

UNISON BCP Branch Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 9 March 2022

12.30pm and 4.30pm

Attendance: Jon Hartley, Margaret Mercer, John Fortune, Lisa Foxley-Hughes, Jamie Fry, Trevor Sills, Tasha Knibbs, Karen Fry, Ollie Thorneycroft, Dominic Gatrell, Simone Thompson, Caroline Procter-Smith, Steven Cocorachio, Tony Smikle, Michelle Davies, Steve Cocorachio, Jez Martin, Rauf Rawson, Adam Woolfenden, Sandra Matthews, Sophie Oliver, Esther Rogers, Beckee White, Julie Murphy, Heather Cusack, Janine Miller (UNISON Regional Officer).

Welcome by chair and introduction of branch officers

JH chaired the meeting and welcomed all members. Branch officers present introduced themselves.

Apologies

No apologies were recorded.

Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the last AGM in 2021 were approved.

Annual report from the branch committee

Reports from officers

JH said the BCP Council pay and grading and terms and conditions work continues. JH highlighted that we thought there was a proposal in January 2022 we could put to members but it did not get political support. The proposal is now to introduce the new pay and reward package in April 2024. The Council had talked to us about introducing it in April 2023, with people being told they would be going up but not actually doing so on that date, but people in protection who will see a reduction in wages. We could not accept this on equal pay grounds.

In response there was a wide discussion from members on the use of agency staff, interim managers and the constant workload which doesn't stop. There was also concern over jobs in Children's Services appearing to be created but not widely advertised, including managers at different levels. The opportunities are shared among more interim positions, and people are leaving as a result. JH said we have asked questions about the Council budget and what is happening is a concern. A further discussion took place about the risk to the Council because of the amount of people waiting for services and the lack of care in the community for adults. This has an impact on morale of staff as they are not able to provide the care people need. Both in Children's and Adults, it was noted the people are finding their own care.

JH encouraged members to have meetings with us so we can gather this information and take it to the Joint Information and Consultation Committees within the Council. JM said vacancy and retention rates is something to take up in HR meetings, along with questions about the Council's plans on workforce development.

RR gave an update on the work of the National Schools Committee. There had been a lot of work on our COVID response and collecting the data from across the country. The Schools Committee have worked with the teaching unions on joint statements and guidance on COVID. RR reported that they had also tried to do a lot to encourage members in schools to vote in the NJC pay campaigns, but we didn't

get the numbers to take action. RR commented that there is a feeling within schools that lots of people are moving because they can get similar money working in a supermarket. So they want more money but don't want to fight for their current employment. RR is seeing this within his own trust, where many Teaching Assistants are leaving. RR said we have been trying to get more school stewards involved with a what's app group and encouraged others to join it. RR also noted the Facebook Group for school staff in the south west which has been popular, particularly during COVID, which hasn't gone away.

Financial Report

Audited accounts for previous year

JH shared the year end accounts. He explained UNISON's financial cycle is January to December. In terms of spending it is all during the calendar year, and then audited before the end of the financial year.

JH highlighted the total income includes money the branch gets from membership fees. The 'other income' refers to money we received after coming out of what was a Dorset Area Resource agreement.

JH said the surplus position looks healthy, although some expected expenditure, such as a redundancy and an increase in in-person activities in the next year, will take some of the surplus.

JH continued to go through last year's branch accounts. A discussion took place about the main items of expenditure. The meeting was asked to approve the accounts for the last year. The meeting accepted the accounts unanimously.

An outline budget for the year ahead was shared at the meeting. JH said this was broadly based on the types of things we usually spend money on, including education, and JH encouraged anyone who wanted to get active that full training is given. There is also member learning.

JH said the overall budget reflects the income we received in the last year, and the membership remaining at a similar level.

JH said It is anticipated each self-organised group and occupational group will bring forward a budget based on the activities they want to take forward during the next year. We will use the branch reserves where necessary to allocate resources to workplans where additional activities are identified outside of the outline budget, with the agreement of the Branch Committee.

Appointment of auditors

No auditors were appointed at the meeting but it was noted that an external auditor has been used for the 2021 accounts.

Branch Priorities

JH started a discussion about the branch priorities for the year ahead. and asked the meeting what their priorities are over the next few months of the year in terms of activities that you might want to do and get involved in as part of our equalities work. We have self-organisation within the union of different groups of members such as

women, LGBT+, Black and Disabled Members so there is a potential to work on activities within and across those groups and members.

JH asked if anyone had any particular priorities.

TS said he is aware of UNISON nationally supporting the people of Ukraine, people who are obviously fleeing from a very desperate situation. TS asked if there is anything that the branch can do locally as there is a large Ukrainian population in the BCP and Dorset area. JH also mentioned the national appeal for donations. JM said there are local groups, such as Dorset Race Equality Council, which might hold information on community groups and we could approach to see how they want to be supported. TS is going to take this forward, but wanted to make sure it was within the remit of the union. DG suggested supporting something locally we would be able to see how it has helped people directly. JH said the meeting was happy with the idea that we reach out to the local communities and local groups.

JM said 2022 is the Year of the Disabled Worker and said it would be good to use this to try and get an active self-organised group. JH said the branch could promote the regional work he is involved in during the year.

There was also a discussion about recruiting more members. AW said cost is often talked about as a reason for not joining a union, and wants to focus on lower paid. JH mentioned recruitment initiatives of other branches and a regional discussion that took place. JM said the learning offer is important, and financial wellbeing seminars are part of that. HC said we need to get the energy back after COVID, and put it into recruitment activities. We also need to look at basic education, as HC said that she learnt about unions from family but she is not sure student social workers know about unions. HC pointed out that people are anxious about their money but we didn't get enough of them to vote to take industrial action, so people need to understand what unions are for. ER agreed more education is needed and suggested short facts based pieces on what the union has done in a month might get people's attention. SM said the use of Teams e-cards is one way to get attention in the Council, as you get notifications of those.

Election of branch officers

JH confirmed the following members are elected to branch officer posts:

Branch Secretary – Jon Hartley;

Michelle Davies – Treasurer;

Tony Smikle – Equalities Co-ordinator;

Beckee White – Communications Officer

Education Officer, and Learning Co-ordinator – Jamie Fry;

Retired Members Secretary – Bob Hucklesby;

Women's Officer - Emma Fry

JF asked about vacant branch posts. JH said there are a number, including Chair, Membership Officer and a number of self-organised officer posts.

JH asked for any nominations from the meeting – there weren't any.

Ratification of election of stewards

JH confirmed the following members are elected to steward;

BCP Council: Adults Social Care and Commissioning: Kate Chizlet, Adrian Smith, Ollie Thorneycroft, Beckee White, Adam Woolfenden. Children's Services: David Welch, Clare Girling, Sophia Mills, Tony Smikle. Environment: Steve Cocorachio, Geoff Hobbs, Mathew Reid.

Growth and Infrastructure: Julie Spencer, Communities: Sandi Clarke, Organisation and Development: Kevin Judd, Law and Governance: Tanya Coulter, IT: Dean Corver.

Tricuro: Moya Ireland, Olivia-Tyler Moore, Sabrina Oberpichler, Lyseth Marin-Rivas (Convenor).

Schools: Michelle Boreham (Winchelsea); Mark Hannington (Poole Grammar); Sally Jones, Laura Davies (both Avonbourne Academy); Nicola Bartlett (Cornerstone Academy); Esther Rogers (Elm Academy); Rauf Rawson (Bethany Junior); Simone Thompson (Longfleet Primary); Deborah Nicholls, Rachel Taylor (both Winton Primary); Sharon Treadwell (Linwood).

Health and Safety Reps: Noel Raleigh (BCP - Environment).

JH said there are vacancies in different departments and schools, and if you are interested in getting active in your workplace, full training is available.

Dominic Gattrell said he would like to become a steward in IT, to add to the stewards there. Nomination came from the meeting.

TK said she may be interested in becoming a steward but would need more information about the time commitment. JH said he will be in contact.

JH said that he and branch offers would support any new stewards.

Update on collective bargaining issues and campaigns

JH said there had recently been discussions about Tricuro. Dorset Council are proposing their own local authority trading company, and we are trying to determine the impact on members currently within BCP Branch. BCP Commissioners have said they are committed to Tricuro. JH said there is work to do to get clarity for members around any TUPE process, as some currently provide services in Dorset and we will work through this with Dorset Branch.

JH said new staff TUPE'd into the Environment department at the Council which might be a recruitment opportunity, along with PHP in the next year. Most of our work is still focused on the pay and grading and terms and conditions piece within the Council. This is likely to be ongoing in the next year.

JM highlighted the social care campaign to achieve a minimum wage of £10.50 per hour for social care staff.

JH said it is about securing better terms and conditions, but also the basic rate of pay for those roles because we know that the imposition of the mandatory vaccination for deployment in care homes had a massive impact on the recruitment and the subsequent crisis in recruitment around that.

JH said we're going to broaden out to other care homes and we've been looking at the care providers in the sector and which ones are targets. We also need to find out what care workers' main concern is. Is it the pay or is it something else?

Branch Rules

JH shared proposed branch rules with the meeting. JH said these are based on the model rules found in the Good Practice Guide for branches. Virtual meetings are formally within the rules, along with allowing electronic voting. This is particularly important for Committee decisions if we are not quorate. JM said the inclusion of virtual meetings reflects what has happened since the pandemic. There was a discussion of how frequent we have been quorate in meetings, and what that quoracy could be going forward. JM said quoracy needs to consider proportionality, and with a very small number, you could have a small number of individuals making decisions. JM said 10 members is ok from a governance point. JM said under these rules, reps are members of the committee so there is a wide group of members. JH said currently quoracy is around 12 (as a percentage of members of the committee) but the proposal is to specify 10 members is a quorate meeting for branch committee.

JH said we want to encourage greater attendance. DG said make the meetings decision-focused to encourage participation. ST said make them shorter, with more action points and less formal.

The branch rules were agreed unanimously but the meeting was not quorate, so the rules will go to the Regional Development and Organising Committee for a decision.

Objectives and branch development plan date for coming year

JH said from the branch priorities we have things we want to do next year which will go to the branch development day activists on 24 March where priorities can be put into action, including race discrimination training and develop self-organised groups. We also have a focus on care workers.

JH said another aspect where we've got some really good work going on is within United Learning Trust, that we can then try and use in other academies. Coastal Learning is another we hope to get collective bargaining restarted in. JH said sharing good practice will be important.

JH said we will find different ways to support people who want to become involved.

JH learning is a key priority. There is a vast amount of member learning and we want to make sure that everybody is aware of the offer. The UNISON College is being

developed, particularly by the General Secretary, in part to replace the hole left by the Union Learning Fund, which was withdrawn by government.

JH also said there are equalities events and courses over the next year and raising awareness of those and encouraging participation is another priority.

JH said UNISON There For You launched an Energy Appeal recently and we will need to promote this support over the next year. JH said using the website is one way, and we have also talked during the meeting about hard copies of materials and a newsletter.

JH asked if anyone had any comments? If anyone wants to they can email JH with suggestions or have a discussion.

Regional officers report

JM said she had really enjoyed working with and supporting the branch in the last year and looks forward to working on the branch priorities in the next year.

From my perspective the branch is working incredibly hard. We've come through some real challenges around COVID and around public sector key workers being incredibly flexible, working incredibly hard with very little recognition, as somebody said in this meeting, incredibly frustrating that we couldn't get over the threshold for for action on pay and that's something that you know will be looking to try and resolve in the coming year and trying to get people angry again, but maybe pay isn't the issue. Maybe other things are the issue that we need to get angry about.

JM highlighted the work the branch is doing around terms and conditions in the Council and the restructures. The challenges of teams working together with different pay and reward structures. On schools, again, incredible challenges there in dealing with COVID that is still out there, the government seems to think we're just living with and I'm not entirely sure what that looks like in schools yet. JM also said there is a real challenge in the social care workforce as it is incredibly underpaid, undervalued and we have an opportunity to bring the NHS and local government together through the work of BCP Commissioners and partners.

JM did ask those present: when you leave this meeting, if you speak to at least one or possibly three people in your workplace, in your team, and ask them to join UNISON, because that's the quickest and easiest way that we can recruit people, by word of mouth and by everybody, members and reps on the ground, talking about why you need to join UNISON.

JH thanked all the activists for their work this year, the members for their involvement, and closed the meeting.