

MINUTES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY NIC MEETING
21-22 SEPTEMBER 2004
ESHER PLACE.

Present: Pat McCourt, Willie Gowans, Tommy Bowler, Darren Mahon, Chris Gold, Kevin Perry, Dave Lord, Davie Brockett, Dave Hodgson, Ronald Conn, Mark Wood, John Moore, Ian Smith, Dick Banks, John Allott (National Officer), Olivia Fitch (Research Officer), Mike Routledge (Regional Officer), Harry Howard (Regional Officer.)

Apologies: Bob Fox, Earl Sutherland.

1. Introduction and Welcome.

John Allott welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained item 7 on agenda, which arose following an email from John Gibbons in the Amicus conference office. All NICs were required to convene a meeting in November to consider amendments to policy motions and rule amendment motions for 2005 Policy and Rules Conference. To avoid reconvening this committee it JG had agreed that this could be done at this meeting. JA asked the NIC to agree that this could proceed on the following day to allow everyone time to read the motions. Agreed.

2. Election of Chair

Willie Gowans elected.

3. Defend Council Housing.

Alan Walters from the Campaign group addressed the meeting. Amicus affiliated to the DCH campaign at the last NEC and are now taking an active role. A briefing has been prepared for Amicus delegates at the Labour Party Conference next week where a minority motion calling for a level playing field for council housing has been put forward for debate. A discussion followed concerning what was happening in local areas and the actions we could take. Key issues raised:

- NEC should encourage branches to affiliate to DCH locally and to run local campaigns against transfer etc.
- We should push for a change in Government policy not just for the 4th Option but also to reverse the trend and allow councils to build homes again.
- Pensions deficit: is this a hidden agenda to transfer LGPS members out of scheme and into private sector?
- Southampton: Council undertook a stock appraisal process 2 years ago and agreed to retain their stock. They are now being forced to go through the whole process again.

- Plymouth: unions have organised a public meeting on October 7th. They would like a speaker from DCH and Amicus to attend.
- ALMOs provide a potential structure for local authorities to contract out to the private sector. In Easington, the ALMO is now looking for partner contracts within the private sector and is moving away from DLOs.
- Glasgow Housing Association has now bought secondary transfers forward from 2007 to 2005.
- In Sedgefield local authority officers stand to gain from ALMOs etc by way of bigger salaries etc.
- Local councillors are often ignorant of the issues. In Nottingham tenants wanted to stay with the council but voted for ALMO as they were told there was no other option.
- Birmingham CC spent £12million on the campaign that still resulted in a No vote.
- It is vital to campaign as early as possible as councils will bring the date of the ballot forward as dirty tricks tactic.

The NIC agreed to send an emergency resolution to the Amicus labour party delegation asking them to support the minority motion and to ask the NEC to inform local councillors of our position. The resolution also asked for an Amicus speaker to attend the DCH Annual Conference at Congress House on Friday 29th October. The committee thanked Alan for attending the meeting and wished him well with the campaign.

4. Pay: Update on National Negotiations.

JA had attended a meeting with the employers on 7/9/04. Only Amicus and UCATT were present from the union side. The meeting had been unproductive and a further meeting was scheduled with the employer's elected councillors but no date had been fixed. JA had undertaken a consultative ballot with shop stewards regarding industrial action. The majority were very much in favour of taking action. UCATT had done the same but not GMB or T&G who were in difficult position having already signed an agreement for members covered by the Green Book. It was agreed that following the employer's final offer all the unions would hold a consultative ballot to determine the will for industrial action. A general discussion followed. Some concern was expressed about whether members who had done deals outside the Red Book would support industrial action. The procedure of balloting members is also complicated as there is a need to determine who is eligible or not. However, the prevailing view was that the pay offer was unacceptable, that the current skill shortage was a crucial issue and that members wanted to be balloted on industrial action.

5. Recruitment and future work of the committee.

John Allott advised the committee about the union's 1% membership recruitment target. Membership within local authorities has been stable but we are not recruiting many new members. A discussion followed about the best way that we can recruit within local authorities, particularly those members who are not covered by the Red Book. A suggestion was made about tailor-

made membership forms. OF and JA agreed to follow this up with the communications/ publications department. Agreed that the contact details of NIC members would be circulated and also put up on the local authority pages of the Amicus website. (OF)

NIC finished for the day.

Day 2.

6. Delegates Reports.

It was felt that this had been dealt with informally the night before.

7. Future of the Red Book: George Brumwell, General Secretary UCATT.

The Red Book exists because craft workers circumstances are different to other local authority workers. Craft workers have to compete with the private sector within a vicious market place, the bonus scheme is the prime motivator and this is under attack. Equal Pay is also a big threat because of the comparators that have been used and the potential cost to local authorities. Should craft workers be forced onto the Green Book it is likely that their concerns will be ignored and we will face a potential recruitment battleground with other unions. What hope is there for the future? GB suggested that the labour force would benefit from the changes within the construction industry. The Government has realised that the free for all does not work and is imposing order via the ending of bogus self-employed status and growth of apprenticeship schemes.

JA thanked GB for attending and wished him well for his retirement. (GB will be retiring as General Secretary this year. He will be succeeded by Alan Ritchie.)

8. Amendments to policy motions and rule amendments to Amicus Policy and Rules Conference 2005.

Under Rule 12 (7) of the Amicus rulebook, each national sector committee can submit amendments to motions submitted to policy conference. It may also amend (or with the consent of the NEC substitute) a motion submitted by the National Sector Conference for that sector in order to take account of events since that Conference met. It was agreed that this NIC would substitute its motion on TUPE for a motion on council housing. The substitute motion read.

PRIVATISATION OF COUNCIL JOBS AND COUNCIL HOUSING.

This conference, on behalf of all Local Authority members, calls upon the NEC to do all in its power to stop the privatisation of Local Authority jobs. Conference also urges the NEC to encourage Amicus MPs and councillors to halt the ever-growing demise of Council Direct Labour Organisations through PFI's, PPP's, ALMO's and Housing Stock Transfers.

We applaud the successful campaigns for Manufacturing, Pensions and Off-Shoring and call upon the NEC to mount a similar campaign to highlight the issues facing Local Government workers. The campaign should be focused around the provision of decent affordable public housing and the detrimental effects of privatising council housing and council jobs.

This union has opposed the privatisation of council housing stock via PFI, ALMO's and LSVT's, and has also supported the 4th Option for direct investment. The NEC must extend the campaign and support the right for Local Authorities to build council homes again and thus reverse the decline in decent affordable public housing experienced over the last 20 years.

JA will forward to the NEC for approval.

9. Birmingham City Council Project.

Arthur Emmanuel, Regional Officer, West Bromwich addressed the meeting briefly about a recruitment project currently being undertaken within Birmingham City Council. John Gardner, Amicus Organiser, will be undertaking an email project that aims to target all 5,000 employees, whom we hope to recruit.

10. Any Other Business

Website.

OF is responsible for updating the LA pages on the Amicus website.

LGPS.

We are still within the consultative phase but are likely to be facing a battle once decisions have been made. Agreed we would invite Brian Gallagher, Pensions Officer to the next meeting. (JA.)