

UNISON
Newcastle City Branch
BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES
4TH OCTOBER 2010

PRESENT: A Gilks, M Temperley, M Harrison, J Carden, J Horne, V Suddes, L Hannon, J Young, Shaun Loughrey, W Aitman, C Smith, M Brown, K Khan, J Liepins-Hall, R Neale, A Green, M Symington, E Whitby, A Hamilton, L McGurk, B Oliver, C Graham, F Mendelson, M Haddon, C Ash, N Proudlock, A Carson, L Newton, D Gormley, L Jackson, S Lee, N Nicholson, L Hardie, B Gates, N Ramanandi, J Kennett

1. APOLOGIES

D Muse, B Taylor, M Hill, J Sharp, J Bird, D Wilton-King, C Stevenson, J Preece, M Hall, L Parker, B Taylor, G Haggerston, J Dunlop, P Keenan, M Hardcastle, J Reed, J Yugire, L Hardy, L Grainger, J Nicholson, K Bell

2. MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION

- i. Branch Committee 6th September 2010 – Agreed
- ii. Health & Safety July 2010 – Noted
- iii. Branch Education 15th September 2010 – Noted
- iv. Black Members Group 16th August 2010 – Noted

3. MEMBERSHIP

Increase of 3. The majority of leavers from NCC are retiring; leaving the Authority etc (natural wastage).

- Enviro & Regen – organising meetings for STEP process, recruitment opportunity.
- Shop Stewards in directorates to encourage recruitment, possible in-house competition?
- Hoped to have recruited more through Single Status. Approx. 40% NCC employees not in a trade union, hope to have statistics for next Branch Committee.

4. STEP

- Weekly meetings have been set up with S Evans, K Moore and Unison Officers – not huge progress as NCC still gathering information.
- Trying to engage new Heads of Service in **Chief Execs**; some staff groups are engaging better than others.
- Discussion took place about issues within **Admin** re no procedures, points ignored, made aware of posts to be saved – not a good experience for staff. Concern about Service Review and STEP Review in Technical Services.
- Audit and Risk Section – any issues / concerns to be given to P Gilroy
- **Enviro & Regen** – Number of reviews in N/Services; Enviro & Localised; traded services are cross cutting (Children's Services). N Ramanandi and M Dobson meeting with N Hails, Director of Neighbourhood Services, fortnightly to discuss STEP. Nearly all staff in Waste have been briefed, good engagement with Leisure. T McKenna, Head of Leisure Services, looking at 3 options – Parks, Service Review, Restructure – no detail to give as yet.
- **Children's Services** – Number of reviews taking place. N Nicholson has set up fortnightly meetings with reps and shop stewards – will feed back to Branch Committee. Will send document to all Unison members as to how to become involved with STEP process.
- **Adult & Culture** – M Symington attending DMTs – E Weir, Exec Director of Adult & Culture Services, to engage with reps (6 areas) – Direct Services; Adult Learning; Commissioning and Investment; Enabling Functions; Care Management and Related Services; Housing and Welfare Benefits.
- Anyone who wants to become a rep should contact Mike Symington or the Branch Office.

- NR – Most reviews have reps – discussion took place about sending email out this week informing members that more reps would be welcome.
- **Children's Services** – E Whitby raised concerns about information not cascading down from managers; how Admin fit into STEP as the group are feeling vulnerable. L Hardie informed Admin not directly affected by STEP, but there could be a knock on effect.
- **Communications Issue** – P Gilroy informed there is a problem, even if there is nothing to report it should be passed to members. S Evans, Director of Corporate Services, and K Moore, Head of City Service, to put into place. P Gilroy meeting with S Park, Head of Communications, to allow joint communications to be consistent with NCC and trade unions.
- **Adult Learning** – W Aitman to meet with T Durcan, Head of Service – Libraries and Lifelong Learning and Caroline Miller, Head of Adult Learning, for update.
- L McGurk – At shop stewards meeting concern was expressed about the efficiency and cuts process affecting carers and service users not being informed as this has happened in the past. This item is on the DJC agenda for Wednesday 6th October – should be 3 month consultation. Will feed from DJC to the CJC next week.
- Discussion took place about STEP process, the Efficiency and Comprehensive Spending Review, engage with service users; how STEP will cover future costs; less frontline services; less play workers; extending redeployment for 6 months as a sign of goodwill from Council; possible industrial action.
- 10 in Security at risk - relocated from Cypress Avenue. Trade union looking at retention of jobs, pushing for no redundancy clause – doubtful NCC will agree. More of a corporate approach needed, phase in job losses – discussion needed.
- No agreement for compulsory redundancy – attempt to create internal jobs.
- E Whitby - Education Welfare Officers (EWO) – some schools saying they do not require service, need evidence. Public unaware of the number of potential redundancies. Is it possible to pressurise management that industrial action may be taken; too late to organise this year. P Gilroy – will have further discussions with group. L McGurk supports EW position as it has been devastating to service users in the past when centres have closed and they were not informed beforehand.
- F Mendelson – Supports longer redeployment period. A Hamilton – Is it possible to pull together across the council the full picture of redeployment list and numbers of potential at risk; asking for posts as well as people?
- Aware of cost efficiency in this financial year, will not be complete until December 2010 – need clarity from managers.
- CJC next week – will collate information from each directorate (red circles) in advance for response at the meeting. Information to be given to members in next 'Outlines'.

5. SINGLE STATUS

- (a) Back pay to be paid September / October, otherwise February 2011 – awaiting info from HR. Any delays are management's responsibility. Those still left will be looked at in December / January (and back pay in schools).
- Leavers should not have to register.
 - Schools – some job evaluations and job trace not until 5th November, some jobs still under review, majority completed.
 - Letter from Council does not say there is an appeal process.
 - Every person who was a red circle should have been spoken to by their manager and kept updated. Good and bad practice in areas; all managers have received information packs from HR; middle management should also have been briefed.
 - Discussed if possible to write to all red circles – 'Outlines' should inform; look at new website for information
 - Youth Service still under review; not doing evaluation due to change of service; N Ramanandi has meeting with staff on Friday.

- (b) Employee Support Programme – An online support package is now available – restricted to red circles, reps, ULRs and shortly all shop stewards – Anita Garvey, Senior HR Consultant, implementing this.
- Managers should inform all red circles of this facility. At the last Chief Exec DJC more than 100 red circles had been removed from list (was 294, now 190 on list). Some reviews still outstanding, hope to go down another 50 (4 year protection period).
- Would it be possible for Reed Consultant to give brief demo to Branch Comm. November / December; 'Linked-In' is a business 'Facebook' – shares network connections; also good aspects re CV writing, it is a free service to red circle employees.
- A Garvey will write to those who cannot access this online package to give assistance.
- ULRs / Shop Stewards to support all red circles; will have access in work time to online portal; no specific restrictions on time as long as 'reasonable'; expect rotas can be changed for access; available even if not related to NCC site (access to training etc).

6. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- (a) A meeting took place with Children's Services ULRs with Becky Dunn, Workforce Development Manager – Children's.
- (b) Branch Education meeting scheduled 15th October (to discuss red circles, training etc)
- (c) National Dyslexia Week – 1st – 7th November 2010. A drop in session will be held at the Civic Centre on 4th November to answer any questions or queries specifically on dyslexia.
- (d) Career Pathways and Learning Development – Combined meeting arranged this month – will involve Jan Kincaid and David Hood
- (e) Community Learning Champion event at Westgate College. When trained how can the branch support these people? One of the Champions is a NCC ULR – could possibly attend the next branch committee?
- (f) PG – Kenny has taken a major role in workforce development, branch cannot lose sight of the good work that is being done around learning.
- (g) David Hood, Senior HR Consultant, Career Pathways, will be attending next branch committee for update.

7. REGIONAL PAY CONSULTATION 2011/2012

- PG – Explained the process of the consultation – joint TU submit claim to Authority.
- Apologies for short consultation – further information available if needed. 80% supports claim from Region as it stands - £250 for everyone whose salary is £21,000 or less. Not clear what will happen with LA as everything is budgetary driven – Civil Servants will receive this.
 - Email was sent out about this year's claim – referred to ACAS – said they cannot force employer to table.
- EW – Maybe we should have asked for £500, not £250.
- NR – Less than 1/3 responded from branch – 700 accepted; 100 rejected.
- MD – Employers not keen to give pay rises, also threat to pensions. Not sure what the value of industrial action would be.
- PG – People are concerned about job security, no mood to take industrial action around pay.

8. MEETING AND DIRECTORATE REPORTS

Adult & Culture – M Symington - Nothing to add except STEPS Appeals process happening; DJC Wednesday. **Children's Services** – N Nicholson – Update from DJC – SW Investment Fund - £280,000, could ease front line pressures. Early Years Fund – not yet received from J Collins, Senior Procurement Specialist. A Carson – 5 year period managing schools agreed. There are now 2 technical apprentices in schools.

Chief Execs – P Gilroy – DJC today, TU turnout good, Head of Services turnout very poor. Meeting informed DJC not put in Heads' calendars. Point made about lack of communication, other issues raised – HR to respond.

STEP reviews, red circles and Racial Harassment Prevention Team (RHPT) discussed. RHPT dealt with appallingly; 2 staff members were red circled, worse situation after review of service. Original report said service to be outsourced, did not go ahead, now located in different part of LA. Should receive a written response within next 2 days. Concern expressed about jobs going, nothing in writing – Council has to follow process.

MH – Staff in IT do voluntary standby, now converted to contractual standby – staff not informed – awaiting management response.

Enviro & Regen – N Ramanandi – Concerns around STEP review. Security workshop not well attended, further communications from R Nichol to staff. Park restructure – ongoing.

J L-H, Technical Services – Asked to do performance assessment, would be scored by senior peers – no means to appeal – proof of how robust system is – comments passed to management, awaiting response.

Admin – L Hardie – 24th September – Resource Management Tool – suspended, good news. Shadowing SCA Office – Admin to do. J Bailey, Business Dev. & Ops. Manager, looking at ECDL for Admin.

Community & Voluntary – R Holland – Nominated to Service Group Exec, attending first Community Service Group Conference, 2nd November, Telford.

9. PRESENTATION AND COUNCIL'S BUDGET SETTING PROCESS

Paul Woods, Director of Finance and Resources, and Kath Moore, Head of City Service, gave a very informative presentation and discussed the Council's budget setting process – re **Managing the Process** – Emergency budget; budget monitor report; potential changes in grant system; directorate cost pressures; 20 October Spending Review; 27 October Exec Report; STEP Phase 1 report; Grant settlement; Exec/SLT budget specials; Budget consultation- December & January. **Lobbying Issues** – Clarity; RDA grant funding; Regional Growth Fund; Review of Pensions; Spending review submissions; In year flexibilities; Protected borrowing; Spending review issues.

- A question and answer session followed – some items discussed were - after Exec Meeting of 27th October would a communication be sent out to staff to keep them updated; informed support packages would be available for employees affected with efficiency savings, Pam Perry working on this and will be invited to the next branch committee; will central government protect frontline services; would Council tax grants based on rises in previous years be penalised.
- PW informed that the government wants to reduce annual deficit, council has statutory duty to balance budget.

10. COMMUNITY ORGANISER POST

21 applications received – shortlisting process and interviews to follow.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

No issues to report.

12. AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

- i. Fundraising appeal for Aid Convoy to Gaza – £200.00 – Agreed
- ii. Asylum Seekers launching Xmas Appeal – Unison office for donation drop off
- iii. UCAN FILM Festival - £700.00 to underwrite (claim through GPF) – Agreed
- iv. Funding for 8 Young People Ghana Trip - £350.00 – Agreed
- v. Holocaust Memorial Day – 27 January - region doing piece of work - £10,000 through GPF – shortfall of £6,000 – bigger branches in region to donate £2,000.00 – Agreed.

5.50 pm - Meeting interrupted – fire alarms in Civic Centre went off – all remaining items to be discussed at next Branch Committee.