

UNISON
Newcastle City Branch
BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES
5th JULY 2010

PRESENT: J Bird, N Nicholson, C Stevenson, A Hall, N Bone, R Fenton, S Hicks, L Hardie, J Yugire, B Mokhtare, G Burin, D Tree, J Porter, R Vasey, L McGurk, J Carden, L Scorfield, S Mulligan, E Hardy, J Donkin, J Reed, J Kennett, H Hardy, R Thompson, D Stoker, J Bourn, J Horne, PJ Elliott, P Keenan, P Henderson, S Loughry, F Mendelson, I Royal, A Berry, W Taylor, K McCormick, J Young, L Alderson, W Aitman, C Ash, J Hood, E Whitby, L Storey, M Haddon, L Hannon, V Suddes, D Gormley, A Hamilton, N Proudlock, M Harrison, B Oliver, JM Nicholson, P Gilroy, K Bell, N Ramanandi

APOLOGIES

J Liepins-Hall, S Lee, P Satterthwaite, B Neill, C Graham, V Douglass, L Grainger, A Gilks, M Hardcastle, E Muller, H Hawthorn, J Dunlop, P Brown, T Murray, M Thompson, L Gormley, P Bell, L Parker, R Flannery, A Carson, K Patterson, M Henderson, P Luckman, J McIlthwaite, C Graham, A Watt

1. MINUTES

- (i) Branch Committee 7 June 2010 - **Agreed**
- (ii) Health & Safety 17 May 2010 - **Noted**
- (iii) Disabled Members 17 June 2010 - **Noted**

Matters Arising from Disabled Members meeting:

Motions to Disabled Members Conf – **Agreed**

Meeting requested that Branch Committee support their position that HR retains a bespoke HR Disability Advisor post should secure a post for a Disabled Officer Post – **Agreed**

Request that the branch funds 3 delegates to Disabled Members Conference – **Agreed**

3. MEMBERSHIP

Noted, June increase of 5.

4. SINGLE STATUS

Ballot Result:

KB- The results of the ballot were 91% voted to accept with a 36% turnout. In YHN 89% voted to accept with a 40% turnout. An email will be sent out today to all members. Thanks to everyone involved in the process for the hard work that has been put in. Appeals will start on 1 November, reps have been identified in all directorates.

Reviews:

KB opened the discussion, asking if there were any outstanding queries regarding reviews.

PE – What is happening with the Technicians review, there has been very little information?

KB – We will get an update, even if there is no information, members need to be informed of this.

BO – We did have a meeting in but this was cancelled.

PK – Is children's residential services under review?

KB – We can find out.

Workstream Reports:

KB – Every directorate plus admin have reps are on each workstream. Some of these workstreams will progress very quickly, others will start in the Autumn. Updates will be given at Branch Committee.

Learning and Development – there will be a trade union meeting with Steve Evans and relevant managers in July.

Health and Wellbeing – Training to take place.

Career Pathways – work will begin in July.

WorkLife Balance – meetings will take place in Oct/Nov.

Working Time – work will begin in Oct/Nov time.

Standby – Meetings to go in soon.

4. CUTS & EFFICIENCIES

Pam Perry, Head of Strategic HR & Kath Moore, Head of Transformation attended this part of the meeting to give an update.

KB – The Government are advising a 25% cut to Local Government budgets. It has been said that the actual figure could be up to 40%.

Kath Moore – We had not planned for these in year cuts, however we are confident this can be managed. Paul Woods (Director of Finance & Resources) is working with directorates to minimise the effect of cuts. A report is going to the Exec on 21 July – more detail in will be available in the following weeks. The national Government are not sharing much information, in reality we won't know much until Comprehensive Spending Review 2010.

Over Summer there will be a lot of concern, we are trying to keep calm and be measured in response and would like reps help with this while we have no further information, we need to acknowledge staff concerns and deal with it realistically.

Most of you will have seen an overview of STEP. All services will go through a STEP Project over the next few years. The idea is about balancing cuts but maintaining services. We have been working with Directorates for timescales on where to start, it can't all be done at once. All Head's of Service are briefing staff about STEP and whether they will be in Phase 1 or Phase 2.

An effective partnership working with staff and the staff side needs to be in place for the projects to be successful. Over the summer baseline information will be gathered by managers. We are governed by the budget, but we want to have a number of options and proposals.

Discussion:

Communications

KM – Better comms need to be build into workshops and Management communications. Corporate and what are local issues need to be addressed. UNISON's style of communication is very good.

KB – Feed back from members is that Barry's blog can be condescending.

KM – This will be fed back

Jobs

KM – In CTP deleted jobs were definitely removed, but sometimes the transparency gets lost. 328 jobs taken out, but new jobs were also created. CTP is the biggest change we have made, on the whole this was well achieved.

Outsourcing and Privatisation

KM – Not one of the things driving this programme and this message is being reinforced. The work UNISON has done previously has set a standard of how we approach this change.

Timing

KM – Inevitably this will be poor at different times, sometimes there is a different local message. Corporate messages should come at the same time.

Consultants

KM – No plans to use consultants, however not to say specialist external advice is ruled if needed but it will not be huge. We have also maintained the corporate transformation team and office.

Prioritisation of Cuts

KM – Formal decisions will be reported to SLT and through to the Executive, things also go to Scrutiny. It is crucial that trade unions are involved in this process.

AH – STEP review in Finance – we have been informed that an agency will be brought in, is this correct?

KM – I will pick this up.

SH – Connexions – Deleted posts were different at STEP briefing than information given by management at meeting on Monday.

KM – Need to get the balance correct between front line and back office services. The front line cannot operate without the support of the back office – this is recognised.

Career Pathways

Pam Perry – This is a wider workforce issue, and again need to manage this with budget constraints but also the need to have a skilled workforce for next 3-5 years. Staff development is central and critical to success of the organisation.

KB – We would argue for investment, and would like to start discussions now on how funding will be allocated – not a token gesture.

KM – The budget will be known in October, but we do want to build on our investment.

Adult & Culture

LMcG – Adult & Culture Services already have the Putting People First transformation.

KM – STEP will be informed by the existing work already done.

KB – Has argued for briefing with Chief Exec – informed Adult Services tomorrow. Reps to meet trade union – how to engage staff re service improvement. Wednesday's motion to full council – to commit themselves further and to oppose privatisation.

5. PUBLIC SERVICES ALLIANCE

The Labour Group has proposed the following motion to the full Council meeting on Wednesday:

MOTION - Local Government – Cuts

Council notes:

- *That the Government plans to reduce the deficit in a much shorter timescale than the Labour Government;*
- *That the Government has imposed additional in year cuts to local programmes resulting in a loss of funding to the city of approximately £10 million;*
- *That the Government has chosen to increase VAT, a regressive tax impacting hardest on the least well off;*

- *That the Government has frozen child benefit, restricted disability benefit, capped housing benefit, abolished free swimming for older people and abandoned the free school meals development programme.*

Council believes:

- *That these cuts will have the greatest impact on people on low and middle incomes while doing little to ensure that the well-off bear their fair share;*
- *That public services can play an important and positive role in promoting equalities, supporting people from disadvantaged backgrounds into employment and building community cohesion;*
- *That these cuts will damage public services and put at risk economic recovery in Newcastle;*
- *That the Council's objectives in implementing these cuts should be to oppose privatisation, avoid compulsory redundancies, protect staff terms and conditions (including pensions) and maintain high quality service delivery.*

Council resolves:

To build a broad coalition within the city to lobby the Government, bringing together political parties, trade unions, community and voluntary sector representatives, business representatives and others who are concerned about the impact of these cuts;

To use the national consultation process about the spending review as an opportunity to engage with local communities and interested groups in the city to identify priorities for the protection of local services and the local economy;

To write directly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer raising concerns about the impact of the proposed increase in VAT on Newcastle's communities.

Proposed: Councillor Nick Forbes

Seconded: Councillor Michael Burke

This has been developed in conjunction with the branch and reinforces the branches position to dealing with the cuts we are facing while continuing to oppose the Emergency Budget.

Discussion:

- Email motion to Shop Stewards / reps
- Need Labour Group to agree and Council to adopt.
- Expect some amendments from Lib Dems – but the commitment to in-house services and avoiding compulsory redundancies should remain. This is important on a regional basis, if Newcastle adopt this other councils may do the same.
- **Agreed** to Lobby Council on Wednesday 7 July, 5.00 pm, Ceremonial Way, encourage colleagues to attend, and members to support the motion.
- Encourage everyone to make a comment on 'Tell Dave' link, must put a marker down that the public are not with Cameron, Clegg and Osborne. 'Tell Dave' to be adopted by national union too.
- STEP programme will be in 2 phases, the branch officer will not have the resource to do all the work. Workplace reps will be essential, we will allocate reps as the info comes through.
- Public Services Alliance (PSA) aims to bring together all public service unions and TUC. We will have placards and banners for Durham Miners Gala (10 July). Launch meeting of Newcastle PSA on 20 July at Regional Office.
- Academies – Many schools rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted are pushing for academy status. This is a major issue for UNISON. Gosforth Junior and High Schools have

- already voted for academy status, no consultation has taken place with staff or parents. Flyers will be going out. If Gosforth goes to Academy other schools are likely to follow.
- Must be made clear academy status is not earned, and is not good. Many Academies are failing, lots of reports stating they are only doing well in vocational subjects.
 - Following feedback it was decided that two leaflets would be needed to address the differing concerns of parents and staff. Discussion took place on the exact content of the leaflets.
 - Emergency budget announced that those employees earning £21,000 and under would receive £250 year increase. Local Government Employers are refusing to pay this. **Agreed** to raise this at the Lobby.
 - Other issues around pay are linked to tax credits with low paid workers, not only a pay freeze but losing working tax credits. The Low Pay Commission are visiting branch 15 July to interview some workers. The budget also attacks disabled and vulnerable people on benefits, people receiving job seekers allowance and housing benefits. Branch to get some example cases.
 - 29 September is Trade Union European Day of Action, rally will be at Grey's Monument – begin mobilisation for another general election.

6. NEWCASTLE COLLEGE

SH – 96 redundancies this year, some will be compulsory. Very low pay increase offered this year. Demo taking place on Wednesday. College applied to run academies – would take service away from LA.

Newcastle College to remain on Branch Committee agenda.

7. TYNE TUNNEL

IR & AB – Now run by TT2, French company. Pay rises have been 2% above NCC, but it is looking like the honeymoon period is over. Company now wanting to change shift patterns – terms and conditions were TUPE'd over. Must maintain membership and bargaining agreements.

8. WORKFORCE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

First meeting with Learning and Development Workstream Reps will be on 21 July.

Launch of 'Learning Champion in your Community Scheme' – 15 July – to enrol mentors, ULR's, informal adult learning. Aim to build community links, all welcome.

9. DIRECTORATE REPORTS

Adult & Culture Services:

JB – Personalisation Workshop held to give better understanding to reps, now need to give stronger focus to how we respond.

Full-time release has been agreed for Mike Symington – date to be confirmed.

PG – Palatine – (employees disabled) possible transfer to YHN – would be TUPE'd.

Children's Services:

NN introduced herself as replacing Jess Cleghorn. Only her first day but hoping to be to speed as soon as possible.

Chief Execs:

PG – Remains of Transformation continues – Finance and Strategic Property. Informed that Head of IT gave outline of new structure – quite vague.

Enviro & Regen:

NR – Have reps for appeals and workstreams

Technicians review outstanding

Security are going through voluntary severance trawl

Parks and Countryside review is nearly completed

Admin:

LH – Steve Evans is now the Corporate lead for Admin

Community & Voluntary:

Ken McCormick's placement in branch office now completed and he has returned to work.
Derek Muse now working on his own.

10. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Issue ongoing re heating on 10th floor, Civic Centre.

11. AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Great North Run sponsorship for Cuban Medical Missions in Haiti –£100 – **Agreed**

Unison Presidents Appeal – Domestic Violence – £150 – **Agreed**

Young Member Delegation to Cuba in December 2010 – Nominate James Imhoof – to look at cost and fundraising – **Agreed**

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

By-election nominations for NEC:

Northern Region Male Seat – Ian Fleming, Northumberland LG – **Agreed**

Local Government Male Seat – Paul Gilroy, Newcastle City – **Agreed**

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 6 September 2010, 3.00 pm, Committee Room, Civic Centre