



Richmond upon Thames Branch

Branch Committee Meeting
Thursday 22 September 2016 12-2pm
The Terrace, York House

Present: John Holroyd (Branch Secretary); Mike Potts (Treasurer); Dave Hodgson (Libraries); Colm O'Reilly (Libraries); Don Rainbow (LGBT); Sally Tsoukaris (Regional Officer):

Maggie Fordham (Minutes)

Apologies: Joanna McCoulough; Balinder Johal; Herb Simms

Mike Potts chairing meeting welcomed new steward Colm O'Reilly from Libraries to first committee meeting and asked for introductions around the table. Colm introduced himself. He is at present working at the library admin centre located at the Cottage but is due to move to the main Richmond library at the Old Town Hall. DH informed us that he is now Library Supervisor moving between Richmond, Sheen, Mortlake, Castlenau and Kew libraries.

1. Minutes from last meeting (26 May) and matters arising

MP - matters arising – Honorarium. ST submitted an application to Regional Finance Committee; subsequently told that 10% of branch funds cannot be paid as Honorarium. Mike contacted national/regional finance team – needs to go before AGM in March and will then be paid in arrears. ST then informed the committee of the new rules governing funding allocation for the Regional Pool Bid. It was decided at conference that the amount of funding available to branches will be based on the coming year's funding allocation rather than current year. Minutes agreed as accurate

2. AfC report delayed due to JMcC's absence.

3. SSA

JH reported that that the agreement had been signed by management and all TUs for 1st October. 3 issues have cropped up:-

1. Contracts; signing it not important, only signing that it has been received. Error found – new contract stated that for those on long term sick only half amount of leave accrued. Now rectified to full amount.
2. Location; Some Richmond staff unwilling to be permanently located in Wandsworth despite extra money for Inner London Weighting. Issues often around caring responsibilities and travelling. Disability may be an issue for those being moved, advice from HR - will be dealt with on case by case basis. Permanent location still to be decided for many staff.
3. Travel costs; people will be reimbursed for travelling between Richmond and Wandsworth. Staff based permanently in Wandsworth will receive extra travelling costs amounting to one year in advance.

4. Facility Time

JH reported that he has 5 days facility time; 3 days for Unison & 2 days for Staff Side role. The main function of SS role is to coordinate the work of all 3 unions. The SS secretary can advise non-members but will not represent them unless they join Unison. We abide by the 4 week rule for new members ie that entitlement to legal advice is based on 4 weeks membership. Unison colleagues in Wandsworth object to the role of Staff Side. They believe it subverts the role of the union and their experience of it has been very different from ours in Richmond. It was suggested that they adopt the Richmond model but they will not budge from their position. The consequence of their objections means that JH loses 2 days facility time. JH has suggested that if the SS role is removed then Richmond Council should replace it with an additional 2 days facility time. HR from both sides objected to this. Although they are in favour of SS role, they are willing to get rid of it but are opposed to the extra facility time to compensate. The situation will remain as it is until March 2017 when the negotiation for facility time is up for annual renewal.

TS added that facility time in Wandsworth had increased. She added that in some other London Boroughs the situation is much worse; Bromley Unison for example has no facility time at all where the dedicated Branch Secretary does union business in his own time. She added that there is pressure from councils to measure time spent on consultations and that this must be transparent. There is a view that staff having direct communication with HR can replace the role of unions.

DH commented on the length of time it takes for HR to reply to queries.

TS confirmed that the only **real** representation is through joining a union.

JH said that councillors in Richmond approve of unions and negotiation and we have always had a good relationship with them.

TS advised that we could devise a standard letter for members to send to their local councillors in support of maintaining current facility time.

DR added that we could do that for members who are local residents but not all staff.

CO said that most library workers are local residents

DH we need to find out and create a template for members to send to all councillors

ST needs to be done **now**

5. Contracts

DR reported that some F/T staff now have 2 p/t contracts, one at a higher grade even though roles are similar.

ST was very surprised and said it must be brought up at next SSA meeting with Ian Stedman.

DR the termination of some contracts for staff on lower grades have had their notice period changed from 1 to 2 months.

6. Additional Pay Claim

TS said that the additional pay claim is for employers signed up to NJC pay agreements. The additional claim has been submitted by Unison only, GMB & Unite rejected; members not prepared to take industrial action.

JH added that our members are very reluctant to strike.

ST answered when questioned that our branch constitution will not change, Wandsworth and Richmond Unison branches will not merge. She suggested that stewards talk to members about the issue, maybe hold a ballot.

ST went on to say that staff were told in March where they will be based although not everybody has been reassigned as yet.

DH suggested sending out a survey to all members 'where are you based?'

DR suggested putting the survey on the website and directing staff via email.

COR volunteered to set up a Survey Monkey.

7. Libraries

DH reported continuing difficulties with HR but added that most requests for VR were awarded without interview and that this had proved less stressful for staff. He was given facility time for the whole process. Pay grading for supervisor post will be left for 6 months.

Staff safety is an issue in libraries. Customers can be aggressive and had been an incident of attempted suicide in one library; a member of staff called the police. There has been a call for greater security but staff are not in favour.

ST suggested a H&S rep for libraries; lone working an issue as well.

Chair had to leave at 1pm; JH took over chair.

DR reported that the future of staff support groups is uncertain. He has been in touch with staff at Wandsworth where there is a Black Members Group and LGBT, but neither funded by the council. He suggested that we look at joint funding by the council and unions in Richmond.

AOB: Regional Officer's Report

ST requested that RO's report be put on the agenda as a regular item for every committee meeting.

The annual Branch Assessment will from now on require an itemised forecast for the forthcoming year on how much will be spent on recruitment for example. Budget reporting needs to be a regular item on the agenda for committee meetings.

A copy was circulated of the TUC 'Trade Union Act 2016: A TUC Guide for Union Reps' It will take 12 months for full implementation. Lobbying the Lords was successful in achieving some amendments. Please use this link to see a copy of the guide https://www.gmb-southern.org.uk/download/political/Reps-briefing_Trade-Union-Act-2016-August-2016.pdf

Meeting closed 1.25