

Branch Secretary's Annual Report 2017/2018



We are again at that stage in the year where I am reporting to you on our activity during the year. 2017 was another exceptionally busy year for the this Branch on many fronts. The branch has seen problems and challenges in all of the main employers within the branch and Stewards and Officers have been particularly busy this year. A great deal of further work was undertaken in preparation for the implementation of those sections of the Trade Union Act concerned with DOCAS and Political Funds. The branch is grateful for the support given by Regional Staff who are continuing to work hard to ensure that DOCAS agreements are in place with employers in line with the provisions of the legislation.

In the main, our focus has still been around the effect that the continued policy of austerity, driven by this Government, has had on our ability to provide services to the public and the cause and effect on the working environment of our branch membership. Constant Review and Reorganisation in the Police has taken much of our time with the trend towards Collaboration with Surrey Police, in an effort to save money, now back on the agenda and bringing with it problems of harmonisation of policy and working practices. I recognise that we need, as a branch to work very closely with our Surrey Branch colleagues and we now have regular Inter-Branch meetings with our Surrey colleagues, where we can discuss and debate issues which affect the membership from both branches.

The continued uncertainty as to the future of the PFI contract with TASCOR Ltd is also something which the Branch has been involved with. While at the time of writing no further developments can be reported, the temporary closure of the Custody Block at Hastings has caused even more uncertainty for our members and the branch has been engaged with the Police employer in an effort to ensure that staff are included in the decisions being made.

Our service to the membership within Probation at the Kent, Surrey and Sussex CRC and in the Sussex area of the NPS are still a major concern for me. The Regional Fighting Fund Organiser has worked over the last year within the Probation membership to try and develop a framework of a structure to let the Probation Stewards manage that area of the branch themselves. The Branch has also invested heavily in this project, using our branch funds to the tune of £5,000 to make an attempt to support and service Probation members. I was quite involved nationally with the service group and National Staff, in developing our strategy for dealing with these matters. This is an area of work that remains “ongoing” and the complex nature of what we are trying to achieve makes this very much a slow time project.

The Branch has continued to see a growth in Case Work particularly in the Grievance area. I think this reflects the levels of dissatisfaction that we see across all our main employers. This dissatisfaction is also result of the many complex and protracted Reviews and Reorganisations in the Police membership, where the branch has tried to ensure that the needs of members are met by the Force but under the growing problem of a lack of finance

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within Sussex Police. The Branch will always support members no matter how difficult the issues are and we will always strive to reach a mutually agreeable compromise where that is possible but not at the sacrifice of the Union principles for which we stand by. However, despite these grievances and difficulties we have managed in some cases to favourably change policy with, in some cases, financial benefits as a direct result of the issues raised by our members. We have also had some small success with the review of Job Descriptions resulting in long overdue rises in pay grades for staff within Sussex Police. In addition Thompsons again have had some considerable success in gaining compensation for members in Injury claims brought to the courts.

The biggest issue that the branch has faced in recent years was the change of the Unsocial Hours allowance within Sussex Police. The branch had negotiated for nearly 6 years to try and get the best possible deal for the membership. The results of that project were put to the membership, who voted in a ballot to accept the Employers process. We are now in the process of working with the employer in the implementation and also trying to reduce the impact of the minority of staff who have been detrimentally affected by the change.

Branch Membership continues to grow and much credit must go to our Branch Organising Officer Alan Gates. The Branch exceeded its regional recruiting target in 2017 and this has the simple expedient of making us stronger.

I continue to sit on the Trade Union side of the Police Staff Council which is the National body dealing with the attempts by Government to reduce Terms and Conditions. I am also the National Officer for Citizens in Policing for the Union, working closely with the College of Policing in how forces around the country develop and use Volunteers in Policing, challenging the replacement of Police Staff posts by volunteers.

So, 2018 is now with us and the workload is not letting up. We are moving, within the Police, to more and more Collaboration with Surrey and this will precipitate much work in the area of Terms and Conditions of Service and Pay.

Never before has it been so important that we all stand together and that we all take responsibility to grow our membership because only in that Strength do we have the power to influence and change things for the better. The power of the Union is not in the Officers and Stewards of the branch but in you the Membership. The more members we have the bigger the voice we have and the more influence we will be able to bring to the Negotiating table.

Andy Stenning
Branch Secretary