



Minutes of Branch AGM held on Wednesday 29th March 2006, 2pm, Monet Room,
St Clements Hospital Main Building

Present: Philip Bloyce (Chair), Cliff Dawson, Gordon Morris, Ray Hill, Philip Bloyce, Ken Abbott, John Cripps, David Edginton, Steve Cook, Ian Talbot and Annette Petty (Notes)

Apologies: Paul Taylor, Judith Wilson, Liz Potter, Wendy Arbon, Dean Bevan, Mark Hillis and Cheryl Godber

1. Nomination Forms/Ratification of Stewards

Nomination forms have been received and were ratified at today's AGM on behalf of the following stewards: -

- Cliff Dawson
- Dean Bevan
- Elizabeth Potter
- Julie Hammett
- Ken Abbott
- David Edginton

Nominations are not required for Branch Officers, Support Officer, H&S Representatives/Officers and Learning Reps.

John Cripps' nomination is "rolled over" to 2007 – nomination form not required. Outstanding nomination forms for Margaret Goddard, Mark Hillis and John Edwards – Annette to send forms by post to be returned by 18th April Branch Committee Meeting. Failure to respond by this date will indicate they no longer wish to continue as branch representative and termination letter sent out in due course.

Action - Annette Petty

Philip has forwarded nomination forms to Judith Wilson for completion and return.

Wendy Arbon is standing down as branch steward, but continuing in Health & Safety role – Annette to contact employer/region accordingly –

Action – Annette Petty

Ian read through the list of branch stewards to the meeting namely David Edginton, Cliff Dawson, Dean Bevan, Elizabeth Potter, John Cripps, Julie Hammett, Ken Abbott, Margaret Goddard, Mark Hillis and John Edwards – in addition to the branch officers namely Ian Talbot, Philip Bloyce, Mervyn Scourfield-Thomas (Independent Contracted Treasurer), Steve Cook, Julian Wong and Ray Hill (Retired Members Secretary). The officer posts were agreed and accepted during the meeting in accordance with the 2006 branch rules (next appointments in 2009).

Philip reported there are 3 new contacts for the branch from Learning Disabilities which were centred around the recent consultations: -

- Jacky Taylor
- Randy Burrows
- Shirley Austin (previously job matching on AfC)
- Lin Brereton (currently contact for Suffolk West PCT)

Philip also reported when Agenda for Change ends, he will approach the panel members in a bid to become much needed branch stewards.

Action – Philip Bloyce

This led to concerns Ian has concerning the low level of trained and active branch steward's and a plan of action needs to be addressed to rectify the situation.

2. **Branch Financial Support**

Following the Local Government Strike on 28th March, Ian received an email from Greg Grant, Regional Secretary asking for a national call for branch financial support at a later date e.g. April/May. Ian asked the meeting for ideas on the subject – If the branch did support the national call and further strikes planned (day 2) – would the Branch help, a) on a “drip system” of funding and, b) is the branch in favour of this approach? c) financial support of 10p per member (Suffolk County has 15,000 + members) Annette will contact Suffolk County Branch to ask if they can provide a speaker for the April meeting to give more insight into the local government pensions dispute and how we may be of more help.

Action – Annette Petty

The Branch Accounts have been completed within specified deadlines and submitted to the audit dept at Mabledon Place in London. There has been no contact to date from the audit dept which is usually a good sign as that means there should be no errors found with the submitted accounting. As things stand, we are now awaiting the new 2006 budget which sets the amount for the next financial year. The Branch Treasurer will be invited to April's meeting, to run through the accounts or provide a report to be read out if unable to attend.

Action – Annette Petty

As at 29th March 2006 the financial situation of the branch is £11,922. This figure is normally static around £12k to £13k in reserves.

3. **Affiliations**

Ian reported that the 7 regional affiliations to the Suffolk Labour Parties (paid for by regional office) have now been processed via the internet, and John Cook of the Ipswich Labour Party has also been informed.

The branch is entitled to send 5 delegates to the Ipswich Labour Party meetings and delegates do not need to be a member of the ILP, so the opportunity is there for all to contribute.

Ian stated his disappointed that Chris Mole, Ipswich Labour Party MP (via John Cook, Secretary) has not supported our health colleagues within his constituency of Ipswich and instead opted for the soft approach of siding completely with the governments poor handling of the NHS reforms and restructuring despite record amounts of monies being injected.

The remaining affiliations i.e. Amnesty International will be dealt with at the next meeting.

4. **AOB**

a) **Member requiring branch financial support**

Ian reported that although not uncommon, but appropriate to today's meeting, a current member is severely struggling financially following an accident at work 12 months ago. Legal assistance through our solicitors to fight for compensation was lodged some while back, but these take time and now welfare has been applied for as pay is in a zero situation. Branch financial support is now urgently required following another operation in hospital and state support in this case is inadequate. The meeting

members agreed a support cheque should be forwarded as soon as possible for an appropriate amount.

b) Age Discrimination Act

David reported that the Act comes into force this coming October, and in the current job situation, asked if this could be used against staff? Before October there is no redress to take cases to employment tribunals because of retirement age on the grounds of ageism. At SMHP, staff over 65 will not have their contracts renewed in future and those currently working over retirement age are being given 12 weeks termination notice. This is a difficult situation as the Trust struggles to balance the books and keep redundancies to a minimum. But it's also difficult to fully accept the strategy being embarked at this time which is tantamount to blatant age discrimination as it specifically avoids the new legislation coming out later this year. However, it is also understandable why the Trust has been forced to take such drastic measures to ensure those with young families are more secure work wise. But again, the same questions are raised as members have been asking, why aren't the unions doing anything to stop this action? This also may affect the current Redundancy Policy which should be monitored at all times. At present staff over retirement age are not resourced, and to be used against redundant posts in October. It's also worth noting, the Disability Discrimination Act will also play a significant part in the selection of staff should the occasion arise.

c) Core of SMHP Trust Council/Staff Group

John reported that at present 4 managers and 6 staff attend SMHP Trust Council. It has been proposed to change this to minimum levels of 3 for management and 3 for staff side, to enable a "quorate meeting" to progress from Trust Council. These "quorate meeting" views were emailed out to attendees with "button voting". UNISON's view agreed this was "inappropriate communication" and was withdrawn by SMHP. There are now regularly 2 RCN and 1 AMICUS representatives attending Trust Council from Mental Health but despite non attendance by these, this still in no way reflects all the other recognised trades unions.

This is a "golden opportunity" for UNISON representatives to attend. At present 8 representatives namely: - Ian, Philip, Steve, Cliff, Dean, Liz, John and Ken are invited to attend. Steve reported from the staff side there is a danger we are "being ignored" and decisions are being made as the unions are not always in attendance and management may perceive that as another reason UNISON representatives attend meetings is to acknowledge they represent members at disciplinary hearings only. It is eligible for 4 UNISON representatives + 2 others from staff side to attend meetings. Last year only 3-4 UNISON representatives regularly attended and this is not acceptable. The meeting agreed attendance should be in "quorate" i.e. 4 management and 4 staff side – at least 3 representatives from UNISON but preferably "in quorate" 4 representatives in addition to Chief Executive, Directors of Finance and HR et al.

Next Trust Council – **13th April, 2pm, Staff Side Meeting at Suffolk House, followed by full T.C. starting at 2.30pm**– revised times have been emailed to all by Philip and Annette (attending to date Philip and Steve – John on A/L but will be able to attend 17th May Trust Council). David Edginton will attend the next Suffolk East Staff Forum on 21st April.

d) Revision of Branch Agenda

Ken commented that branch meetings seemed to be more structured than of late and also direct action taken on raised issues seemed to be less supported. He was also concerned about communication via email as it seemed impersonal and also finds it difficult using electronic mail effectively. It was explained email is one of the quickest methods of getting correspondence across to all reps and also the best way to mass communicate on a shoestring budget, although never really replaces face to face meetings etc. A general discussion followed, and it was agreed that stewards should use their initiative as trained whilst working within their constituency and also the role should include workplace meetings with members on a regular basis and then to report back at the main monthly committee meeting. Ian suggested he would have more "face to face" contact with stewards on a monthly basis starting in the next few weeks which may help struggling or quiet reps.

Ian will also revise the Branch Committee Meeting Agenda to start in April to include the following items: -

- Apologies
- Minutes of last meeting
- Matters arising
- Reports from – Private Sector, Suffolk East, West and Waveney PCT's, SMHPT
- AOB

5. Date/time next meeting

Tuesday 18th April, 2pm, Monet Room, SCH (lunch provided from 1.15pm)

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1545 hours

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