

UNISON
Newcastle City Branch
BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES
7th FEBRUARY 2011

PRESENT: J Carden, C McGuinness, P Quinn, S Mulligan, N Bone, B Turnbull, S Loughrey, M Harrison, A Watt, A Hall, R Fenton, T Murray, D Tree, V Suddes, L Slasor, J Horne, L Dickman, D Lawrence, A Green, C McArdle, N Proudlock, S Herron, L Newton, J Browne, L Scorfield, E Whitby, L Alderson, M Temperley, A Hamilton, M Haddon, J Bird, K Bell, F Mendelson, J Imhoof, B Mokhtare, D Gormley, J Nicholson, J Booth, S Barnes, B Metters, S Turnbull, C Jarman, G Brown, S Rounthwaite, C Clayton, I Royal, L Grainger, J Kennett, J Dunlop, J Sharif, P Gilroy, J Reed, N Nicholson, C Mullinder, J Liepins-Hall, J Young, L Hardie, L McGurk

APOLOGIES: A Gilks, P Brown, L Parker, G Haggerston, M Hall, T Connell, J Flood, S Orton, M Oliver, H Hawthorn, H Ord, P Satterthwaite, K Ameli, A Carson, L Grainger, L Hardy, B Gates, J McIlwraith

IN ATTENDANCE: K Loughlin, G Robson, S Praszczalek

1. STEP/BUDGET CUTS

Chief Exec's - AH – main concern is that members are being rushed – draft consultation tomorrow - meetings are not being sent through to Branch Officers.

MH – Timescale issue – 1 week's deadline to decide whether or not to take voluntary redundancy – time taken on decisions.

SR – 3 sections of Community Empowerment – 1 section had email from Deputy Leader stating no cuts in that section - KB can you forward me a copy of the email please?

FM – Strategic HR, etc – speed thing – 6 job losses to be done in a month – great concern

AH – Find out new structures Wed – looking at certain posts – staff would prefer voluntary redundancy not compulsory redundancy but managers don't seem to feel same feels as though they know who they want to keep.

JB – With all the people gone, how will the work left be distributed – works still going here but it doesn't appear to be communicated to members?

E&R - BM – Meeting Thursday with H Emms who said it's inevitable that there will be cuts.

BM – Volunteers want to go but no one has had confirmation.

BO – Problems getting feedback from UNISON Office, which means members are getting very anxious.

JLH – Concern DJC – Admin being treated as within section and not as their own directorate.

JB – NR off sick at the moment - when she gets back will be getting feedback from members.

Children's Services - NN – Children's proposal – we have very little clarity.

Connexions - runs alongside with ITS – to be raised with Martin Surtees.

Corporate Issue – not committing to full consultation.

SureStart – Authority commit to keep existing centres – need clarity as to how much.

EW – SureStart consultation is now on website although the documents and the website do not match up. This looks very bad.

KB – Need to put in place weekly meetings for reps – each directorate to meet separately to solve issues and get immediate response.

KB - Trawling – we suggested it's very useful – in a position to look up volunteers and hopefully use these volunteers. A failure to deliver cuts before April will reflect on next financial year.

Agreed on trawls – before consultation we need to know changes to jobs and their structures etc.

KB – We need to follow up Deputy Leader sending out notice – can we have a copy so we can try to understand this? Consultation time can be short if we have right resources. We only have small number of officers leading on this – we do need reps to be equipped.

Admin – Corporate entity been agreed to each directorate – managing job loss corporately – we need to know where this is happening.

Establish weekly meetings – must prioritise (Reps and Shop Stewards)

Have not seen full service impact assessments except in Revs and Bens.

Need to take issues and register them quickly with the Chief Executive and HR – these are very important. If we feel we are getting “bounced” we can call a Special Branch Committee. People who have expressed concerns please email them into the branch so we can take them up with Chief Exec.

Adult Services - JB – Major issue with some of the proposals – proposed closure of Westerhope Centre and Chirton. Starting to develop a strategy – 3 public meetings that went well and well attended by staff, unions, carers and users.

Scrutiny Panel – significant. Proposals referred back to Exec – what other options can be on the table?

Intend to use APSE consultant to evaluate viable in-house options, will have more detail in the coming weeks.

Reps meeting tomorrow and also specific meeting for Learning Disabilities.

Need to raise concerns with the way management are dealing with scrutiny.

SM – Activism has us where we are now, leafleting etc. Impact Assessments not being done.

Also being sent inaccurate information from management. We need to build a case to fight cuts – speak to public and stay solid.

LMcG – Management have turned to UNISON tactics – followed design, wording on their leaflet.

MS – Reminder – DJC is on Thursday, pre meet 2 pm, encourage as many reps as possible to attend.

NB – Appears Adult Services haven't thought about too much else – Welfare Rights unsure what is happening.

KB – We are building a big campaign, coordinated with PSA, but we will be lead.

Following public meetings its significant how many people have concerns. Need a hold on what's happening in Adult Services. People can see ideas will not deliver. We need a lot more detail of what the 'vision' for the service is.

EL - is making contact with members of the community asap.

JB – Learning and Disabilities – proposals – significant job loss and even pay cuts. This is a key issue. Proposal to reduce working hours to 21 hours is unacceptable.

If we go to Council and say we don't agree and this doesn't work we can always lobby the Council. We need to mobilise community and members.

LMcG – Staff see proposals to change jobs and cut hours as a direct hit from Single Status – we were green circles and now they are halving hours. They are taking away reasonably paid jobs, which mainly belong to women – at least 70% - interesting towards equality agenda.

PG – Have asked for figures – keep raising it – not been getting anything back.

KL – This could be a direct discrimination.

DL – Most people who work in these posts are women who have had to work hard to get where they are – they are sending the care back to families –direct affect on women.

EW - Scrutiny is a process – what happens when something gets rejected by scrutiny?

KB – Good point – within scrutiny – formally calls a decision that needs reviewed – they said we can refer back to Exec – Exec makes decision – then Full Council agrees – need to clarify.

Scrutiny can bide time.

Other issues raised:

- Labour possibly in control of council in May? Need commitment from them to review budget cuts – pressure on. Discuss the manifesto – if elected must ensure they are held to account. Could add to manifesto part year working (school staff), mainly women affected by pay cuts; LA to listen to workers and communities; Academies; local issues.
- Prioritise Adult Services – job loss/compulsory redundancies – extend redeployment to avoid compulsory redundancies.
- Corporate resource pool – advantage to extend redeployment
- Durham, North & South Tyneside agreed to compulsory redundancies
- Regional meeting Wednesday 9th February – need to have regional stance.
- Enhance debate in council – realistic demands
- Get region to create leaflet – everyone's job is important; cost of redundancy on personal level; cost to local economy; give example of public sector pension; caring staff – cost to family and communities; cost to local economy.

- Some managers trying to ignore Council motion to avoid compulsory redundancies – all managers should be aware of Unison and NCC position. Legal duty for alternate work; drastic consequences financially and personally to families.
- Training – need to clarify how long the training process would be for social workers not in SW role at present to move forward.
- Discussed NCC releasing pensions early – possibly at 55. Informed will not happen due to costs as LA have to make up the financial gap. Flexible working – questions asked if changes can be made; commit to reviewing in 12 months – realistically the LA will not review. Agreed good idea to buy time; make coalition less stable; private sector growth not happening. Ballot members? Discuss all options – are members confident in taking industrial action? Are funds available from branch if action taken?
- Learning and Development – will this be able to be done whilst at work? Concern about the future within NCC.

2. MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION

(i) Branch Comm. 10th January – Subject to adding J Nicholson and J Reed as attended – **AGREED**

Matters Arising:

- TUC Rally 26th March, London – 100 rail tickets allocated – will distribute as soon as available from TUC.

The branch has received a request to fund coach to rally from the Coalition of Resistance - £150 **AGREED**. Where we have we have additional members wanting to attend the rally we can direct them to the Coalition of Resistance and this will enable us to support students, etc. to get to the march.

(ii) Special Branch Comm. 19th January – **AGREED**

(iii) Health & Safety 13th December – meeting did not go ahead – **NOTED**

(iv) Branch Education 15th December – **NOTED**

3. NOMINATIONS

Clare Williams – Regional Convenor and Kenny Bell – Deputy Regional Convenor – **AGREED**

NEC Nominations:

National Black Members Male Seat – Mark Clifford – **AGREED**

Local Government General Seat – Paul Holmes – **AGREED**

Local Government Female Seat – Lynn Poulton & Julie Robinson – **AGREED**

Young Members Seat – Graham Smith – **AGREED**

Community General Seat – No nomination made

4. MOTIONS

Motions need to be considered for Branch AGM – need to be circulated at least 2 weeks before AGM; Local Government Conference (LGC) – motion deadline 25 February; National Delegate Conference (NDC) – motion deadline 1 March.

- Need to agree topics for all three and a meeting will take place prior to next Branch Committee to agree wording for national conferences.
- Part year/term time working – AGM and LGC. Main points for there to be a fair formula for calculating pay to be applied and protection for those who will lose out. Currently a major issue for our school based staff.
- Sure Start/Early Years – LGC. Impact of public sector cuts on these services.
- Impact of Public Sector Cuts & Young People– re EMA etc. – NDC
- Impact of Cuts on Women – NDC
- Strategy for Responding to the Cuts – AGM and NDC
- Cuba and Haiti – Support for medical brigades, etc – NDC (J Imhoof & P Gilroy to draft)
- Impact of Cuts on Disabled People & Carers – NDC
- Back Office Cuts– Staff enablement. Direct response to crude attack; IT informed that NCC to make better use of system – yet budget cuts will affect back office; cuts in H&S Exec will affect front line services – myth that H&S not important – NDC (A Hamilton to draft)

(Discussed solidarity needed; all jobs important; NCC

- Learning & Development – NDC (W Aitman & F Mendelson to draft)
- Discussion took place about 'Big Society' not working – replacing professional staff with volunteers; replacing library staff with volunteers signing contracts breaks equal pay laws; Police using Specials Constables – unpaid; Job Centre signing people as volunteers – certain jobs only available to long-term unemployed; need to protect pensions; personal high interest loans – legal loan sharks; £500 charge to be introduced to submit claim to Employment Tribunal;
- Reps encouraged to help draft motions – support will be provided by senior officers; as there is such a large number of motions it is unlikely they can all be drafted by the branch office.
- Date of meeting for motions to be arranged.

5. SINGLE STATUS

PG – 742 red circles (down from 1,400). 91% affected by phase 2; 94% by February. Schools need correct grades.

Workstreams – The Single Status Agreement proposed a number of workstreams such as – Worklife balance; standby; career pathways; working time etc. There has been a degree of progress in all of these but we have requested that this work is given a priority. For example the career pathways workstream has produced a policy document that needs to be implemented on an operational basis.

Appeals – extended by 2 months to end of March 2011. 150 registered, working through them, may want to extend again.

LMcG – Submitted appeal and still not acknowledged.

JB – HR have agreed that they need to acknowledge, we can raise this again.

JR – YHN did not give extension. 49 worker groups submitted appeals.

EW – 2 members in phase 1 – can appeals go in to phase 2 – yes.

JLH – Requested factor comparison info – takes time.

PG – Aware of this, no-one to lose out. Important for stewards/ reps to train – capacity issue. HR also stretched.

Schools – term-time pay – meetings booked; tension with some Headteachers; we negotiate with Council not Heads, this needs to be made clear. Schools Working Group meetings are key with reporting back. Children's Services Convenor attending lobby of Parliament on Wednesday re SSSNB.

6. BRANCH AGM – 21 March 2011

JB - Need Shop Steward and Branch Officer nomination forms returned to branch office ASAP. Would encourage workplace reps to become shop stewards – training given; can share info; facility time requested etc. ULR's do not need to be elected at AGM, but do need complete list needs to be tabled. Notice will go out to ULR's to check they want to continue in role.

7. WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Key element with redeployment agreement.
- Career pathways – only business case but should adopt with wider support.
- Bridges to Learn Project – 13 have now passed course. Presentation to be given by Chief Exec on 28 Feb.

8. MEETING REPORTS

- Single Status Sub Committee – issues already covered under Single Status
- Council Joint Committee – Requested Cuts information be given in advance of meeting with the right to withdraw from consultation.
- Public Services Alliance – Discussed closure of Chirton and Westerhope Centres in Newcastle and Academies – Branch issues were the main focus of meeting. Next meeting 15 February at Regional Office – attendance encouraged.
- Leafleting against Academies – Cllr Margaret Carter involved. Kenton – asked leafleting to be postponed. NN meeting with Kenton staff on Thursday evening.
- Regional Council – Focussed on Cuts – all branches having to deal with this; manifesto and nominations discussed.

- Labour Executive – Opinions shared on Cuts & Budget – especially Adult Services.

9. DIRECTORATE REPORTS

Adult & Culture – Voluntary trawl - Reducing posts but will not carry out trawl at management level; Unison will challenge for wider trawl, also the members views. Initial response not acceptable.

Libraries – None to close but 8 to be known as express libraries – which will not be staffed – may use volunteers; other libraries could be self-issue; equivalent loss of 22-24 full-time posts. Unison to send email to Heads of Service expressing need for consultation. Library Survey – Heads not seen survey – was done corporately.

Children's Services – No further issues.

Chief Exec. – Voluntary trawl – HR have given 1 week response time to decide. Concern about staff not at work – they need to be kept informed. Revs & Bens – Interviews begin next week.

Env. & Regen – No further issues.

Admin – Impact Assessments; EINAs etc required. Also seeking challenging some practice where the council is not treating admin as a corporate function.

Community & Voluntary Sector – Newcastle College – 170 redundancies; Branch to pick up – informed of Facebook campaign. UCU meeting on Wednesday. Issue to be raised at next PSA . Tyne Tunnel – TUPE'd over 3 years ago. Informed no compulsory redundancies (22 volunteered). On Friday told compulsory redundancies would happen. 3 other authorities involved in favour. Members negative about industrial action. PG to obtain detail.

10. HEALTH & SAFETY

- Concern about one person doing collections on Route 9 – unsafe.
- JK requested information about adult to child ratio in schools – incident about work colleague injured when breaking up a fight. H&S Officers to liaise with JK.
- MT raised issue about recycling programme in the Civic Centre. M Symington will follow up.
- Risk issues if volunteers work in libraries.

11. AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Fishing Competition donation - monies raised to be donated to Macmillan Nurses - £50 – Agreed
- b. Donation to M Brown to teach Tibetan Refugees - £100 – Agreed

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AH – Changes to Access to Work – Info circulated and to be emailed to branch.

Date of next meeting – Monday 7th March 2011, 3pm, Committee Room, Newcastle Civic Centre.

Meeting finished 6.15pm.