

UNISON IN WALTHAM FOREST
MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

(evening meeting)

Wednesday 4 March 2015
Council Chambers, Waltham Forest Town Hall.

Apologies: Julie Woolf, Cecil Codrington, Sandra Lloyd

1. Minutes of the last AGM were agreed.

2. **Asbestos**

The Branch Secretary reported that Waltham Forest Council recently pleaded guilty to mismanagement of asbestos and the court case will continue at Southwark Crown Court on 30/3/15. This is as a result of asbestos in the Town Hall basement being unmanaged and placing staff at risk.

The earlier AGM meeting heard from Ann Marie Christie at Thompsons Solicitors who advised any members concerned about possible exposure to contact Thompsons for inclusion on their national database.

3. **Officer and Conference reports**

Reports from Branch officers and Conference delegates were included in the AGM pack.

Branch Secretary

Dave Knight highlighted problems of falling membership and the need for more recruitment. He also reported that the UNISON pay campaign was very disappointing and that no further pay offer will be made until 2016.

Chris Street has been elected Branch Secretary as Dave is retiring in July.

International Officer

The International Officer, Oona Kelly reported that the American embargo against Cuba remains in place but there has been some relaxation of regulations relating to travel etc.

Treasurer

Lynne Troughton's report highlighted the financial difficulties faced by the branch but the branch managed to save £10,000 last year. The budget proposed for this year was agreed by the meeting.

Oona Kelly has taken over as Treasurer and thanks were given to Lynne for her hard work as she was leaving the borough.

4. Motion on Branch Finance

Given the financial difficulties the motion below was passed and includes various measures to restrict future expenditure.

This Branch AGM recognises that our branch is running in deficit at the moment and has been for some while. At previous AGM's we have agreed to transfer money from the Industrial Action Fund and last year agreed to convert the Industrial Action Fund into a Contingency Fund in order to ensure the branch is able to continue running its campaigns and services at the same level.

This AGM thanks the outgoing treasurer Lynne Troughton in successfully reducing branch expenditure but the branch is still running at a loss year on year.

This AGM therefore reluctantly agrees that the branch should:

- a. Cease to fund visitors to conferences.
- b. Review the various agreements that it has with private contractors for IT Support, photocopying and any other regular outgoings in order to investigate whether further savings can be made.
- c. Ring-fence an amount of money equivalent to the redundancy entitlements for the branch employed staff in our Contingency Fund for the purpose of ensuring the branch can meet the entitlements of our staff should the need arise.
- d. Focus all its efforts on recruitment. The best solution to this funding problem is to increase our income.

Proposed: Dave Knight

Seconded: Bill Palmer

The motion was agreed by those present.

5. Branch Officers' attendance at Committee meetings

Lynne Troughton asked for the chart included in the papers for the AGM to be checked as she felt it was not accurate.

6. Election of Branch Officers 2015

The list of Officers presented at the meeting was ratified. Glynis Carpenter was nominated at the lunchtime AGM for the position of Women's Officer by Dave Knight and seconded by Lynne Troughton and this was agreed by the meeting.

7. Conference and committee delegates

Nominated conference and committee delegates agreed by the meeting. There are still some vacancies and members were advised to contact the branch office if interested in taking up any of these positions.

8. **Ratification of Reps**

The presented list of Reps was agreed at the meeting.

9. **Recruitment competition**

This was won by Lawrence Ekele, Steward at George Mason Lodge.

10. **Motions**

Motions on 'The Pensions Board' and 'No Confidence in the Chief Executive' were agreed by the meeting.

a.) Pensions Board

This Branch welcomes the new governance arrangements for Scheme member involvement on the new style Pensions Boards that are being established throughout the country.

In Waltham Forest UNISON currently has observer status on the Pension Fund Committee and we would want UNISON to provide the Scheme representatives on the new Pensions Board once it is established.

Our branch believes that these representatives should be elected by UNISON members in Waltham Forest and that they should be accountable to those members.

We therefore agree to:

1. Create a new Branch Officer position of Branch Pensions Officer whose role would be to attend Pensions Board meetings to represent UNISON and all scheme members. The post would have full voting rights at Branch Committee and would need to be filled by a UNISON member who is also a member of the LGPS. The post would also be responsible for monitoring the scheme and reporting back on their activities and any developments to Branch members.
2. This officer would also deal with pension enquiries on behalf of individual members though this would exclude giving any financial advice.
3. In order to facilitate this new role the branch also agrees to merge the posts of Membership Services secretary with the post of Membership Secretary and
4. Merge the posts of Publicity Officer and Campaign Officer.

Proposed by Branch Committee

The motion was agreed by those present.

b.) No Confidence in Waltham Forest Council Chief Executive

This Branch has no confidence in the Waltham Forest Council Chief Executive for the following reasons:

1. During his time as Chief Executive he has failed to protect the Council workforce from exposure to asbestos *and failed to act when Director of Environment.*

2. In 2012, under his leadership, the Council cut the pay of lower paid Council workers (those Graded at Scale 6 and below), deliberately ensuring that the cuts to terms and conditions were primarily inflicted on the lowest paid workers.
3. Under his leadership this Council has employed large numbers of consultants without proper equal opportunities recruitment procedures and has paid them inflated salaries that far exceed the Council's own evaluation of what the posts concerned are worth.
4. Under his leadership since 2010 the Council workforce has reduced by 800 people, causing misery and financial hardship to many workers of Waltham Forest.
5. Furthermore, the Council has lost over 1,000 jobs. These represent employment opportunities that have been lost to the people of Waltham Forest.
6. The Chief Executive has accepted a pay rise that is in breach of the government's public sector pay restraint policy (of 1%). He has received a pay rise of £15,000 per annum (8%+ increase) *as a reward for making the cuts*.
7. Under his leadership, the Council has devolved decision making regarding staffing issues to the management team of the Council thereby ensuring that the trade unions can no longer formally relate to Council members.

This Branch AGM therefore calls on the Chief Executive to tender his resignation and that the branch secretary will write to the Leader of the Council, Chris Robbins to that effect.

Motion proposed by the Branch Committee. Amendments from the floor (in italics above) were accepted.

The motion was agreed by those present.