**UNISON**

**Edinburgh Napier University Branch**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 11th February, 2014**

**Room B32, Merchiston Campus**

**Branch Executive Group present:** Malcom Mackay, Stephen McLellan, Elaine Macdonald, John Wood, David Campbell, Maxine Wood, Allison Johnstone, Gary Britton

**Branch members present:** counted as being 23 people (Total 31)

**In attendance:** Emma Phillips, UNISON Full Time Officer

 Caroline McLean, Welfare Officer, City of Edinburgh Council

1. **Welcome**

Stephen McLellan welcomed members to the meeting and outlined the agenda.

**2.0 Minutes of Branch AGM, March 2013**

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved.

1. **Matters Arising**

Stephen McLellan provided an update on matters contained within the previous AGM minutes:

* There had been no mergers between colleges and universities.
* Mergers had taken place between colleges. The newly formed Edinburgh College is currently taking industrial action over pay and conditions. Update- an improved agreement now being voted on by EIS members at Edinburgh College
* The Chair of the Branch retiring has meant a period of change for the Branch and new people have got involved over the last year.
* Concerns over the use of credit cards, had been addressed by a credit card analysis. A new credit card management tool had been implemented by the University. The whistleblowing policy was highlighted to members.
1. **UNISON Welfare**

Caroline McLean, Welfare Officer and Service Conditions Officer at City of Edinburgh Council gave a presentation about the welfare provision that is available through UNISON. She highlighted that UNISON is unique among the unions in providing this kind of support. The welfare fund is called “There for You” and any member can apply for a grant. These are not loans and do not have to be paid back. Caroline highlighted potential issues that members could apply for support for: fuel grants, school uniforms, adaptions to home following illness. Support is also available in terms of debt planning, life insurance and writing wills. Funding and advice are handled within the branch where possible and then referred to UNISON at a national level or other appropriate agencies such as CAB.

1. **Secretary’s Report**

Stephen McLellan updated members on the work of the Branch in the previous year:

* There has been a turnover of stewards this year, with new stewards currently undergoing training. The branch committee has continued throughout the year to support members through both collective and individual representation.
* The relationship with the Senior Management Team of the University has improved since the new Principal has come into post. Two examples of this are that the new Recognition Agreement will hopefully be signed next week and that the Branch, along with the EIS are now invited to attend Staff Inductions.
* In the last year the Branch has been involved in 9 consultations regarding organisational change and this involvement has ensured no compulsory redundancies.
* The branch has represented around a dozen members on an individual basis.
* The University has recently changed OH provider. During consultation the Branch was pushing for in house provision. Malcom Mackay asked members for feedback on the new service.
* The Branch is always willing to support members’ charities and fundraising and has made the following donations to charity:
	+ £500 to Prostate Cancer Research
	+ £500 to Breast Cancer Research
	+ £600 to Sick Kids
	+ £500 to CHAS
	+ £500 to Maggie’s Centres
1. **Treasurer’s Report**

David Campbell summarised the annual accounts. He highlighted that there was an operating surplus of £1,748 in the previous year, with the Branch holding a balance of £21,123. Branch funds are currently being transferred to the Unity Trust Bank, in line with UNISON guidelines. David invited members with detailed questions about the accounts to email him directly.

1. **Election of Executive Committee**

Nominations were collected and counted and members were advised of the outcome:

* Branch Secretary and Steward: Stephen McLellan
* Branch Treasurer: David Campbell
* Health and Safety Officer and Steward: Malcom Mackay
* Steward: John Wood
* Welfare Officer and Steward: Elaine Macdonald
* Steward: Gary Britton
* Equalities Officer and Steward: Allison Johnstone

The position of Branch Chair remains vacant. Responsibilities of this role will be shared between Stephen McLellan and Malcom Mackay, as in the previous year.

1. **Briefing of UNISON National Activity**

Emma Phillips provided an overview of UNISON activity at a national level within the HE sector.

* 1. **Governance**

UNISON has recently given input into a Scottish Government report on university governance. This report suggested a number of ways to increase accountability within the sector. The response from the universities has been to work towards bringing in a code of practice. However this falls short of the report recommendations. UNISON views the fight for accountability as ongoing.

* 1. **Ongoing Pay Dispute**

Emma gave an overview of the current pay dispute. The current pay offer of 1% combined with those in previous years equates to a pay decrease of between 13-15% in real terms. Members were balloted and a majority voted for strike action. So far 3 days of action have taken place. She highlighted that pay is negotiated at a national level. While at a Scottish level the unions are receiving a sympathetic hearing at UK level the Employers Association is standing firm. She highlighted that the Unions would be open to a favourable 2 year pay offer. Moving forward there is a meeting to be held in London to decide the next steps for industrial action and she understands that there will be a motion going forward to conference requesting further consultation with members before further strike action.

* 1. **Other Pay Issues within HE**

UNISON is also working on a number of other pay issues: gender pay gap, living wage and zero hours contracts. She highlighted that while Edinburgh Napier pays the living wage, there is no formal agreement in place and that this could also include contractors as well as staff. She encouraged the branch to work towards this as this would ensure that payment of the living wage would remain in place in future years.

* 1. **Branch Involvement**

Emma highlighted the importance of people getting involved within their Branch and encouraged members to take on roles within the Branch Committee.

* 1. **Questions from Members**

**8.5.1 Current Pay Negotiations**

A Member asked about the tone of current pay negotiations. Emma intimated that there had been changes in the negotiating team on the employer’s side and this had led to poorer relations. She felt that some universities were leading on this stance while others were keener to see movement. She highlighted that the biggest Union in England is UCU and they are currently undertaking 2 hour strikes and discussing a marking ban. NUS are supporting this action.

**8.5.2 Principals’ Pay Rises**

A Member asked what UNISON is doing to raise awareness of the large pay increases being given to university Principals. Emma stated that UNISON is trying to put pressure on Scottish Government regarding the issue. They have also sent out a number of press releases as part of the ongoing dispute. Within Scottish Government, Mike Russell has picked up on this issue and expressed concern and highlighted the need for restraint. Emma acknowledged that more could be done in this area.

**8.5.3 Press Coverage of Strike Action**

A Member expressed concern over the lack of coverage UNISON was receiving with regard to the current dispute in comparison with other unions such as the UCU. Emma highlighted that UNISON have good relations with the media in various local areas, but at a national level, journalists tend to go to the unions with University in the title. To combat this UNISON are working to raise the profile of the union within Education.

1. **Prize Draw for Returned Nomination Forms**

The prize draw was won by Tom Collier.

**10.0 Any Other Business**

**10.1 Car Parking**

The issue of car parking, in particular at Merchiston Campus, was raised. Malcolm Mackay told members that from current discussions at the JCC, that the University have intimated that they do not have the resource to patrol car parks. They are currently investigating third party provision of this work. If this is the case the company will have the right to fine individuals. The Branch is currently waiting for the University to put forward a firm proposal. Members expressed frustration at the current situation. Concern was raised as to what money paid to the University in monthly car parking charges is used for. One member informed the meeting that the University collected over £80,000 per year in parking charges and that it was utilised on operating expenditure such as clearing snow and repairing barriers. David Campbell intimated that when parking charges were first established money collected was to be used on improvements to car parking areas i.e. bike racks etc. Members at Merchiston were frustrated by residents parking in the car parks overnight and not vacating spaces in the morning. It was felt that this raised health and safety issues during out of hours working as people had to walk back to their car which was often parked some distance away. One member highlighted that after hours people could request security staff to escort them to their car. Members were encouraged to do this. Members asked the Branch to formally raise the issue of residents parking in the Merchiston car park at the next JCC.

**10.2 Branch Meetings**

A member requested that there be more regular branch meetings which would enable members to share information and build solidarity. It was agreed that the Branch will aim to hold quarterly update meetings.

**10.3 Branch Event**

It was suggested that the Branch use some of its money to hold an evening event for all members. This idea was opposed due to the current strike action. It was suggested that funds should be used to provide strike pay instead. The meeting was informed that this was not allowed. Emma Phillips highlighted that while the branch couldn’t do this for this current dispute, the Branch could set up a strike pay fund, which could be used in future disputes.

**10.4 Branch Involvement in Restructuring**

A member enquired if the Branch was involved in the restructuring of Property and Facilities. Malcom Mackay confirmed that they were.

**10.5 Branch Stall at Edinburgh Napier 50th Anniversary Celebration Event**

It was suggested that the Branch request a stall at the 50th Anniversary Celebration Event.