

UNISON
Newcastle City Branch
BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES
10th January 2011

PRESENT: N Ramanandi, PJ Elliott, L Newton, L Grainger, A Carson, H Ord, L Hardy P Quinn, L Dickman, R Vasey, N Proudlock, SM Herron, C Clayton, J Carden, A Green, S Loughrey, J Horne, J Flood, V Suddes, M Harrison, B Gates, L Gormley, K Khan, PJ Bell, M Brown, L Hardie, L Ashbridge, A Ashbridge, L Alderson, W Aitman, F Mendelson, E Callender, L McGurk, M Temperley, A Hamilton, SP Mulligan, B Mokhtare, M Symington, G Burin, C Ash, J Bird, K Bell, N Nicholson, E Whitby, S Hicks, L Scorfield, A Gilks, S Rounthwaite, J Young, T Murray, B Oliver, J McIlwraith, A Hall, R Fenton, E Lipscombe, J Bourn

1. APOLOGIES

S Turnbull, A Ibbetson, A Lamb, J Liepins-Hall, I Fish, J Dunlop, M Henderson, L Storey, J Teasdale, J Yugire, H Rocke, J Kennett, C Hodgson, K Loughlin

2. Powerpoint – Missed introduction

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KB – Not last in first out; competitive interview; upfront and clear; greater clarity required.

EW – Clarification needed for fixed term–v–permanent staff – should be followed up.

KB – Compulsory redundancies – some members cannot afford to go; 6 months redeployment – jobs would have to be covered over this period, Council will not give agreement to this as costs would be too great. May extend by 3 months if redeployment is realistic.

- There is a meeting with Leader of Council tomorrow – redeployment issue will be raised – need consistency.
- Questions raised about cost of consultancy package; if 800 jobs to go how can HR support on 1-1 basis - informed operations managers are to support this.

KB – Cash value protection remains at 3 years full protection – and a further year at 50% of remaining difference. Council want to reduce the notice period, suggesting if volunteering can leave after 4 weeks. Staff cannot be denied statutory requirements if not accepting 4 weeks – Unison seeking legal advice. Low paid workers (65-70% earn less than £21,000) would lose 8 weeks – which is a massive loss. Chief Exec conceded this could be an issue – possible different scheme for this group?

Discussion took place - managers last year were receiving high pay outs -125 managers took their redundancy; concerns about workforce fit for purpose if people have to leave; young people are a great investment for the future; compulsory selection not on a personal basis; would like commitment that those longer employed not singled out; what if more people want to leave?

KB – Business case required – on a case by case basis – skills, knowledge and experience considered etc.

- Concern about authority taking cheap option – need guarantees. JB & KB to follow up.
- Revs & Bens – how will redundancy affect benefits etc. Welfare Rights aware.
- Director of Finance and Resources under financial pressure. Council may consider moving from 1.5 to 1.75 as an enhanced redundancy package (Council

does not consult on package) – extra .25% costs £2m-£2.3million. Reality is Central Government dropped funding to statutory minimum across region. Expectation is that the package will go down; anyone who is thinking about going should think about this now.

- Voluntary redundancy – Same offer should stand as with compulsory redundancy. Entitled to 3 months notice – must clarify as soon as possible, also different approach on low pay.
- Other councils have different redundancy packages.
- Discussed about flexi working; term time working; reducing weekly hours from 37 to 35 – would save jobs and possibly £15m-£20million.

KB – Complex negotiations; will not give 6 months redeployment; may have to take action to avoid compulsory redundancies. Choices – if no movement can target worker group for action – funds to pay 1 or 2 days? Need to agree to severance package.

- Redundancy package should be x2 before March - will have to clarify; asking for x2 if not September has to be when voluntary trawl done. Concern about cuts in youth service, Children's Service under severe focus.
- Feedback from table discussion – package not good enough to leave; part-time workers would leave with little; diversity of workforce with low pay; realistically no redeployment; compulsory sacking on economic grounds – not redundancy; got to fight back; must be aware of all options; need to attend rally.

KB – 2 key demands – concern about notice periods, if compulsory redundant should be same package; retain enhanced till September 2011. Need 15-25 to leaflet at lobby; JB to send out notice on Tuesday to request volunteers.

- Been through STEP, must be legal case to fight against redundancy.

KB - Win by strength in workplace; on the streets; politicians must listen.

Explanation given about lobby and press coverage.

- All jobs are vulnerable; must mobilise people in workplaces; concern about operational needs – need protection from Unison; x2 package agreed by Constitutional Comm. – will check.

KB – May elections crucial, 30,000 live in City; Lib Dems believe they will win, Unison will have massive political impact. School based staff – NCC open negotiations about term time pay; 3,000 would lose approx. £5,000, worse situation now. Low paid and vulnerable – will run alongside broader cuts.

Flyers for rally available to distribute.

3. MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION

Branch Committee 6 December – Agreed

Matters Arising – Page 3 – Letters out today re part year working meeting (SSSNB).

4. NEC ELECTIONS

Asked meeting if acceptable to look at NEC nominations – Agreed.

By elections held in November – Paul Gilroy and Ian Fleming up for re-election.

Josie Bird – Northern Region Female Seat; Ian Fleming – Northern Region Male Seat; Paul Gilroy – LG Male Seat; Sue Forster – Reserved Northern Region Women's Seat – all Agreed

All other nominations coming into the branch office to be submitted to February's Branch Committee. – Agreed.

5. MEMBERSHIP

Down 1 member – 30 up from last year. JB - Breakdown not known – will find out figures.

6. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW 2010

No proposals – expect end of January.

LG worker event 5th February and demo – Public Services Seminar, 10am – 12.30pm, Rally 1pm – 2pm, Assembly Rooms and Grey's Monument – will publicise.

- Asked if Chief Executive declined £5,000 bonus – no more info known – will ask question at rally and lobby.

7. COUNCIL LOBBY / TUC RALLY

Reps to lobby inside – email for volunteers.

Newcastle PSA meeting tomorrow 5.30 pm, Northern Region Office. Branch Officers will accompany anyone wishing to attend.

- Rally 26th March, London – massive mobilisation – 1 million people; Branch has purchased 100 rail tickets, expensive year – need to look at fundraising.

EW – Leaflet for 5th February to be given out Wednesday at Rally – info needed from TUC.

8. SINGLE STATUS

JB – Meeting tomorrow – outstanding issues around workstreams; only happening with career pathways and learning development – loose ends to be tidied up; nothing else being done – needs looking at.

- Extensions of window for appeals? Asked for extension – should be acceptable to submit an appeal before end of January. Capacity issue in Unison office – workloads not going to be easier in March / April. Will be raised tomorrow – will send out a general note / reminder.

NR – Branch office inundated with appeals; 150 dealt with in date order – stewards to inform members of situation.

L McG – Worker group appeal – no acknowledgement – need to know appeal has been received.

EW – Sure Start Admin in Phase 1 – wrongly underpaid for 21 months. Been told cannot be dealt with at present. Management have let them down; low paid staff undermined.

NR – No room to manoeuvre – other queries prioritised – PG back tomorrow – NR will follow up.

9. BRANCH AGM

Monday 21 March 2011, Council Chamber, Newcastle Civic Centre.

- Encourage members to come; Shop Stewards / Branch Officer forms to be completed and returned to branch office; inform if not standing – need to be aware of gaps; generally no need for elections in workplaces.
- Union Learning Reps to be ratified each year – not elected – discuss at next Branch Education meeting.

National and Local Government Conferences – June 2011, Manchester

- Need motions before end of February; delegates end of April. May need special branch meeting – if not – will be raised at February meeting. Branch Officers to discuss.

10. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Next Branch Education meeting 17th January, 1pm – 2pm.

- Lynne Alderson, Children's Services, seconded part-time to Unison – will have first meeting tomorrow.

11. COMMUNITY ORGANISER

Emma Lipscombe is now officially in post. She gave a brief description of job role – learning agenda with ULRs and voluntary organisations; how community groups will be affected with cuts and PSA involvement – need to recruit more reps; union to strengthen links and cohesion with VCS; to give great support in this area; anyone can speak to Emma about these issues and any other concerns.

12. MEETING REPORTS

(a) PSA at Regional Office tomorrow.

(b) Regional Committee – Reps attend from all branches, discussions took place in regional context, how to work together, cohesive strategy, cuts faced. Newcastle has the biggest proportion on committee – enable to adopt strategies etc.

13. DIRECTORATE REPORTS

Adult & Culture – Majority of staff unhappy with closure of 2 Resource Centres – need to develop a response – S Mulligan, Resource Manager, to speak at lobby. MS – Need permission for reps to speak at next Scrutiny meeting in early February. JB & MS go to Sub Programme Board – any opinions about personalisation etc or questions raised at DMT can be put.

L McG – People are anxious/terrified/disillusioned –no feelings of solidarity. 60% of workforce to go in day care (privatisation?); would like this to be publicised as members disappointed with lack of support.

JB – Branch gives full support.

SM – Management speak of efficiency savings – this means job cuts. Wednesday is crucial to build solidarity. Politicians/management decide job cuts – what action is needed?

EW – Wider membership not aware of personalisation issue, need councillors to understand, maybe organise protest outside both centres in the near future, mobilise other areas for support?

SM – Senior manager on tv, branch strategy seems to hold back, prepare for industrial action?

JB – Need to know what we are going to advocate. Could equate to cuts happening elsewhere, we oppose but need to give choices.

Discussed if Councillors are aware of proposals – maybe just the Executive? They need knowledge to ask correct questions. Every Scrutiny Panel and Special Budget DJCs will have Unison reps present; bankers should be made to pay; fight all cuts; Lib Dem council should go back to Government; Councillors need to think they will lose their seats; how do we say enough is enough; cuts will be announced in March – need action beforehand.

FM – Most vulnerable will be the first affected; members need to have more information about those services involved; rally very important.

JB – Oppose cuts – NCC will be given less money next year. What were other options; Council does not have enough money not to make cuts.

Children's Services – Need more Reps for STEP. Sure Start – Early Intervention Grants received – Senior Managers meeting to move forward.

Chief Execs – Revs & Bens have STEP proposal – informed of job loss. Benefit Fraud halved (10 Benefit staff to go). Straightforward cuts – competitive interviews.

LH – Asked for severance trawl. JN has list. Overpayment area to be passed to Benefit Officers.

NR – Some managers still unaware of proposals – package not given formally. STEP 2 meetings to be taking place soon.

Community, Engagement & Empowerment – Head of Service asked to be delayed until March. Info on STEP review been given electronically on server.

Enviro & Regen – Received proposals for STEP - 100 total. Need to know Domestic Waste cuts by 26th January (70?). Leisure – Looking at remodel in years 2 and 3.

Admin – LH – STEP Phase 1 said Admin indirectly affected. Phase 2 – Contact S Evans to be involved with meetings.

CVS – Nothing to report.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Nothing to report.

15. AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

- (a) Brochure for Croyde Bay – Holidays for Unison members
- (b) Red Pepper – subscription renewal – Agreed
- (c) War on Want – donation - £50 – Agreed
- (d) ACTSA – HIV AIDS – donation - £50 – Agreed
- (e) Palestine Solidarity Campaign – donation thanks
- (f) Medical Aid for Palestine – donation - £50 – Agreed
- (g) Municipal Journal – subscription renewal – Agreed
- (h) Abortion Rights AGM London – 19th March – No volunteers
- (i) Ovarian Cancer – donation to Queen Elizabeth Hospital re Kim Reeve - £50 – Agreed
- (k) Advert for Newcastle United FC Website – Not Agreed
- (l) Thank you for donation from youth group who went to Africa

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 7th February, 3pm, Committee Room, Newcastle Civic Centre