EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY UNISON AGM

Thursday 10th March 2016

**Present**: Stephen McLellan (Branch Secretary, convenor of the meeting), Emma Phillips (UNISON Higher Education), Greig Kelbie (Local Organiser), Mike Kirby (UNISON Scottish Secretary), plus stewards and members: in total 42 people in attendance. 2 apologies noted.

**Minutes of the last AGM and matters arising:**

Approved.

Convenor noted that both David Campbell (Treasurer) and Elaine Macdonald (Welfare Officer) had since left the University.

Convenor provided a general report relating to:

1. **HE Governance Bill** which has been passed. Giving Trade Unions, Staff and Students more influence in decision-making of Universities and formal representation on University Governing Bodies (Court), as well as chairs of court having to be elected by staff and students.

It was noted that UNISON and students should be active in identifying and voting for suitable candidates.

1. **Recruitment.** ENU branch lost members due to VS but with the support of the local organiser, Greig Kelbie, new members have been recruited. In particular branch is looking to recruit more women stewards and stewards for the Craiglockhart campus. Current members should refer any colleagues with an interest in joining to Stephen or Greig or speak to their campus rep if they know one.
2. **Branch Organisation.** Branch Secretary is undertaking the majority share of duties and responsibilities, in relation to policy, representation and working with HR, and has been seconded to UNISON 3 days a week: Wednesday (some home working), Thursday and Friday at Sighthill Room 7B35.

The Branch reps are being supported by the Local Organiser Greig Kelbie. Greig’s role is funded across a number of Edinburgh HE branches with a primary focus on recruitment and supporting the organisation and effectiveness of local branch committees. The position is match-funded by UNISON. ENU branch have committed to contribute for a further year as it is felt that the post is returning dividends in relation to recruitment, publicity and communication.

Local stewards continue to be active within the branch and in representing members.

1. **Re-structure and Voluntary Severance**. Loss of UNISON members and staff generally noted as a concern. Impact on remaining staff is a focus for the branch and so have launched the ‘Say no to overwork’ campaign.
2. **HR.** Noted that there has been lots of changes with ENU HR and that this has been a challenging time for stewards to negotiate this change but is hoped a period of stability will now prevail.
3. **JNCC**. Noted that ENU Unions are required to negotiate through this committee but there are concerns regarding its operation.
4. **Local Issues.** Branch has been active in dealing with Car Parking and Fixed Holidays with some limited success for the former, while there has not been much progress on the Holidays issue. It was noted that the University’s resistance to flexible working which is becoming more restrictive in some areas is impacting on the negotiations in relation to Holidays.
5. **Branch Finances** are healthy and branch has managed to discharge more expenditure on legitimate business than in previous years. Going forward it is no longer the intention to make substantial charitable donations, although applications and suggestions for small donations are still welcomed. Branch’s preference is to support local community initiatives and in particular where UNISON will be able to obtain positive publicity for doing so.
6. **University’s Financial Position** is less healthy as it is not on target to raise projected funding but has also received the national SFC cut. Meantime £3 million was made available to fund VS along with a £9K bonus for the Principal.

It was noted that despite the financial cuts and loss of staff UNISON branch, locally and nationally should continue to campaign and challenge for better pay, terms & conditions.

1. **Trade Union Bill**. Conservative attack on Trade Union rights is currently going through Parliament and is sitting with the House of Lords. The Lords are attempting to ameliorate against the worst excesses of the Bill.
2. **Elections.** The result of the elections was announced:

Secretary Stephen McLellan 15 votes No opposition

Treasurer Libby Hume 12 votes No opposition

Health and Safety Malcom McKay 13 votes Elected

Gary Britton 4 votes Elected

Alan Boyce 3 votes Elected

Equality and Diversity Rojan Subramani 3 votes Referred back to Branch

Welfare Stewart Walls 3 votes Elected

General Stewards A Boyce 9 votes

D Baird 3 votes Training required

S Walls 10 votes

M Wood- ENSA 5 votes

G Britton 9 votes

J Wood 11 votes

G Davies 2 votes Training required

1. **Mike Kirby Guest Speaker.** Key Highlights:
   1. Thank you to members, activists and stewards for continuing support for UNISON
   2. Pay negotiation 2016 – 17. UNISON challenging standard public sector cap of 1% as although higher than current inflation rate when taken into account over the past 10 years actually represents a cut. Campaigning for bottom loading to benefit lower paid. Constrained by the 1 year framework for public finance and aim is to return to a 3 year planning cycle.
   3. HE Governance Bill – will go some way to address the imbalances in power but will require training and support for UNION members to ensure they are in a position to influence the debate and decisions.
   4. Pensions – the impact of changes to National Insurance as noted in relation to the opted out pension schemes which will result in an employee contribution of an additional 1.4%
   5. UK Austerity programme – UNISON continues to campaign against the austerity programme which will represent a 12.5% reduction in public service funding by 2020. UNISON view is that the Scottish Government could have made a stronger stand against this.
   6. Branch issues – clearly the restructure has affected morale and of note is that 3 times more than the number of VS places available were applied for, which again is indicative of low morale at the University. Hence the launch of the ‘Say no to overwork’ campaign.
   7. UK Counter-terrorism Bill – and the ‘Prevent’ initiative was outlined and concerns raised over public services employees being required to report suspected terrorist activity.
   8. Policy Development – UNISON has continued to develop policies aimed at challenging austerity and mitigating against the worst excesses.
   9. Trade Union Bill – is the biggest attack on public service unions in the past 30 years and is comparable to Thatcher’s attack on industrial unions. The Bill seeks to prevent payroll subscriptions from union members; monitors and restrict the time and activities undertaken by stewards; imposes unrealistic thresholds for ballots. The Lords are reviewing the Bill with a particular focus on human rights re: freedom of speech, right to gather and organise etc. Employers are not supportive of the Bill and the Scottish Government has said it will not support/implement restrictions relating to the Civil Service and Health Service. In general the Bill is aimed at restricting criticism and action.
   10. Mike reminded the members of the gains won by the Trade Union movement including the introduction of the minimum wage; abolition of child labour; health and safety legislation; improved maternity and parental rights, and that UNISON continues to fight for better holidays, improved sickness entitlement, the rights of migrant workers.
2. **Questions**. A number of questions were asked around:
3. EU Human Rights legislation and the UK referendum.
4. HE Governance Bill in relation to setting the pay of University Leadership Teams
5. The involvement of students in nominating and selecting the Convenor of Court.
6. The ‘Prevent’ initiative and if ENU had a policy
7. External Seating and Rubbish Bins at Merchiston
8. **Raffle Draw.** Number 7 was drawn and a £50 cheque was provided to the lucky winner, Isabel Devlin.
9. **Honorarium.** The members voted (bar 1 objection) to give Libby Hulme a one off £250 Honorarium for completing the UNISON accounts in her new role as Treasurer.