conference.
6. Motions to Regional Labour Link Forum.

Labour Link has also agreed to send an open letter to the Labour Party and the current government on the war in Gaza.

If you are interested in getting involve in the branch Labour Link, please get in touch. The Labour Link is vital in shaping Labour Party Politics. Hopefully, our future government is a Labour government. There is going to be a general election in 2024 and so your participation is vital.

Please contact Samuel Kamara if you are interested in the branch Labour Link.

Young Members Report

George Wheeler, Young Members Officer

At our last AGM Lambeth unison reported that we were representing 29 Young Members including myself. I am pleased to report that today we are representing 80 young members. At National Delegate Conference last year, conference ratified a motion to raise the age of young members in UNISON from 27 to 30, meaning that some of this change may represent members “aging in” to being a young member, having aged out previously but this also represents an overall increase in our

recruitment. I am aware that we have been successful in recruiting young members in Children's Social Care where I am based. I have supported Andy, our children's convenor, in our work to understand the crisis in CSC and as part of this I surveyed Social Work Students and Newly Qualified Social Workers – most of whom are under 30 – to better understand if the LA is adequately protecting them and supporting them at the start of their careers. In the following year, I would aim to continue this work and survey all of our young members in order to understand any workplace issues which are particularly pressing or unique to them.

Further to this work, though separate from Lambeth Unison work, I have worked within the Greater London Region Young Member's forum where I drafted a motion on pay which was sent to young members conference. That motion was sadly ruled out, however, garnered a lot of support and attention from other regions who argued with us that it should be returned for voting. I also, along with other young members from across the region was part of efforts to organise a fundraiser for striking UNISON Mental Health and Social Workers in Barnet which raised £1666.

Black Workers Group Report

I often hear from Black members that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Council is going backwards. Ex- and current Lambeth staff tells me that Lambeth was the forerunners in race equalities, but all that work is seems gone. Does it help to have a Black CEO? When we have 6 male directors appointed end of 2023, only one of which is a Black, the rest is all white, no women director in sight. Given that over 50% of staff are Black women. I wrote to the CEO and was told: He is working on race and gender equality so watch the space! Jocelyn. Well, I have been watching this space for a while it is a hard to watch an empty space.

As the majority in this workforce, it is UNISON's duty to keep race, gender, age and support all the oppressed groups - ensuring equality of opportunity, fairness and justice.

Note, 'Black' is an inclusive term and include black, brown, Asian, mix raced and other ethnic minorities background people. In UNISON, 'Black' – with a capital B – is used to indicate people with a shared history. 'Black' is used in a broad political sense to describe people in the UK who have suffered from colonialism and enslavement in the past and continue to experience racism and diminished opportunities today.

It is upon Black workers to always point out the discrimination and unfair practices in the Council. No one will do it for us. Keep raising the issues and set the bar for fundamental systems change. Do not get tired or lose hope. Unity is our strength, together we can make a change for the better for all people.

As a Black Workers Group committee, we wrote to Hillingdon council to celebrate Black History Month after our Hillingdon comrades told us that their Council celebrated travellers, but not Black history and the Directors said that 'we are all the same'. The Hillingdon council refuse their staff and our BWG group request and intervention. This unfortunately makes us think we are going more backward rather than forward because everyone is not celebrated equally. We will persevere and not get tired.

In 2024 we will write to Hillingdon Council again requesting them to celebrate Black history. We will not stop until Black staff in Hillingdon voices are celebrated.

Conferences.

Anna, Sam and Ruth attended Local government conference in June 2023. Lots of talk/debates on PAY. They were able to put this talk into action and contributed to our branch successful PAY campaign which results in us achieving the 50% threshold to take strike action. With this result we could take strike action but it's not to be because nationally the turnout was below 50%. As a branch, we do work hard to meet the 50% threshold. I often say we run a very tight PAY campaign 'machine'.

Christine, Bashir and I attended the National Black Members Conference 2024 in Brighton. We submitted an emergency motion on the war in Gaza. 26,000 deaths in Palestine since October 2023 propelled us to say something. We called for a lasting ceasefire and a return of the Palestinian land. The motion was ruled out of order, but we pushed forward and met with the standing orders committee, stating our case why Palestine need to be debated in Conference. We were turned down. However, we made useful interventions in the other motions debated. For some reason the committee did not publish our full motion.

We managed to get National Black Member committee to publish in full and get it circulated to all delegates. Despite a few trying to suppress the issue, our motion has increased the plight of the Palestinians at Conference. The delegates understood the cause and struggle of Palestine people and why Palestine need to be supported in their fight for justice and equality. Well done to Bashir for standing up and speaking on Palestine in the Conference.

From October 2023 to date, we attended most of the National Palestine demonstrations and locally action. Check out social media pages.

Campaigns

We continue to follow and support justice for Chris Kaba campaign and will be on the streets and stalls to bring justice for this family in 2024.

PAY campaigns.

We support the nurses, rail, and teachers picket lines.

AGM

Thank you to all who attended Black workers AGM.

We had speakers who inspired and brought a wealth of knowledge and lived experience to our members. We passed a motion supporting Ricky Reel family campaign for justice. Ricky's mother, Sukhdev Reel, author and activist movingly shared with us the police failings in the investigation of her missing son 25 years ago.

Lee Jasper, social justice campaigner took us at back to Lambeth in the 80' and 90's and the race relation then and now. The message is clear: We all must get up, stand up and fight. Bell Ribeiro-Addy – Streatham MP inspired and encourage us to get involved in politics and make a difference in our workplace.

It was UNISON's Year and the Black workers and so we celebrated with a DJ, good food and quality merchandise.

This year is the Year of the LGBT + worker. We will be putting on an event to mark the achievements of the LGBT+ workers in UNISON.

Plans for 2024

Women's event- March 2024

LGBT+ workers event- June 2024

BWG AGM- September 2024

Black history month- October 2024

The incoming BWG committee 2024

Chair- Sam Kamara

Vice chair- Bashir Miah

Secretary – Simone Mckoy

Treasury- vacant

The Policy Advisor- vacant

The Publicity and Campaigns officer- Jocelyn

Convenor: Jocelyn

Follow us on Lambeth UNISON Black workers on Instagram, Facebook, and twitter.

Author: Black Workers Group Convenor. - Jocelyn Cruywagen

Disabled Members

Saliha Rashid, Lambeth Unison Disabled Members Group Convener

I took over the role of Disabled Members Group Convener after the tragic and untimely loss of Roger Lewis in November 2022. Roger was a tireless campaigner and advocate for disabled people and is missed by members dearly.

The group is chaired by Nishma Hyde, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nishma for her assistance over the previous year.

Group meetings have mostly taken place bi-monthly in 2023.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remains with members at heightened risk of infection, due to underlying health conditions, medication, and treatment.

Members continue to experience difficulty in obtaining reasonable adjustments in the workplace and at home. This is due to a multitude of reasons including lack of timely provision of specialist equipment, as well as negative attitudes and lack of understanding of disability-related issues from management.

Members have also raised concerns in relation to the processes for Occupational Health assessments, and lack of clarity around this.

Following on from this, we have had on-going discussions in relation to accessible technology and equipment available. This includes the Access to Work scheme, which is a government funded scheme providing support to disabled people in work.

2 members from the Disabled Members group attended the 2023 Disabled Members Conference, which took place in Edinburgh. Feedback from attendees was that the conference included discussions in relation to Neurodiversity, reasonable adjustments in the workplace, disability passport, and bullying/harassment in the workplace.

I will be stepping down as Convener as of February 2024, and it is hoped that a new convener(s) will be elected. It was my honour and privilege to have worked alongside Roger Lewis as Co-Convener in 2022, and to have continued this role in 2023.

I will remain involved in the group and wish the upcoming convener(s) and members all the best.

LGBT+ Report

We currently have no LGBT+ Convenor – please contact Ruth Cashman if you are interested.

Inspired very much by the year of disabled workers in 2022 and the year of Black workers in 2023 we are very proud to launch the year of LGBT+ Workers for 2024.

UNISON LGBT+ have many things to be proud of including the repeal of section 28, equalisation of the age of consent, and the introduction of civil partnerships and marriage for LGBT+ people. But we are also aware that there is a long way to go to achieve true equality. We know that people still struggle to come out in their workplaces and beyond even now and that some have an agenda to systematically remove our rights.

This coming year will provide the opportunity to promote UNISON as the union for LGBT+ workers, raise awareness of LGBT+ rights throughout the union, challenge discrimination in the workplace and society, and recruit and grow the LGBT+ activists of the future.

We want all of you to be part of the year of LGBT+ workers.

Our first aim is to relaunch the Lambeth LGBT+ Workers Group. Sign up at the AGM or email Ruth Cashman, Branch Secretary to get involved. RCashman@lambeth.gov.uk.

Convenor Reports

Housing Convenor

Interesting times in Housing for the past few months and some of which have been highlighted below. The challenges for our members are real and Housing matters have been continuously being raised during Housing union management meetings on all level as the next few areas of our concern.

New concerns – Cirrus system

There has been lots of development in Housing and the most recent pressing one that has come to the attention of the UNISON is the unpopular CIRRUS monitoring system on staff. Complaints have been raised by the Home Ownership Services (HOS) team regarding this system and operates on a micromanagement style-like manner. This system is being used to monitor staff fully on their daily movement and activities including when leaving for the toilet, lunch, kitchen, time taken to update information on Northgate and to name a few. Staff complaint that they have been micromanaged and is affecting their mental wellbeing. So far, only 3 teams are using this system, HOS, Central Income Team, and Collections.

On 16th Feb 2024, after a meeting with the Collection manager to raise the issue, an email was sent to Bayo and Fiona about the matter and a response is yet to be available.

Our members in Housing have been treated appallingly and as a union, concerns have been raised during our meetings on multiple occasions and addressed. The issue has not been an isolated one in this area (Housing) and is of concern across the board.

Merging Adults and Housing management meetings

In 2023, a recent corporate structure was implemented, and it created a new Housing and Adult Social Care Directorate made up of Housing and Adult Social Care operations. On 4th January 2024, as a result there was a proposal for a merging of Adults and Housing management meetings. This was seen by some colleagues as a cause for concern as they believe it was a bad idea. From a Housing Convenor's point of view as per feedback from some comrades, I am not in support of this move. Adults is a massive area on its own and so is Housing. Merging the two may lead to issues such as longer meetings and may be led to being chaotic. I believe the best approach will be to carry on individual areas' meetings and do a joint every quarter. This move is still under review. During the last Housing union meeting, it was again raised for the union to provide feedback on where we stand, and this is to be in due course. Comrades input on what the union think of this will also be considered.

Meeting with NHOs (Neighbourhood Housing Officers)

On 1st November 2023, a meeting was held with NHOs to raise their plight and there was a big turnout totalling about 29. This was then followed by a meeting with the Assistant Director on Thursday 30th November 2023 regarding the concerns raised and burning issues. A big shout out to comrades Simon Hannah and Dan Jeffery for their support and being part of this journey throughout with valuable contribution. Since my meeting with Senior more than two months ago, I have yet to receive an update on measures being taken to address the issues raised. As a result of the delay, I brought the issue up during the Housing union meeting that took place on 1st Feb 2024 and the Director promise to follow up and get back to me. I feel like the matter has not been taken seriously and a second phase meeting will be arranged with NHOs to provide a “non-feedback” response from senior management. Some NHOs have volunteered to be part of the meeting.

Recruitment of Stewards

During the NHOs’ meeting, the need to have new recruited Stewards in different directorate was raised. The benefits of this are that it will provide an insight into those areas and how concerns raised can be addressed in a more reflective of what goes on within those designated teams. We were able to secure 3 members who expressed an interest in becoming Stewards. A total of 5 Steward was recruited within two weeks because of the meeting. This can be seen as a success in such a short period of time. Success of this meeting has prompted other teams requesting for a similar one and this will be done in due course.

Grievances and Disciplinary Challenges

Although members are approaching the UNISON with their concerns, there is still a culture of fear from our members to instruct the union on grievances. Member in most cases will be more inclined on being anonymous. Some familiar names within Housing management team have been popping up during one of my 1-2-1 meetings. These managers’ names have been mentioned multiple times in meetings.

Resident Services

Convenor for Resident Services Simon Hannah

Resident Services is a big directorate so there are a lot of meetings. I meet with management and HR in the different departments every month and raise issues there that members inform me about. There have been a few grievances going on in a couple of the areas of the directorate. and long running issues over Essential Car Users allowances which seemingly cannot get resolved.

I have been working closely with the security guards and cleaners who come under this directorate because their contract is managed from Resident Services. They feel that they

are not respected at work by their managers, and they are underpaid. We lodged a £15 an hour pay claim that the Equans management rejected. This year we are discussing lodging a £16 an hour pay claim and looking to move to strike action to win the demand.

If the security and cleaners do strike, then we will expect maximum support from the Council staff!

We don't really have many stewards in Resident Services, and it is a big Directorate spanning a lot of different teams and services. So, if anyone would like to consider being a rep please get in touch.

Climate and Inclusive Growth

This year I have been covering Climate and Inclusive Growth (The Directorate formally known as SGO). It is relatively quiet in this directorate. I did some casework around grievance against a racist manager which was very revealing about some of the structural weaknesses in HR in terms of how these complaints are investigated.

I continue to meet the Executive and Assistant Directors quarterly and discuss issues with reps.

We have three reps in CIG, Martha, Sonja (currently on maternity leave) and Josh. I will endeavour to organise more meetings with members and reps to discuss any issues they are facing in their teams.

Adults

Our best wishes go to Jackie Lewis, Convenor. Jackie has been off work due to illness. Ruth Cashman, Branch Secretary will be covering Adult Social Care and Public Health along with Shop Stewards Saliha Rashid and Henry Bamford.

We will be holding a members' meeting for all members in the section after the AGM to find out members priorities in negotiating and bargaining with management. Issues raised so far by individuals and groups of members have included delay or refusal to provide reasonable adjustments, lack of recognition and wrong grading for posts.

Children's and Schools

Andy Tullis: Convenor Children's Services

Late last year UNISON were inundated with reports from social workers and practitioners about excessive and unsafe workloads in CSC.

Some specialist teams effectively collapsed due to lack of permanent recruitment (agency levels at 42% in CSC!) and 'churn' of existing staff. This has meant major reallocation of cases across other teams requiring practitioners to cover functions they are unfamiliar with or not trained for, raising caseloads to unacceptable levels, exacerbating delays, backlogs and pressures on staff to keep up with all statutory duties and deadlines amidst the many conflicting priorities of the job.

Redistribution of unallocated cases (particularly involving complex court work) has not always been fair, even potentially discriminatory and when staff raise problems like this, an often-used management refrain has been "you have to be resilient in Social work", questioning the persons professional ability. Such chronic lack of support heightening feelings of stress, burnout and anger.

We've met with our CSC members and have been raising serious concerns with the SLT and the elected member for Social Care (Cllr. Ben Kind), but we must continue to keep up the pressure.

Our director's and elected members have assured us they understand the problems and are addressing permanent recruitment with measures like a rolling advert in the press and recruiting overseas. They say they will re-examine workload distribution, are looking at ways to increase capacity within existing roles and provide necessary training (we've told them staff don't get time to take up the current training offer!). UNISON have also demanded greater BSO support in the teams most affected as an emergency measure, as well as Lambeth widening the retention bonus scheme to reflect the extra/more specialist work staff are having to take on across the board.

We must continue to identify the problems, raise the concerns and demand our CSC members are safe and supported, even if that means whistleblowing or going public. As yet we don't know the fallout from the tragic Bronson Battersby case but it's an all too familiar illustration of what can go wrong.

Other important areas of CSC have undergone changes (lifts & shifts) such as the Children's Brokerage Service and Specialist Placements Team. UNISON represented our members and challenged the proposals leading to positive outcomes. No compulsory redundancies were involved.

This year started with a small restructure of the Back on Track (NEET services) Team where consultation has been constructive.

Following a consultation & survey of parents and service users in 2023, Lambeth intend to restructure the 0-25 children with disabilities services to achieve more clarity of pathways in care, education, health and clarity of practice. This will have implications for ways of working in CWD Teams.

After some years of dogged campaigning UNISON achieved a job re-evaluation and regrading for Personal Advisers (PA's) so thank you Simone for your efforts.

Again, after some delay we also got a transfer policy in CSC as an avenue to career development, so thank you Jocelyn for your determination.

Another much delayed restructure took place in the Youth Justice Service. UNISON gathered staff comments on the proposals and responded to consultation achieving some minor concessions, we also secured a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies. Despite this the process and procedures, assimilation panels, interview panels etc. show the limitations of the Change Management policy. We can only achieve so much by negotiation and “consultation”, if we are going to challenge future ‘savings’ led restructures we will have to increase Union density and demand ballots for industrial action.

Lambeth Schools:

Two of our historic schools, Archbishop Tennison’s and St. Martins in-the-fields have closed due to falling role numbers making them financially unviable, because they were independent Academies the council claimed they were powerless to intervene. UNISON supported our members throughout the redundancy process (not restructures; all jobs deleted with no alternative proposals from the governing bodies) and thankfully many members were redeployed into vacancies elsewhere. Academisation is clearly not the answer underfunding of education.

The problem of falling pupil numbers, budget crisis and government underfunding continue to be a problem affecting local schools in 2024; a national campaign for increased education funding is more relevant than ever.

Elm Court and Livity Federation are now undergoing a restructure of the Business Support Teams across both sites and UNISON are consulting.

Many thanks to Jeremy Drinkall, our school’s convenor (also see schools convenors report).

Local Government funding; 1 in 10 Councils face bankruptcy:

The Local Government Association estimates councils in England are facing a funding gap of £4bn over the next two years. The Commons Levelling Up Committee said councils were being hit by "systemic underfunding"!

Although the government has announced an extra £600m support, and minister Michael Gove has added £500m to the social care grant, these will be nowhere near enough to cover the deficits and rising costs councils face. Lambeth alone faces an estimated £37m budget deficit over two years.

As I write joint UNISON are lodging our pay claim for 2024/25. If the employers offer falls short of our expectations our leadership must firmly reject it and go straight to ballot for industrial action.

2024; the future is unwritten:

Branch members made a good start to the campaigning year on the national TUC demonstration against the Tories new Anti-Trade Union laws in Cheltenham in January. Waiting for a Labour Government to scrap them is no strategy, a clear programme of defiance is needed to make the laws unworkable.

We can still take heart that last year's wave of Union militancy is ongoing, important concessions are being won through strike action, we must repeat the call on the TUC to link up the disputes and all strike together!

I must thank all my shop stewards, branch officers and members for their support and patience throughout last year. I must also pay my respects to retired member Roy Beasley who recently passed away, a dedicated Trade Unionist who showed me much comradeship over many years of activism, you will be missed brother.

Polls might suggest a Labour Government is the most likely outcome of a general election (in my opinion still not certain) but what alternative will a Starmer government really be? Shadow chancellor Rachael Reeves's mantra is "economic and fiscal responsibility" her fiscal rules on spending and reducing national debt are codewords for austerity and cuts. New formations of working-class representation will be a critical task in the coming period.

It seems like a world war is developing without being called a world war, decades of conflict in the middle east surely show there are no solutions to the global crisis on the basis of capitalism, all the great powers have to offer the majority of the world's population is more austerity, poverty, repression and violence. Our movement is fundamentally socialist, so socialists must raise concrete socialist demands as the only way forward for humanity.

"My faith in the socialist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today than it was in the days of my youth". Lev Davidovich Bronstein – last testimony 1940.

Finance and Governance

Eleesha Smith: Convenor Finance and Governance

The past twelve months has been challenging in local government. We have continued to see restructures in the council with constant proposed changes, as well as a reduction in access to public services.

In finance and governance, many employees feel like they have less of a chance of career progression and endure working in a hostile working environment and face issues with senior management. Most particularly within the last seven months, several of our members in HR lodged a collective grievance against the director of HR. (for hostile working environment, overbearing workload, and lack of support.) The group agreed to explore an informal route for a resolution to their grievance, which included an apology from the director

of HR and to be compensated for additional duties.

There was a series of welfare meetings that had taken place with the collective group to address what the resolution will be. However, the collective group was not happy with how the resolution was conducted and I continue to support the members to address their concerns. There appears to be a reoccurrence of an hostile working reported by our members in HR and the environment they have endured working in and being over worked over the years.

Over the last year, I have continued to support the branch with cases in other directorates, particular schools, (supporting my comrades with schools' cases) I have gained experience working on cases in an education environment. Our members in schools face similar challenges as our members in local government.

We commenced having quarterly strategic/directorate meetings in F&G, which unfortunately in the past, there had been resistance from strategic management in this area, so having constant engagement and a space to address concerns in this directorate will be utilised.

An EDI and strategy action plan has been set for F&G which sets out the commitment and plans for progressing equality, diversity, and inclusion over the next three years. Following Patrick Vernon's review, the council details how they plan to tackle constitutional racism, working on the six key workforce themes: career progression, creating a healthy working environment, transparency & HR, healing and resilience, recognition and reward, scrutiny, and accountability. I will continue to support our members and engage in tackling the issues we face in the council.

Plans for the year ahead is to continue to support our members, continue to grow our membership, working with the branch to support the yearly PAY CLAIM.

Private Sector Report

Tracy Smith, part-time Private Sector Organiser. Input from Paul Fitzgerald, Private Sector Convenor.

This year has been a full year of members' disciplinaries, grievances, appeals, sickness reviews, and attempts to improve working conditions in the workplace.

We have also had a full year representing members' economic and social justice issues at external campaigning events involving the wider union family.

There are about 300 +members in the private sector. Most of our members are to be found in small to medium sized organisations such as nurseries, care homes or agencies contracted to supply services formerly under the remit of Lambeth Council.

Our presence is particularly important in small organisations (with no formal union recognition agreement) where the member is more or less on their own.

We have had several big issues involving large organisations where we have a sizeable number of members: GLL (now Activa Lambeth), APCOA and Serco.

At the latter we worked on behalf of members who claimed bullying and harassment at Shakespeare Rd and Milkwood Rd depots. We tried to resolve this with a formal collective grievance.

We also tried to resolve issues around shift changes and changes to contractual duties.

Several workers' meetings were held at the depots to involve members in action against the company.

We have a very good rep in place at one of the depots (who we work with on a regular basis) and hope to have another on board soon. We have an ongoing recruitment campaign at the depots to recruit more members. Lately, members have been concerned with grading issues and a pay rise.

At APCOA we had a collective grievance against forced annual leave upheld by the company, where members were being forced to take two days of annual leave each month at local management's behest. There were also many health and safety issues, including maintenance and adequate toilet facilities. We recruited five new members as a result of the collective grievance action.

We are in the process of putting a rep in place at the Clapham APCOA base.

We supported our members at GLL as they were transferred to Lambeth Activa under TUPE at group meetings held by Lambeth and 1-1s until the transfer was completed in April.

We have had leafleting campaigns at BUPA, Excelcare and other large care homes in Lambeth and helped out at the pay stall outside Lambeth College. In early 2024 we intend to recruit more members through continued leafleting and organising.

Aside from representing and organising, we have been involved in many local Lambeth Unison campaigns, the local Black Workers' Conference, the National Unison Black Workers' Conference, London pro-Palestine marches and demos, Lambeth Unison's pay ballot campaign, protests against the Government's Rwanda policy, supported doctors and nurses during their strikes over pay, Stand up to Racism events, an eco-conference, and a workers' summit.

Finance

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

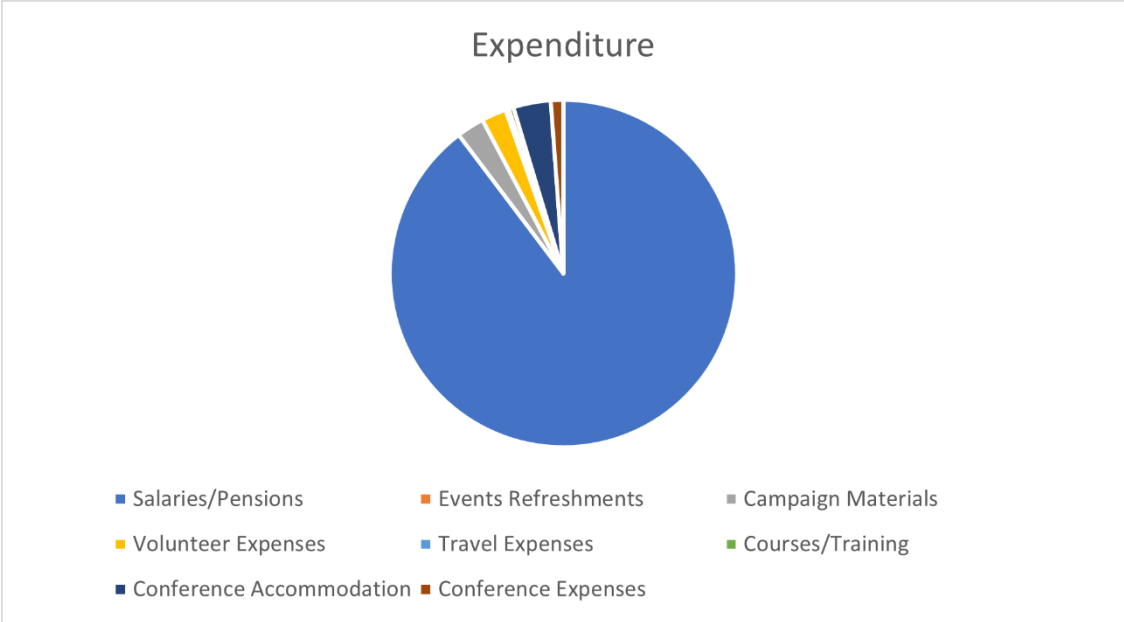
The breakdown below, details the branch income and expenditure for 2023.

General Fund Income and Expenditure Account for Lambeth					
For the year ended 31 December 2023					
All Items	▲	2023 (£)	2023 (£)	2022 (£)	2022 (£)
Income					
Total Income	▲		£77,272.98		£63,821.96
Expenditure					
Total Expenditure	▲		£83,892.51		£92,967.54
Surplus/Deficit			-£6,619.53		-£29,145.58

Consolidated Balance Sheet for Lambeth					
For the year ended 31 December 2023					
All Items	▲	2023 (£)	2023 (£)	2022 (£)	2022 (£)
Fixed Assets					
Total Fixed Assets	▲		£1.00		£1.00
Current Assets					
Total Current Assets	▲		£34,990.12		£42,424.27
Current Liabilities					
Total Current Liabilities	▲		£0.00		£814.62
Net Current Assets			£34,990.12		£41,609.65
Total Assets			£34,991.12		£41,610.65
Accumulated Funds					
Accumulated General Fund at year end	▲		£34,991.12		£41,610.65
Total Funds at End of the Year			£34,991.12		£41,610.65

The total income for 2023 consist of the branch funding, any branch transfers refunds, and retired memberships fees.

We currently have 1782 members and our estimated branch funding for 2024 is predicted to be **£68,891.14**.



The pie chart details the branch’s expenditure for 2023 and how the funds have been spent.

A breakdown of some of the big spends:

Wages bill - £56,355.81

AGM 2023 food - £682

Black Workers Group AGM Food - £450,

Black Workers Group AGM DJ - £200

Hotels - £712 for LGC and NDC

Conference expenses 1166 (Local Government, National Delegate, Disabled members and Black Members conference)

New branch banner - £500

Catering for Roger Lewis Wake - £461

Alchemer (survey system for UNISON branches) £246

Flags and material for Year of the Black Workers £166

Website hosing for lambeth-unison.org £104

A new urn for tea and coffee - £100

Proposed budget for 2024/5

Name	Receipt Or													
	Payment		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Branch			5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.	5820.
Funding	Receipt		45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
			7425.	7366.	7366.	7425.	7366.	7366.	7425.	7366.	7366.	7425.	7366.	7366.
Staffing	Payment		47	07	07	47	07	07	47	07	07	47	07	07
Conferences	Payment		700	0	0	0	0	3280	0	0	0	0	0	700
Affiliations	Payment		0	150	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regional														
Council	Payment		0	25	0	0	25	0	0	25	0	0	25	0
Other	Payment		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

This year's budget will be a turning point budget. Due to UNISON's funding rules, we have only received a limited amount of our full income for the last few years because we have had relatively high reserves in our bank account (around 80k at one point). This means UNISON reduces your income from members subscriptions and that is our only source of income most of the time (unless we sell some T-shirts as we have done previously). In line with national transition arrangements the focus of our budgeting has been to use reserves to build membership through recruitment and organising initiatives.

This year around June because our bank account surplus has fallen to less than £30,000 it means that we will now get an increase in funding (We have £29,355.23 in the bank account). Branch funding is forced to increase in year so we will have to submit additional budgets to Branch Meetings throughout the year.

We intend to apply for Branch Support & Organising Fund (BSOF) for events aimed at promoting our self-organised groups and recruiting black, LGBT+ and disabled members. The Black Worker's Self-Organised Group has put in a bid for 2024 events which funding will be reviewed throughout the year.

We have also grown as a branch since the last AGM, despite losing dozens of members at Lambeth College because they were transferred out of the branch into the South Bank University branch because LSBU bought the college. The more members we have the more we can bring into branch funds, as well as better organised we can be.

Rapid inflation increased our wage bill without bringing in higher subscriptions at the same time as our Lambeth College members were transferred to LSBU Branch. This means we have submitted a barebones budget until we get the additional funding. This budget commits to

spend only the basics and continuously incurred costs which cannot be halted. Some changes you may see, for instance having our branch AGM online this year has saved us money.

As you can see our largest expenditure is staff wages. That is for a full-time administrator and a part time private sector organiser. We will be looking to use our staff to increase recruitment.

As a branch in a national union, we have financial obligations around attendance to national and regional events. This biggest expenditure is the Local Government Conference and National Delegate Conference in June which covers hotels and expenses (£3280). We also have active Self Organised Groups for Black Members and Disabled members so that is the national participations in December and January, which we have budgeted £800 for each. We are also committed to attending the UNISON Regional Council every quarter so there is money there for travel.

In addition, retired member Paul Fitzgerald works very hard supporting the branch and helping with private sector organising and comes into the office almost every day to speak to members and assisting Tracy so we pay his expenses every day he comes in (£5 a day) which comes to around £100 a month.