

UNISON
Newcastle City Branch
BRANCH COMMITTEE MINUTES
4TH APRIL 2011

PRESENT: P Gilroy, J Bird, A Hamilton, K Bell, L Hardie, J Liepins-Hall, N Proudlock, B Gates, F Mendelson, W Aitman, J Yugire, C McGuinness, S Kipling, H Rocke, G Burin, P Henderson, P J Elliott, N Oliver, B Oliver, D Gormley, R Kain, H Ord, S M Herron, C McArdle, J Arnold, A Graham, C Mullinder, L McGurk, G Brown, J Horne, D Tree, N Nicholson, P Keenan, D Lawrence, L Scorfield, R McGrath, M Temperley, M Harrison, J Bourn, S Corke, J Young, A Gilks, L Grainger, L Newton, M Symington, M Henderson.

IN ATTENDANCE: G Robson, S Praszczalek

APOLOGIES: K Loughlin, M Thompson, K Ameli, M Haddon, S Mulligan, J Kennett, D Muse, N Bone, R Fenton, S Hicks, J Sharif, J Dunlop, L Hardy, A Dargon, V Anson, E Whitby, S Turnbull, B Wilson, S Rounthwaite, C Hodgson, J Carden.

1. STEP/BUDGET CUTS – PG – Vast majority of interviews have taken place – people have now been identified for redundancies and redeployment etc.
Bridging Newcastle Gateshead – have had their budget cut, they were externally funded – they were due to leave last month - have now been extended for another month.
Education Welfare Officers have also had their redeployment extended.
The last indications were that there are now less than 200 jobs to go under Budget – this has gone down a lot.

BUMP REDUNDANCIES – Encouraged Council to do a broad trawl – this did not happen and we are still being told it will not happen, although we are still pushing. Targeted trawls where they have not been done before – this task started in areas said to be light work.

Job, grade and skill matching exercise taking place. Hopefully by 2/3 weeks we will have maximised number of people taking voluntary redundancy – target 100+ jobs.

Council supporting people for extra year – details have not yet been worked out – hoping to get **no** compulsory redundancies.

Significant reviews – Adult Services around APSE report etc – final position needs working out.

Weekly and fortnightly meetings with the Chief Executive are still going ahead; membership needs to be made aware of this – may need some sort of update to go out?

– This should be in Barry's blog – Is this not adequate - No

– We will aim to get something out in the next week or so.

Adult and Children's Services - where issues can be emotional etc there are 10/15 permanent roles – may well be ok for some people to take on role; usually these posts are taken by agency workers. The use of agency workers is now to be very limited.

Need information on this and will bring it back to Branch Committee.

JLH – Does this include Partnership Agency in Technical Services?

PG – No, need to review this – maybe to do with a change in Shop Stewards.

KB – Discuss what we need to bring to Branch Committee – Election. We have commitment from Labour, would also be good if we could get something from the Lib Dems. Need people to go out in the run up to elections. We seem to have a lot of people nodding their heads. Call people out for 1–1½ hours to speak to the press.

Learning Disabilities - An anonymous letter from staff at Chirton was circulated, which is totally disgraceful saying that there has not been a lot of support for the members there. We take objective views. Chirton was closing.

37 jobs to be cut in Learning Disabilities – 2 include Westerhope. Council should retain services for those with most complex needs. Details needed. Was great concern with neighbours and carers etc. Proposal to create lower grading posts – we need quality time.

APSE were commissioned - had workshops with staff. Chief Executive agreed over report. Need agreement to commission – to do work, models and business – great in-house option ideally. Branch Committee – **AGREED** – to commission that piece of work.

Children's Services – NN -Connexions proposals due to go out Friday; they are still not here today – they have had an extra week. Proposals for interim period – email went out last week.

Bump redundancies and targeted trawls - still no information – sent 3 further emails. Some staff are at risk.

Policy and Performance still out in the open.

Admin - LH – only ongoing problem is Kenton Staff.

Enviro and Regen – ABR - Significant group – Jesmond. Significant reduction in compulsory redundancies.

Libraries – Kenton are training Customer Service Staff to work in Libraries.

2. KB presented Josie Bird, Branch Chair, with bouquet and thanked her for all the hard work and input she has given to the branch over the past years and looking forward to seeing her back after maternity leave (or during maternity leave!).
 - The shop stewards on the Organising Stewards Course attended the meeting and introductions were given from all attending. It was explained how important it is to register in the Signing In Book at the meeting as this can show the authority that the union has strong support and puts it in a good position.

3. MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION

Branch Committee 7 March – Agreed

- Noted that 2 motions were ruled out of order for Local Government Conference (seen as citizenship issues) and have been moved to National Delegate Conference – now have 9 motions at NDC!
- PG – Update given on Pensions – This will be an important issue at LGC. There was a meeting last week with the NEC.

(LG Employees facing a pay freeze; LG not giving the £250 to employees earning £18,000 or less. Employer not talking to us – trying to make representation but not happening)

Pensions – The significant issue in the next 12 months; could/would get co-ordinated action; 1 day strike not sufficient; debate about when to take industrial action; will be an issue on the floor at conference. Worrying aspect is that the detail has not been given (pay more, get less, work longer?) - no clarity. (Final salary scheme – career average – maybe advantage to women).

- Low paid workers in LG – with some proposals there will be a significant increase in contributions (3% - which means an actual 50% increase). Reality is that with less people in the pensions scheme it will wither; cannot sustain itself – not viable. Pension scheme invests in the UK economy. Clear information should be given to members about this. Cannot ballot until known, need overwhelmingly support.
- Region establishing a Pensions Campaign Group with the TUC – ½ day school coming soon to be organised with branch activists; how to build; arrange 2½ hour sessions with reps. Anyone interested in becoming pension champion to inform branch; identify young members; James Imhoof to circulate to them. At the last Regional Young Members meeting pensions were a priority.

- Discussed that members should scrutinise off takes for pension; will pay more National Insurance if paying into other pension schemes; make sure information is given to members – sell as a 50% increase.
- AH – International Disabled Members Comm. – presentation to be put on website. Should be brought to Regional Branch Comm.

Health & Safety – Not tabled – will receive minutes for next meeting.

Branch Education – Noted

4. MEMBERSHIP

Gained 4 – quite good in this climate.

5. BUDGETS

Employee Support Session – Wednesday 6th April has been cancelled through lack of interest (only 7 registered). W Aitman to circulate presentation from HR.

- Informed about events at Libraries with Job Centre Plus – access to advice, guidance and training; do not have to be on redeployment or redundancy lists.

- A leaflet was put out ahead of Regional Council AGM – quotes NN out of context; leaflet is anti democratic; Branch Committee has to be quorate (20) to make decisions; wide network of shop stewards; lots of training being done; collective and individual views are welcome, open discussion – not personal attacks! Co-operation not collaboration makes a strong branch!

Chirton/Westerhope – Member felt things didn't move on, no action taken. The issues around Chirton were explained; reps did not come to meetings; branch has limited resources; understands issue of job loss; tired of leaflets attacking individuals and union. The member did not support leaflets. Noted that if members do not support the union we cannot do anything. We will launch where campaign is a success, members and users stronger at Westerhope; cannot expect successful result next day; branch office cannot do it all.

6. MARCH FOR THE ALTERNATIVE

LH – Gave an overall view of the march and rally on the 26th March, London. Left Newcastle 6.35am - good atmosphere, deafening noise; placards, flags, signs, speeches – no problems. Trouble with far left – property damaged etc; did not take attention away from the issues – the government cannot ignore the march – they have got it wrong! Long train journey back – problems with signals on network. Positive press coverage – mostly fair; broader society at march; strength of opposition seen. Public not all on unions' side; effects on services will filter through to the public; PSA very important to keep this message in the public view. Asked if it would be possible to have a consultation throughout Unison re do we need all the MPs we have – would be cost saving to reduce number of MPs; attack their pension scheme – non contributory!

7. SINGLE STATUS

PG gave an update – extension to 31 March, asked for longer but not given. Officially window is shut – closed on submission. If appeal already lodged with branch – could go through end of April. Discussion took place about challenging scores; where to go; getting question traces on unique jobs; white circles – full job evaluation; green circles – pay rise and increments. Authority's commitment must be upheld. Members asked if there was any money left in pot for white and green circles – informed backdated money comes out of corporate pot.

8. ACADEMIES

Kenton and feeder schools agreed to academy status. PSA meeting tomorrow with joint trade unions.

Excelsior – Poached Atkinson Road in September for academy status. NN meeting staff.

Part-year working – HR cancelled 2 meetings.

9. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Reps urged in work areas to attend Employee Support events.

- Bridges To Learning – Funding for 1 year to March 2012. Work ongoing in Children's Social Care and Children Admin. New course brochure out soon.
- Next Shop Stewards course in September. Last year 30 members were trained – now having 3 courses per year.

Jane Yugire and Lyn Alderson attended the National Learning Reps Conference – Dave Prentis, Unison General Secretary, was a speaker. B2L dvd was shown through lunchtime. Requesting B2L dvd to be shown at LG Conference in June – good interest – will report back.

- Adult Learners Week in May 2012.

10. MEETING REPORTS

Regional Council last week – number of elections - Clare Williams and Kenny Bell were elected as Regional and Deputy Regional Convenors. Paul Gilroy and Josie Bird to attend Regional Committee from branch.

Discussed - Cuts issues and pensions – PSA very important.

Presentation given from Young Members delegation to Cuba – James Imhoof spoke – trip inspirational; importance of international solidarity with trade union work; possibly give presentation at future Branch Committee.

- There was a Blood Service demo last Friday – concern about service being moved out of region and privatised – big campaign.

Service Group Executive – picked up pensions issue.

NTUC – Conference this weekend; meeting of UNISON/UNITE/GMB – public sector.

Attack on public services; pensions; regional economy; lots of motions – part of the TUC work programme this year.

11. DIRECTORATE REPORTS

Adult and Culture – APSE report covered issues.

Children's Services – Nothing to add.

Chief Executives – Nothing to add.

Enviro & Regen – Nothing to add.

Admin – Nothing to add.

Community and Voluntary Sector – Newcastle College – proposed 170 redundancies (UCU included) approx. 10% of the workforce.

12. HEALTH AND SAFETY

PG – Made meeting aware of the removal of asbestos from Civic Centre is being carried out (located in sealed panels).during evenings, although it is of no danger to the public and employees. An incident occurred when a member of staff walked into the area that was being worked on. The member should not have been on that floor, but was not at risk, a physical barrier was then put in place. NCC has an excellent record with the Health and Safety Executive.

13. AFFILIATIONS, DONATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

(a) UNIMAG – Quarterly online journal - £100 per year; new subscription £175 for 3 years – **Agreed**

(b) Workers Memorial Day – 28th April, Hartlepool; P Kenny, GMB General Secretary, speaking; asbestos one of the topics.

(c) Cuba Solidarity Campaign – reaffiliate - **Agreed**

(d) Colombia – Looking for a Young Member to go to Colombia (focus around mining multinationals and how they abuse human rights etc) – **Agreed in principle** – Young member to fund raise.

(e) Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) – Against violence in Zimbabwe - Donation - £50 **Agreed**

(f) Phil Wharton – Studying for PhD – Miners Strike e.g. facing redundancies etc. - to agree in principle to help fund members studying in the field of industrial relations – **Agreed.** (Next branch committee to agree amounts – also informed of bursaries/funding from national.)

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Peter Elliott, Shop Steward, standing in South Tyneside as an Independent candidate in May elections – needs support.

(b) Celebration – 9th April, Civic Centre – require ticket to attend, sold out!

(c) Natasha Nicholson and Lynn Hannon – Joint Share Women's Officer Post. Branch are to become more active – any issues please contact above or branch office.

(d) Closing date for the Welfare Fuel Grant is end of April 2011.

(e) Adult and Culture Reps meeting on Wednesday 4.30 pm – 5.30pm.

15. Next Meeting – Monday 9th May, 3pm, Committee Room, Newcastle Civic Centre