

UNISON
Newcastle City Branch
BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES
7th March 2011

PRESENT: J Bird, K Bell, L Hardie, J Liepins-Hall, L Alderson, S Rounthwaite, A Lamb, A Gilks, D Gormley, B Mokhtare, M Symington, J Young, A Hamilton, M Temperley, R Sheikh, J Yugire, C McGuinness, J Carden, S Barnes, P Elliott, A Green, L Dickman, D Lawrence, S Turnbull, H Ord, L Scorfield, E Whitby, S Loughry, J Sharif, H Rocke, M Henderson, N Proudlock, A Watt, L Grainger, L Hannon, V Suddes, D Tree, J Horne, L Newton, A Carson, J Kennett, F Mendelson

IN ATTENDANCE: E Lipscombe, K Loughlin

APOLOGIES: R Fenton, C Mcardle, J Musham, S Herron, J Dunlop, P Brown, L Ashbridge, G Haggerston, C Clayton, C Armstron, B Taylor, S Mulligan, M Dobson, S Richardson, T Barton, T Murray, B Turnbull, S Hazel, L Hardy, B Oliver, C Mullinder, N Bone, W Aitman, N Ahmad, M Cunny, H Hawthorn

1. STEP/Budget Cuts

Main Issues: Process for managing Job Loss, EINA's and SIA's.

JB – Workshop to be run on the employee support package for reps.

KB – Essential that we avoid compulsory redundancies. Meeting w. Senior Branch Officers and SLT – should have detailed analysis into job loss. Not to discuss process, but to put package in place to avoid compulsory redundancies by September. Some areas keen to look at for potential bumps.

Bump redundancies – Council have given a commitment but do not believe rigorous analysis done. Should be sped up to identify redeployment – Council need to make clear, staff may need to be given lower grade work, job carving, project work, etc.

- Political commitment to avoid comp. redundancies. Numbers have reduced from 1,000 to 650, after bumps this could potentially be 200. Additional money may need to be taken from reserves. Scale of cuts significantly less for 2012/13 than first told, would be good to start negotiating on 2012/13 now, if we are going to continue to avoid compulsory redundancies.

- Areas with problems – E&R Area Based Renewal; Strategic Housing, Planning & Transport; Children's Connexions, Adults Learning Disabilities and Older People.

Learning Disabilities – Have commissioned APSE to do a piece of work exploring other options for the service, including viable in-house options.

NN – In Sure Start no. of redundancies now reduced from 19 to 5-6.

JLH – How high are council reserves?

KB – Don't know exact figure off top of my head, but low compared to many other LA's.

AI – CXD – Options to buy back leave, as this is only temporary, we were told that it cannot be included as a saving. Our perspective would be is it valid, do you have view?

KB – That is being followed up – temporary arrangements – PG follow up.

AH – We've offered flexible working – management just don't seem interested.

KB – This needs to be pursued. Must be an equal and consistent approach.

EW – Asw possibility of Labour taking power is there any proposal to revise the budget cuts?

JB – Labour Group – we had discussion last week – they said open to discussion but no current commitment to change proposals already given. Reluctance if there is no other alternative. We need to put the pressure on.

KB – TUC meeting with Senior Branch Officers and Labour around key issues – such as compulsory redundancies. Hoping to achieve some firm commitments.

We need to build pressure, possible lunch time lobby – 2 hours, flexi or walk out – one act. We could get publicity – 7,000 members in this branch – with outcome of election in May it would be worthwhile.

SB – Why don't we do on Election Day?

KB – By then will be too late – need to build pressure in run up to elections.

AH – Staff in Civic on flexi. They would be willing to take some action, we could take 2 hour flexi at same time – some areas would get in trouble, so target those who won't.

EW – If opting for selective action, we have to build confidence. People feel isolated by the cuts. Those who are safe now may not be safe later – ask to show solidarity.

KB – Don't forget 26 March. Also AGM on 21 March.

Equality and Service Impact Assessments – growing sense of importance of Impact Assessments.

Some areas not huge job loss but in terms of impact on Community – massive. Welfare Rights / Search Project. Housing support of homeless – Shelter.

Hopefully there will be greater consistency with Impact Assessments.

Children's Services – KB covered Connexions and SureStart - full detail including EINA etc by end of next week.

Commission Services for Young People, funded programmes – looking at 8th March first phase – looking at funding – hoping for information tomorrow. Collaborative work with other Authorities. Policy and Information – initial information with staff – consultation won't end until all detail is available.

EW – Comm. Staff are moving to admin function.

Enviro and Regen – NR – 165.5 post reduction.

ABR – massive challenge – 21 posts to go.

Resources and Performance – interviews this week and next.

SHPT large number posts to go.

Neighbourhood Services – 57 posts to go and have found 57 volunteers.

Regulatory Services – have met target.

Adult Services – MS – EINAs want feedback from reps.

Comm. Mental Health – Scrogg Road and Summerhill will take 2 years for fruition. No trawl yet.

LH – Meeting at 5pm to get more detail and EINA's for libraries. Still a lack of clarity re location of express libraries.

KB – Branch work – massive workload currently.

2. MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION

Branch Committee 7th February – **AGREED**

Matters Arising – Page 3 – Letters out today re part year working meeting to school based staff.

H &S minutes. **NOTED** Matters Arising – None

Branch Education minutes **NOTED** Matters arising – None

3. MEMBERSHIP

Gained 27 in past month.

Can unemployed people be members? JB advised office will contact people to ask if they would like to be an unemployed or retired member prior to them leaving the council.

4. MOTIONS

Defending Public Services Motion – Recommended to AGM

Part year working motion – Recommended to AGM

KB – Competitive election for Deputy Branch Secretary, essential that we have a good turnout and that we continue to be a strong branch.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE

JB outlined criteria for sending delegates to Local Govt and National Delegate Conferences. Proposed delegation list: Derek Muse, James Imhoof, Nicky Ramanandi, Natasha Nicholson, Jane Yugire, Angela Hamilton, Joanne Nicholson. Plus Kenny Bell for Local Govt Conf.

EW – Was there an expression of interest request for places?

JB – Dates to submit names were earlier than we realised, so haven't had a chance to do that this year.

Delegates were **AGREED**.

6. PENSIONS

KB – Lord Hutton's report is expected to request for higher contributions and longer service for those in the public sector pension scheme.

UNISON has requested an urgent Public Sector Forum meeting and is working with the TUC nationally. This will significantly effect other service groups and the possibility of national action is high.

Noted that the last successful action was around pension changes; need to raise awareness amongst membership about what pension changes mean in real terms and how it is yet another attack on public sector workers.

JB – This is a tax on public sector workers, the 3% increase in contributions would go to government to close the financial deficit, not into the pension scheme. Changes will stop people joining which will reduce the stability of the fund. Big changes to final salary look like will be proposed, no new money coming in would have negative long term effects to scheme.

AG – Need for illustrations that look at public sector pay against inflation

LG – effect of paying more into pension resulting in less NI contributions

EW – need to look at younger peoples attitudes to pensions and encouraging members to join the scheme.

PG - highlighted the need for understanding around pensions and the significance of the changes. For example the 3% increase will mean a 50% increase in real terms.

7. SINGLE STATUS

JLH – some staff have not received letter, others have received with wrong information on so all please check.

NR – On Appeals, we have had an extension until the end of March, currently making way through list lodging them with council. Could stewards respond to any queries advising members they are being dealt with in date order.

JB – council recently held an initial meeting on work life balance, to scope out what the workstream will cover. Hopefully this will start in earnest soon.

JH – Admin in section have generic job description, can be classed as mobile so have been asked to move work locations, are having to fund extra travel themselves.

PG – If mobile contracts then they can be asked but if one person is being asked more than others or there is a disability issue can be looked at

NR – have had this issue before, will flag up with Lynda Hardie

EW – is common within Sure Start and frequently staff are using their own car to travel between different workplaces sometimes part way though the day which has meant some staff have had to get business use on their car increasing their insurance.

PG – staff moving between sites do not have to use own car, the council cannot force you to do this, up to manager to manage the workload and pre plan.

8. ACADEMIES AND PART YEAR WORKING

NN - Kenton looking to go to academy, meeting held last week to discuss, more governors are for it than against. A joint trade union resolution has been put to the school outlining

why we are against it becoming an academy. Materials are being produced, appeal to anyone who can help mobilise in the area.

SB – need to put pressure if does go to academy to keep services in-house.

NN - Regarding proposals for a suggested formula on part-year working, UNISON have proposed a '49 week model'. In addition to this we would be seeking a lifetime protection. This would include all school based staff who are included in the part-year discussion- ie any staff who work less than 52 weeks per year (but who have not arranged this through right to request).

KB – we are including this issue in our discussions with the Labour Group, and would like to see it in their manifesto.

AC – would the outcome be implemented in Academy schools?

KH – up to individual academy, but if with TUPE+ it should be included.

9. TUC MARCH

KB – 7-10,000 people across the region expected to attend, 100 from our branch, more than any other individual branch in region. Still negotiating coaches from the region.

PG – mobile phone numbers and some money will be taken for emergencies. It will be chaotic due to numbers but information will be provided including Thompsons solicitors number and advice in case of aggressive tactics from police.

NN - Tickets will be posted out with information after the AGM

JB – please let the branch know if you can not go as we do have people on the reserve list

10. INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S DAY AND WOMAN'S CONFERENCE REPORT

LH – gave a report back on woman's conference highlighting what an inspiring weekend it was, our branch motion on Sure Start has been submitted to National Delegate Conf from the conference, as the regional motion on Cuts.

NN – Newcastle City Learning are holding an event for International Women's Day tomorrow. Also the TUC are holding an event at the Thistle Hotel.

March is National Ovarian Cancer awareness month; there are pins and information available.

11. WORFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

FM – Bridges to Learning has been extended for a year and looking at possibly moving into another sector.

Celebration event was held last week, very positive event. All learners were presented with their certificates by the Chief Exec.

The Open University, Bridges to Learning's partners, are going through changes at the moment which may result in fee increases.

There are various campaigns going on around education, ESOL has been severely cut. The WEA and Unison are holding an event 1 April around the Future of Adult and Community Learning.

JB – advised Felicity will not be standing at the AGM for the Branch Education Coordinator and thanked her for her major contribution in driving forward the learning agenda. Branch Cttee showed its appreciation for Felicity's work for the branch over the years.

12. MEETING REPORTS

NEC – PG - advised he and JB are both re-standing for the election, information will be out soon. Cuts and pensions were main focus from last meeting.

Regional Committee - JB – large discussion around regional strategy against the cuts, Newcastle branch is influencing and feeding into this following our own experience.

Local Govt Svce Group – JB – discussed term time pay, academies, pay, pensions, managing job loss. Sunderland are taking a very different approach to managing job loss, which we need to understand better.

PSA – academies discussed, leafleting continues alternative Thursdays, next date will be circulated.

EW - low paid members, there was a scheme talked about for people who earned less than £21k to get more but this has been abolished, Unison coordinating a response seems a bit late.

JB – Union coordinated a response to the emergency budget as a whole.

13. **DIRECTORATE REPORTS**

Adult & Culture – nothing extra to add

Children's Services - covered.

Chief Execs - focus is all on cuts at the moment

Enviro & Regen - covered

Admin - no extra issues

CVS – no indication of anything to report.

14. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

SB – Issue still ongoing over route 9, manager hasn't moved away from it, they have just put a non-union member on the route. Risk assessment has been done, the result being it is a two person job but has been done with just one person for a while.

15. **AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

(a) Gosforth Students trip to Ghana to work on a project - £150 donation **AGREED**

(b) Searchlight – subscription renewal – **AGREED**

(c) Abortion Rights Conference – no delegates came forward

(d) Medical aid for Palestine – £150 donation – **AGREED**

(e) Welfare are offering £50 for fuel bills to cover the winter period if you earn under a certain amount, please check website or contact the branch Welfare Officers for more info.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Local Elections

JLH – Can the council refuse to pay staff their day's wages if they are working in the elections?

EW – traditionally people who do the role are often low paid members of staff so missing an opportunity to earn extra money.

JB – Staff are entitled to be released from work (and paid their day's wages) to do election work but as always this is subject to operational requirements.

Facility Time

FM – asked if there is a contingency plan to cover officers that are absent or going on maternity leave etc.

JB – region are offering extra support, but the council is reviewing facility time, and currently they are not likely to offer more release.

EW – how the different roles in the branch are funded and supported is confusing, could they be written down for clarity.

JB – There will a fuller discussion at a future branch committee, once we know the potential consequences of the facility time review.

17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 4 April, 3pm, Committee Room, Newcastle Civic Centre**