



Southampton City Council SE/6288 Branch

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 16th September 2015

Agenda:

1. Apologies.
2. Previous minutes, accuracy and matters arising.
3. Trade Union Bill.
4. Removal of Check-Off.
5. Branch Committee Reports.
6. Correspondence.
7. AOIB.

Present: Mark Wood (Branch Secretary), John Early (Chair), Pete Watts, Mick Fitzgerald, Louisa Goodman, Amanda Boorer, Steve Chivers, Andy Tubbs, David Vowles, Dave Batt, Flo McCloy, Carl Breach, Ian Woodland and Simon Cotton.

1. Apologies

Chris Barnes, Dave Ross, Steve Gorrell, Simon Hartill, Andy Riddell and Ray Barfoot.

2. Previous minutes, accuracy and matters arising

SARC, Branch still to send the £800 donation previously agreed.

JE training has happened. Carl Breach said shadowing is now underway.

Rules conference happened on the 8th July. Amendment proposed by our Branch fell.

The length of time the "Shirley Six" were suspended has been discussed with the Chief executive and head of HR since last Branch meeting.

There have been some new disciplinary polices agreed, which it is hoped will change the way investigations will be conducted in future.

Since the last branch meeting Unite reps have met with Stephen Giacchino, Head of Transformation, a further meeting is to be set up.

The pay and allowances package has now been implemented. Transition to monthly pay did not go well, still some issues.

Unite has finished all the craft workers grade appeals, all were successfully concluded.

There was a concern raised that Port Health are not correctly implementing the “standby payments”.

There was a discussion around the removal of parking passes for parking wardens who work the late shift.

Unite are due to have a meeting this week about holiday pay. This is because there have been changes to the regulations surrounding the way holiday pay should be calculated.

Also discussed the recent legal challenges to the way “travel to work” time should be paid / calculated.

Simon Cotton spoke about his experiences of the Durham Miners Gala and political school. Very good event and training. Simon was a little disappointed at the lack of representation from the South East Region.

The people’s assembly demo in London on the 20th June was very well attended, Southampton People’s Assembly sent two full coaches, with the help of Unite. Usual lack of media coverage.

3. Trade Union Bill

Mark circulated a large amount of information about the “Trade Union Bill”.

(All documents can be downloaded from our website)

This bill is a general attack on all trade union activities, with the scope once passed to impose even more restriction on the Union movement.

Unite and all other Unions are campaigning against the Bill, all members are being asked to write to and lobby in person, their local MP.

Key Points

- Thresholds
- Ballot Paper Requirements
- Time Limits for Strike Mandates
- Certification Officer
- Restricting Rights to Picket
- Political Fund
- Facility Time
- Agency Workers

4. Removal of Check-Off payments

Another and separate Tory attack on the trade unions is forcing employers to remove the “Check-Off” facility. This is the mechanism that allows Unite to collect its member’s subs through payroll.

New members should be encouraged to sign up to pay their subs via direct debit instead of check-off. Where possible existing members should also be encouraged to consider changing across to direct debit as well.

Mark distributed new membership forms for signing up new members.

5. Branch Committee reports

Unfortunately no time for full branch officer's reports.

Dave Batt (H&S)

Reminded safety rep that there is a safety reps meeting next week, Wednesday 24th September.

Steve Chivers (Political)

There will be motion raised at the local Labour Party meetings this month in opposition to the trade union bill. Urged all members to attend.

6. Correspondence

Cuba Solidarity Campaign – request for support

Unity Trust Bank – changes to paying in processes

Palestine Solidarity Campaign – Upcoming events

7. AOIB

- Posters were circulated advertising the People's Assembly 4th October demonstration in Manchester at the Tory party conference. This event has now been backed by the TUC. "No to Austerity – Yes to workers' rights". Unite are running a coach, it will leave the Cenotaph in Southampton at 6.00 am. Contact Maggie at the office to book your seat
- Dave Batt asked for the branch to make a donation to Southampton Keep Our NHS Public (SKNOP). Agreed to donate £50.
- RISC is next week Thursday 24th September. Contact Natalie in the office if you require transport.

Date of Next meeting – 14th January 2016, 12.00 to 14.00, Venue TBA*

***DECEMBER MEETING CANCELLED**

***Note also SCC Branch Christmas/New Year get together will take place immediately after the meeting on 14th January**

Trade union Bill summary

Thresholds

- Minimum 50% turnout across all sectors. In certain 'important public services', as well as the minimum 50% turnout, 40% of all those entitled to vote must vote in favour of industrial action. This essentially treats abstentions as no votes.
- There are no provisions in place to allow secure, workplace balloting or electronic balloting.

Ballot paper requirements

- Ballot papers will have to include a 'reasonably detailed indication of the matters in issue in the trade dispute', 'the type of types of industrial action' contemplated and 'the period or periods within which action is expected to take place'. This would create opportunities for the employer to challenge these details.
- Must also include statement alerting members that if they take industrial action this may breach their contract of employment, and that they only have limited unfair dismissal rights.

Time limits for strike mandates

- Currently, provided industrial action starts within four weeks of a ballot, the mandate remains valid as long as the dispute continues.
- The TU Bill proposals mean that if the action goes on for more than four months, regardless of whether employers enter into meaningful negotiations, the trade union would have to re-ballot.
- Trade unions will have to give 14 days' notice of any industrial action, not 7 days' as now.

Certification officer

- The certification officer would be given significant new powers, including the ability to investigate trade unions on their own volition, to seize records from offices/workplace branches, to monitor all political expenditure over £2000, and they would have the ability to fine unions up to £20,000.
- The CO would have to be notified of planned use of social media in support of disputes.
- Trade unions would have to pay for this extended role.

Restricting rights to picket

- Trade unions would have to appoint a picket supervisor, who would have to provide their contact details to the police, have a letter of authority to produce to the police or 'any person who reasonably asks to see it', and must wear an armband, badge or other item to identify them.
- There are wide proposals to restrict picketing under consultation, which could include criminal sanctions and significant financial penalties.

Political fund

- Currently the union must ballot members every 10 years on the continuation of the political fund. Members are automatically signed up to the political fund and must opt-out if they do not want to pay into it.
- The Bill will mean that only those who opt-in will be able to contribute to the political fund.
- Trade unions will have 3 months from the date the Bill becomes law to sign members up to the political fund. This can only be done in person or by post, not electronically.
- The opt-in only remains valid for 5 years, after which it must be renewed by the member.

Facility Time

- The government will require public sector employers to publish the annual amount of funds used for trade union facilities, how many employees are trade union officials and a detailed breakdown of how money has been spent on trade union activities e.g. health and safety, grievance and disciplinary procedures etc.
- The government gives itself power to impose regulations on restricting facility time given, which would override any contractual or collective agreements.

Agency workers

- This is not part of the Trade Union Bill, but part of a consultation the government intends to run alongside the Bill's passage through Parliament, which they will use to scrap the ban on using agency workers to replace striking workers.