



Richmond upon Thames

Branch Committee Meeting Thursday 5 February 2015

Terrace Room 12-2pm

Present: John Holroyd (Branch Secretary); Joanna McCoulough (Branch Chair); Mike Potts (Treasurer) Greta Farian (Regional Officer); Don Rainbow; Balinder Johal; Ernie Hunt; Jaqueline Chance; Guy Smith; Herb Simms.

Apologies: Steve Cunningham; Fiona Campbell

Minutes: Maggie Fordham

1. Matters arising

JMcC: JH to send out amended Facilities Agreement, expected to be signed off in March, no issues. Training, dates circulated. Those needing re-accreditation, JH, JMcC, DR, BH, SC, MF, TdeR, Fiona.

<p>JH to circulate amended Facilities Agreement prior to signing off</p>

2. Wandsworth & Richmond Joint Staffing

JH: JH & DR met with True & Norton. They are committed to start Savings at top of hierarchy, handover in 2016 when Norton retires. Finance Director in Wandsworth also retiring. Confirmed that staff changes will involve redundancies. Richmond will maintain independence. HR an issue, will need experienced staff to see it through.

Agenda item 3 moved to await arrival of JC who raised the issue

4. Social Workers & Joint Membership

JMcC: Many members hold joint membership with BASW. Unison has more experience with representation so members usually call on Unison when employment issues arise. BASW have very few reps on the ground. Must be made clear in any disputes, who is responsible for representation. (After JCs arrival she commented that SWs should choose between unions rather than join both). GF confirmed union was recorded on case form; any serious issues of fitness to practice would go to Region.

5. AGM 19 March

JH: Nominations close on 20 Feb, 2 received so far. Have invited speaker Samson Low, Policy Officer at Region who lives locally, to discuss Labour Party and General Election.

6. Branch Assessment

GF: Explained that there are compulsory elements that have to be addressed but mostly to act as guidance between branch and region. **Recruitment** is stable in the branch, but with restructuring coming, members may be lost. Some branches have lost 100 plus from Council and schools. RHP a possibility, mapping &

targeting. Well Being Day was a success, possibly hold another? Stall at RuTC very quiet, not many staff present. **Branch Finances** – all branches to set a budget, to be agreed by committee. Has to be monitored throughout year. **MP** reported that branch finances are sound. Money available for promotional materials. **General Election:** members living in Isleworth might like to help in campaigning for Labour candidate Ruth Cadbury fighting a slim majority. We need to encourage members to vote, how? **Shared Services** difficult road ahead – where extensive job cuts will fall is uncertain. Fear can force people to leave; need reassurance. Unison should challenge council decisions wherever possible and support members. **Communication** MF had training on website to help out JMCC to develop website. Suggested FAQs eg What do I do if I'm being bullied? **JH** Website useful tool for communication, time needs to be devoted to it, cheaper than sending out Newsletter. **GF** raise branch profile in schools – posters, invite members to become stewards/contacts. **EH:** commented on Trade Councils. He attends one in Acton where 6 Labour councillors attend. Should be resurrected locally-useful for communication. **GF:** takes a lot of will power to get one going **EH** retired members can put their time to good use, eg helping out in the office, helping with recruitment **MP** Kathy O'Sullivan used to run a successful group but group now moribund. **JH** suggested putting something on the website, 'calling all retired members.....'

MF to request help of retired members via website

1. Equalities Monitoring (Agenda item delayed)

JC circulated a Unison document 'recruitment monitoring information' **GF** commented that equalities monitoring can provide useful statistics for employment, those involved in disciplinaries, suggested setting up Unison sub-groups eg Black Members. **JC** gave point of information – we already have support groups funded by the council. **DR** stated that he is Chair of the LGBT group and also a Unison Steward. Kingston involved in LGBT event, part funded by Unison. **JC** suggested setting up remits and targets for gathering and recording equalities data in branch. **GF** said yes, structures should be used that suit the branch. **MP** asked for clarification on what precisely was under discussion as the recruitment monitoring information form could only be used for employment by the branch, not for recruitment to Unison. **JC** would like to see a recruitment policy for the branch to be used for employment to posts funded by the branch. **JMCC** confirmed that this is a good idea and that it will be used in future. **JC** said we need to clarify branch employment procedures, eg where to advertise posts – council website, unison website **JMCC** agreed that we should do so. **JC** pointed out that the last post for branch employee was only voted on by committee. **JMCC** confirmed that this issue had been discussed at previous meeting and that we have agreed that procedures will be introduced. **MP** said that the committee had agreed to the procedure at the time as no other procedure had been established. **JMCC** agreed that a formal procedure needs to be in place for next branch employment, one that is specific to purpose.

7. Steward training

JMCC needs to be re-accredited every 5 years – email all stewards requesting date of last training

MF to email all stewards requesting date of last steward training

GF confirmed that a training database will be established soon

8. Recruitment

MF reported that recent work in schools had alerted her to the number of TAs and LSAs facing redundancy and changes to contracts and JDs. This has coincided with a cut to SEN funding and a change to the classification of SEN. TAs reporting incidents of having to work with challenging children without having had adequate training. **GS** reported back from Hampton Academy where re-structuring of SEN support has resulted in redundancies. He commented on the lack of consultation with affected staff and Unions. There was no discussion until a document was produced, imposing a new structure. **GF** suggested contacting education portfolio holders, to rattle some political heads. **JH** added that it seems that re-classification of SEN is a stealthy way of reducing funding. **MP** suggested the branch formulate a course of action to involve gathering information from Stewards in schools and to report back to next meeting. We can then decide how to move this issue forward.

MF to contact stewards in schools requesting info on SEN budget cuts

9. AOB

MP requested Committee approval to close the branch account at the Britannia Building Society, funds standing at £4,300, as one of the 2 signatories required has left the union. We can then open a new account. Approval agreed.

1.30pm meeting closed.

Next meeting will be AGM 19 March