

**UNISON**  
**Newcastle City Branch**  
**BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**1<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

**PRESENT:** J Bird, K Bell, E Whitby, L Newton, S Corke, L Jackson, C Ash, B Oliver, G Haggerston, L Alderson, D Stoker, D Williamson, J Bourn, P Keeman, M Haddon, C Clayton, S Loughrey, D Tree, V Suddes, S Hicks, L McDonagh, H Ottie, N Proudlock, J Young, R Kain, J McIlwraith, J Day, J Carden, S Barnes, L Hardie, F Mendelson, N Nicholson, J Lipeins-Hall, S Mulligan, J Imhoof, J Nicholson, A Green, R Vasey, L McGurk, J Yugire, W Aitman, M Henderson, AJ Kennett, L Grainger, B Mokhtare, R Sheikh, P Gilroy, D Gormley

**1. APOLOGIES**

J Dunlop, P Brown, M Brown, L Storey, A Hamilton, D Muse, N Ramanandi, R Fenton, A Carson, A Ibbetson, M Symington, M Hill, L Hardy, S Hazel, K Ameli, L Parker, A Gilks, C Armstrong, M Hardcastle, H Rocke, C Graham

**2. STEP**

PG gave update – Regular meetings are taking place with reps / managers, climate changed with announcement of Comprehensive Spending Review, fearful of extent of cuts. Council Executive met on Wednesday. Paul Woods, Director of Finance and Resources, did not think cuts would be so severe.

- Efficiencies not enough; plan to modify STEP – will change overall how we participate. Council understands we would be in opposition with any outsourcing etc.
- Still gathering information, need global overview.

Directorates:

- First meeting held with Technical Services - 6 weeks behind others.
- E&R – No update
- Update tomorrow with Environment workforce
- A&C – Not a lot of detail; aware transfer of services for a number of years, want to introduce STEP, how can it be done? Wait for clarity for savings within STEP.

KB – Broader discussion took place about STEP, to take stock of CSR; impact is worse case scenario, as bad as it could be. Full implication not understood as yet e.g. impact on Adult Care (Councils withdrawing provision etc). Has Council ability in 1-2 weeks to translate into financial services; cannot talk about STEP and budget separately.

- Is there a way forward with campaign? Can Council change much in 2 years, need open discussion with Chief Exec and political leaders.
- Council not looked at shared services / collaborations – maybe need to accelerate debate.
- 2 pronged approach – Voluntary and Community Sector – over 1,000 members in branch (5,000 citywide). £30m spent by Council, £70m provided – keeping community cohesion – working together in an integrated way. Will suffer with big cuts – need to think broader, not much time as Council preparing budget.

MH – Concern about possible shared services within ICT, getting rid of replication – job losses?

PG – Discussed with IT, one service, buys in external services, there are clever ways of working, efficiency cashable – not job loss.

EW – Staff now want to know what STEP and CSR mean. Reservations about shared services, can we put pressure on council, what is option; is this coalition government vulnerable; can we put pressure on to delay; anything to avoid compulsory and frontline service redundancies.

PG – STEP phase 2 not in original timescale – will be brought forward – accelerated.

CA – Will STEP be lost; are managers looking at job loss? Wider issue – could housing go; should we move against authority before next election. PSA rally was very good.

KB – STEP not a separate issue.

- Keep building campaign – 30,000 members in the City; 7,000 in branch. Chief Exec is committed to avoid compulsory redundancies. The union will hold him to that, we must show strength.
- Potential loss of 2,000 people. Meeting to be arranged with K Rowan, TUC.
- Maintain a commitment to apprenticeships and youth training. Work is being done, new jobs may appear. 16-19 age group will decline in next 7 years; skill gap will show; is there an alternative economic strategy for the city?
- Local authority has to play a key role – direct conflict with Tory government. Aware 95% mortgages being offered for housing in Cruddas Park; prime investment in Stephenson Quarter with private investor to assist in developing hotel site. Not in harmony with central government.
- Labour control in May? We must have influence on policies and will work with them if they will deliver.
- Show practical examples where sustainable services create jobs; cannot cut jobs in first year; tie Labour into strategy; Labour Group and MPs to sign up to agenda.

MH - Staff have expressed they would take voluntary redundancy.

KB - Enhanced package was three times salary, now only double (always has been this) – this could be under threat. Council discusses in January, no consultation with trade unions.

JB – Can we lobby in January?

PG - Concern expressed about redundancies with STEP; having to demonstrate right behaviour to avoid job loss. Must adhere to formal policies.

SM – Believes we are adopting a sophisticated strategy, still got to be strong and not let changes happen through backdoor. Councillors in Durham top slicing.

- Perhaps demo at Mansion House when budget is to be set? Use it for Regional focus, through PSA, get publicity. National demo around 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> December? – JB and PG to look at mobilising.

BH – Does not think demo would be successful – better to recruit more people to join the union.

KB – Should organise workplace meetings with branch officers.

PG – Bigger picture – bring it back for branch to respond. Trust has to be on both sides – believes Chief Exec would honour to avoid compulsory redundancies and outsourcing. Union to act mature, sensible and to look at alternatives. Also to meet with Labour Exec re budget next year. Members to be part of collective, activists to do more recruitment – no freeloaders.

CA – Worried smaller parts of council will be outsourced.

JB - Regional Action Pack – modules against cuts – 2 hour sessions – will look to get dates – AGREED

Send P Wood's presentation given at November Branch Committee to Shop Stewards for information - AGREED

### 3. CAREER PATHWAYS

The Branch Chair introduced David Hood, Senior HR Consultant, who was giving a presentation on Career Pathways – where and how to use it, and how it is rolled out within each directorate.

David gave an overview and spoke about the background of CP; what is a career pathway; types of career pathways; pathways in practice; benefits of career pathways; where to use them; building career pathways; operating them; the framework; supporting; implementing and further information about existing / potential pathways.

- A question and answer session followed – what role is there for ULRs; engagement with staff needed, staff developing learning reps – role out jointly; commitment to

secondment (costs); Connexions torn apart with single status – sceptical – no opportunity for progression.

- DH – Pathway gives an opportunity to upskill workforce. Thanked the branch for support and would speak about staff survey another time.

#### 4. **COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW**

##### Ed Whitby - Branch Motion – Opposing Cuts and Redundancies

EW spoke about CSR and cuts; Unison's engagement in the strategy; review of service; redeployment period; proposal to suspend involvement with STEP. What is the branch's position and how would branch respond if compulsory redundancies were issued?

PG – Believed it was useful to have debate, although there is a difference of opinion.

This motion would restrict branch to a particular course of action – having to disengage in any future discussions. Education Welfare Officers situation with regard to voluntary severance request has nothing to do with STEP. This motion could make other reviews difficult. Branch urged to vote against.

A discussion took place with stewards noting some people had little faith in STEP, the motion is more negative and reactionary, some points made well, cannot accept compulsory redundancies with trade union involvement.

KB – This is a serious debate. There has been no compulsory redundancies in Play and Youth; Edu Welfare. Want a positive work environment, a balanced decision has to be made. Nonsense to withdraw from negotiations, will send out wrong message – need shared commitment.

FM – Agree with motion about redundancy issue – lack of clarity. Needs consistency with procedure – no 2-tier workforce. Welcomes Paul's motion.

L McG – Hate to think of the impact on families if members are issued with compulsory redundancies – strong commitment needed.

EW – Low morale in Edu Welfare; recognises hard work of branch officers, difficult to organise strike within next 3 months. Would like to call a meeting with management to temporarily suspend STEP meetings. If moved, need to have another meeting with reps.

PG – Natasha Nicholson is looking after review in Edu Welfare; talks about extending redeployment, branch to have position around compulsory redundancies – ballot for strike action? Chief Exec will not give blank extension, done on case by case basis – 2 EWO given extensions till end of March. Spoke to Head of HR to put on redeployment scheme, if we disengaged it would take us nowhere. Security section being dealt with, some staying, others want to go. Urge to vote on this motion.

EW – Informed people can vote for both motions.

Vote took place – results were –

Ed Whitby's motion – 2; Branch motion – 34; Abstention – 1

Branch motion passed.

##### **BUDGET REDUCTIONS AND COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES**

*This meeting recognises the financial pressures on the City Council as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review which could mean the Council having to deal with a funding gap of between £50 million and £60 million in the next financial year and estimated cuts of £110 million over the next four years.*

*The cuts next year could mean up to 1000 jobs are at threat rising to around 2000 over the next four years.*

*Newcastle City Branch welcomed the motion agreed at full Council that re-affirm the Council's commitment to –*

- *An agreed process for trade union and workforce involvement in service reviews, options appraisals, procurement and efficiency reviews,*

- *In-house service improvement plans to precede and inform any procurement process and any formal procurement process to include a clear commitment to an in-house bid,*
- *An agreed policy and procedure for managing job loss to avoid compulsory redundancies and maximise redeployment opportunities,*
- *Commitment to workforce development and learning,*
- *Equality and diversity including the use of Equality Impact Needs Assessments (EINAs) in relation to employment and service delivery,*
- *The promotion of health and wellbeing.*

*However, whilst welcoming the Council's commitment to do everything possible to avoid compulsory redundancies, we reaffirm our commitment to ballot for action up to and including industrial action in the event of compulsory redundancies being introduced.*

*The branch is currently meeting with UNISON representatives on a fortnightly basis across all directorates in relation to the STEP process, in addition to monthly branch committees. However, as the Council's considers its proposals to cut jobs and services, the branch agrees to:*

1. *Organise meetings with all worker groups across the Council, and*
2. *Convene a special branch committee meeting to discuss any Council proposals for job cuts and agree a branch response.*

#### Ed Whitby - Branch Motion – Building Public Service Alliance and Cuts Movement

EW – Discuss PSA meetings, demo in December – encourage people to attend and help co-ordinate. There has been a huge opposition to coalition, government cannot remain in power for next 5 years.

KB – Is very much involved in developing PSA in his role as Deputy Regional Convenor. Discussions are taking place already to organise regional demonstration, meeting PSA Executive tomorrow night. Demo possibly 5<sup>th</sup> December, 5 General Secs will speak from PCS, CWU, UNITE, UNISON AND GMB; bring together with Royal Mail issue? Maybe do something south of the region.

- More activists should participate in meetings; need strategy to look at May elections, core element of manifesto, good launching pad.

#### **JB – Note motion**

##### Building Public Service Alliance and Anti Cuts Movement

*We note:*

1. *The level of cuts and attacks from this coalition is unprecedented.*
2. *The launch by Northern TUC and the unions in the North East of the Public Service Alliance to coordinate a cross union and community response is to be welcomed and supported.*
3. *The hard work already committed Unison activists in this branch and regionally in building PSA protest on 20 October and other events this year.*

*We believe:*

1. *The cuts will impact on all services, health, local government, school, colleges, universities, voluntary and private sector*
2. *The cuts will impact especially on the poor and most vulnerable in society.*

3. *We have to work tirelessly to turn the Public Service Alliance into the a coalition that is known in every community, in every workplace, and is where those facing attacks to their services or there jobs goes to fight back against the cuts.*
4. *We will not defeat these cuts at Newcastle City Council alone, even if we win more concessions here, we need to help win victories for all those facing these devastating cuts*

*Resolves:*

1. *To advertise to all stewards and members all the local PSA meetings across the region and encourage representation and involvement.*
2. *To advertise all stalls, and other activities (especially ensuring our branch takes some responsibility for providing people for PSA stalls in Newcastle)*
3. *To make fighting the Cuts / PSA a regular item on the branch agenda.*
4. *To ask for a regular written report from Unison reps at both the Newcastle PSA meeting and the regional PSA committee to each branch meeting*
5. *To discuss how through PSA we can call a meeting of union reps from branches affected by the CSR to discuss the strategy of different unions and if industrial action is called by any to build support and where possible coordinate this across unions.*
6. *To raise with Unison representatives in PSA coordinating a public meeting in January to discuss the strategy locally and nationally including national and local Trade Union leaders and community representatives*
7. *To raise with Unison representatives in PSA coordinating a regional demonstration against the cuts in Newcastle in the run up to the national demonstration called by TUC in London in March.*

## 5. MINUTES

(i) Branch Committee 4 October – Page 2 – Following an amendment the minutes were **Agreed**.

(ii) Page 3 – point 8 – Early Years Foundation fund - not Early Years Fund – **Agreed**

(iii) Matters Arising – Reed Consultants – feedback mixed from previous presentation.

We will arrange separate demonstration, not at Branch Committee, if agreed.

- Community Organiser Post – progressing ok.

(iv) Health & Safety – **Agreed** – no matters arising.

(v) Branch Education – **Agreed** – no matters arising.

## 6. MEMBERSHIP

Down 15 members – mainly through leavers.

Priority to focus on recruitment.

J L-H – Has Council given numbers of total trade union members?

- Council reluctant to give information, will keep requesting.

## 7. SINGLE STATUS

Children's Services – PG - Looking at a number of things – rate for overtime, affordability, gender, equality etc. More discussions needed.

CA – How do management know staff are red circle by completed application form?

How do staff find out across authority re job code?

PG – Ask Branch Officers

JB – Appeals Open Day – Strategy given for dealing with appeals. Slightly behind but by midweek system will be in place. Everyone who has volunteered will be contacted.

Looking at responses from stewards if more training is needed.

Discussion took place about not putting people in a difficult position; appeals that were covered under Single Status Phase 1; Phase 1 appeals to be looked at after completion of Phase 2 in February 2011; can people appeal after March 2011 in Phase 2 – Yes, but need to go through all 13 factors; workstreams – not moving as quickly as hoped – need to pick up on this.

## 8. **WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

17 – 19 February 2011, Harrogate

3 delegates funded nationally. 6 members came forward. Discussed with Treasurer – only 2 visitors allowed.

Delegates – Lynne Hannon; Lynda Hardie; Natasha Nicholson

Visitors – Nicky Ramanandi; Alison Robinson

**Agreed.**

## 9. **AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

- Reclaim the Night – 27<sup>th</sup> November, Durham, United Nations International Day to End Violence Against Women, open to women and men members. Info will be put on branch website.

- Asylum Seekers, Christmas Appeal - £250.00 donation – **Agreed**

- Octopus Welfare – take up membership as a branch – **Agreed**

- Medical Aid for Palestinians – affiliated – donation £100.00 – **Agreed**

- Abortion Rights – re-affiliated – thanks given.

- Compass – left wing think tank – re-affiliate – **Agreed**

- Searchlight – anti far right – affiliation - £50.00 – **Agreed**

- UNISON Northern – donation to NE Unites Against BNP – thanks given.

**Minute Takers – S Praszczalek; L Hardie**

**Meeting closed – 6.15 pm**