



## Plymouth Trade Union Council


Secretary: Tony Staunton  
Chair: Dave Franklin

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[www.plymouth-tuc.org.uk](http://www.plymouth-tuc.org.uk)

### Minutes of meeting of Plymouth Trades Union Council held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012 at the Transitions Offices, 171 Armada Way, Plymouth

1. **Present:** Sarah Allen-Melvin (PCS R&C); Suzy Franklin (UNISON Health); Jeremy Guise (UNISON LG); Dave Franklin (PCS LR); Tony Staunton (Unite 193); Phil Johns (Unite 193); Paddy Ryan (Pensioners); Kevin Treweeks (UNISON LG);
2. **Apologies:** John Taylor (UNISON); Diana Beal (Unite);
3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011** were agreed as a correct record, and the following **Matters Arising** taken:
  - 3.1. **Item 3.1. Plymouth *Fightback* Against the Cuts/Right to Work Campaign:**

 **Unite the Resistance Plymouth Conference:** TS explained that unions policy towards the inter-union public pensions dispute had split by 19<sup>th</sup> December, with UNISON and GMB agreeing to the Heads of Agreement required by the Government, which includes acceptance of paying more and working longer to receive less – the core grievances on which 2 million people to strike action on 30<sup>th</sup> November. He was pleased that Unite had refused to sign-up and that PCS continues to lead the defence of current pensions. However, it is clear that the 30<sup>th</sup> November strike was not led by the rank & file and is subject to national political manoeuvres centralised upon the relationship between the national trade union leaders and the Labour Party leadership. This is a complex situation, with historic implications. If members see the resolve and commitment of 30<sup>th</sup> November wasted or come to little, union power will be significantly dented for a long period of time, during which huge job losses and attacks on pay and conditions will continue. Local activists need to be talking with members and building a clamour for further action. This should include local direct action initiatives, continuing to support the *Occupy!* campaign, and public meetings against all the Cuts. The PCS-sponsored Conference in London next Saturday will be important in bringing activists together, and the Unite the Resistance Conference in London on the 14<sup>th</sup> will take place immediately following the first meetings of crucial unions that week. The PTUC will hold a linked Conference the same day, to bring together as many local activists as possible to build the momentum again.

TS **moved** the following motion, seconded by SAM:

**Motion to Plymouth Trades Union Council 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012**

**Plymouth Trades Union Council** recognises the importance of the public sector pensions fight for the future of trade unionism in Britain over the next few years. This is the highest profile national dispute in decades. We cannot afford to let the Government win.

We **note** that currently over 62% of union members are in the public sector - that's almost double the number in the private sector. Union density in the sector is 56%, while that in the private sector is currently only around 14%. Even in manufacturing, union density is under 20%. In the private sector only the ex-publicly owned industries of transport and electricity and gas have union densities of over 40%.

If unions cannot win in the public sector, where union density is so much higher, it is bound to dent the confidence of union members in the private sector as well. We shouldn't be fooled by the Government's divide and rule tactics into thinking that there are multiple separate pensions disputes - sector by sector. There is one dispute and it needs to be fought as such.

We **oppose** the Heads of Agreements (Civil Service, Local Government, NHS, Teachers) negotiated at the end of 2011 all contain similar provisions:

- 1) Every document, including that for Local Government, agrees to people working longer by linking the Normal Pension Date to the State Pension Age. Can you imagine a health worker trying to lift a heavy patient at age 68? The Financial Times reported recently that research showed two thirds of the population have a disability by age 68.
- 2) Every document, again including the LGPS one, agrees to move from a final salary scheme to a career average one. All the union research demonstrates that this will make members worse off (and the Government have boasted about this as a cost saving measure and believe it will make privatisation easier).
- 3) The documents all agree CPI as a basis for pension increases rather than RPI - an effective cut in pension by 1% per year, compounded through every year of retirement. It's not specifically covered in the LGPS document but implied by the statement "That the LGPS maintain its relative value in terms of benefits in relation to other public sector schemes" suggesting that Local Government increases should follow the norm of the other schemes, i.e. CPI.
- 4) Every document implies higher contributions, although for the LGPS one this is deferred for two years. The percentage increase will vary from scheme to scheme but most of our members can expect to be paying more than 50% extra over the next three years.
- 5) In each document, the various protections offered to those approaching retirement are not guaranteed but subject to Treasury approval - as the LGPS document puts it "Principle 7. That the method of meeting the cost of protections need to be confirmed by Treasury."

The strike ballots across all sectors campaigned against the same issue: - Pay 50% More, Get 50% Less. The Heads of Agreement have not changed that situation - Danny Alexander made that clear in his statement in the House of Commons before Xmas. To accept these agreements would be seen by most members as a defeat.

The Heads of Agreement are important even though they are not a final agreement. The LGPS document puts it very clearly:

"At the meeting of the 15th November between LGA lead members and officials from the GMB, Unison and Unite it was concluded that discussions should be progressed with the aim of reaching agreement on a set of high level principles for the Local Government Pension Scheme.

"In setting this objective all parties accept that any agreement which may be reached would be subject to consultation with and confirmation by their respective memberships.

"The following document is the result of the above discussions and forms the Heads of Agreement between the LGA and UNISON, GMB and UNITE on behalf of the LGPS unions)."

**Plymouth Trades Union Council** also **notes** that Unite signed the LGPS document, as did Unison and the GMB. That means the negotiators signed up to the Principles. In Health, the National Officer warned about the consequences of not signing, however an emergency teleconference of the NISC, called under pressure, rejected the document out of hand. In MOD/Government Departments, the National Officer did not sign, but the Principles have not been rejected out of hand.

Plymouth Trades Union Council **believes** this approach from our TUC affiliate National negotiators does not reflect the position taken by trade unions in November which recognised the need for further co-ordinated industrial action.

If we allow this dispute to be settled on rotten terms on a sector by sector basis, we will not just have done a disservice to our own members - we will also have contributed to allowing the Government to inflict a massive defeat on the trade union movement as a whole.

We therefore **resolve** to call upon union branches to

1. support the lobby of the TUC on Thursday 12 January
2. call upon the TUC to withdraw fully from the current Heads of Agreement document and LGPS document;
3. demand that the TUC immediately organise for further co-ordinated inter-union industrial action; and
4. require National and Local Officers to carry out EC policy.
5. send this motion, suitably reworded, to South West TUC Executive for forwarding nationally.

**In discussion**, DF suggested that members will not be happy about signing the new agreement. The unions who have not signed-up cover all the other schemes outside Local Government. The PCS, most teaching unions and POA have said no to the Heads of Agreement, as has Unite for the other sectors. If we are able to pursuer campaigns inside the unions, we have a chance. There has to be a clamour from below for a ballot in front of any Agreement. We need to have branches demand a ballot – this should be our starting point. It is clear we are up against a bureaucratic fear of a dispute getting out of their control. A number of UNISON officials have said that the reason they signed the Heads of Agreement is that this is the best deal that can be won outside of further industrial action.

SAM suggested that the Labour Government has played a role here, hoping that the bad stuff will be done by the Tories ahead of the next election. She suggested that the vitality and size of N30 had been played down. We have to push for action.

KT explained that union negotiators will say they have not agreed to anything. TS explained the motion's detail of what has been agreed to. DF explained that the unions involved have agreed to put the HoA to their respective NEC's, effectively isolating PCS and the Left.

JG suggested this is a classic divide-and-rule tactic, and it is not enough to ask members what they want – the membership will need leadership and explanation. The votes for action, of those who voted, were very large majorities. Conversely, each time a union backs down, members ask why they are paying their fees.

KT admitted that the UNISON Branch on-line plebiscite offers no explanation of the Heads of Agreement, and is absent of any direction or leadership. But we do need to mobilise members to get out and express their views. A regional meeting for UNISON activists is being held in Exeter tomorrow, where further clarification will be sought.


DF explained this is an agreement which binds the unions to career average, CPI, and linked to State retirement age. The LG scheme is split over the cap on employer contributions (the Pickles letter) but the Heads of Agreement are the non-negotiable basis for further negotiations. We need to ask the question – why are national negotiators prepared to accept less than we were balloted about in the first place, and took strike action over?

JG suggested there is a vital need for general meetings for all members. DF moved an amendment: "Add new Point 4: "Require trade unions to hold binding ballots of entire affected membership in advance of any final agreement.", and renumber subsequent Points." Seconded by JG. The amendment was accepted by the mover.

The motion was then **put to the vote** and **carried unanimously**.

The meeting then moved to the Plymouth *Unite the Resistance* Conference called for by PTUC for 14<sup>th</sup> January. DF reported that three union branches have supported the Plymouth Conference, and a national speaker from UCU NEC has been booked to speak. Since then, a national Conference of *Unite the Resistance* has been called for the same date.

**In discussion**, SAM suggested that arrangements have been made for people who are attending the Plymouth conference to attend. She also felt that people will not go to London two weeks running. PCS has circulated the Conference across the peninsula branches. DF explained that we will be unlikely to get national speakers for the 14<sup>th</sup> January. PJ questioned whether we need national speakers. DF explained that high-profile people will draw people locally. The meeting **agreed** to stay with 14<sup>th</sup>, with a further consideration of the structure of the Conference.

 **Occupy Plymouth:** TS explained the expulsion of Occupy from the disused Job Centre at Bretonside. JG suggested the international Occupy movement has had a great resonance and it is good that Plymouth has been part of that. Phil Johns identified that Len McCluskey spoke in full support of Occupy and has visited the St Paul's Occupy site. PTUC should have no concern about supporting and advocating for Occupy Plymouth. TS explained that the Occupy Plymouth group have re-camped at the Jigsaw Gardens with fewer numbers, and has called a protest in the City Centre for 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1pm. The meeting **agreed** to continue to support the movement.

**3.2. Item 3.2. Anti-Incinerator Campaign:** TS reported from the public protest 22<sup>nd</sup> December with over 100 people protesting. JG suggested the PTUC formally ask the Labour Group to rescind the decision should they be elected to power in May. He considered the decision to be a prelude to the larger issue of the Nuclear Dump. SAM reflected upon the class issue of the incinerator campaigns locally and nationally, that the poorest communities get all the polluting industries. PJ suggested the local population have experienced a very positive political education. The potential for a judicial review should be considered and can hold-up the process.

#### 4. Class Struggle

**4.1. RMT/ASLEF/TSSA Strikes:** No report

**4.2. PCS strikes:** SAM reported strike action for Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January of all staff in processing/contact centres, followed by further action on 31<sup>st</sup> January – the filing date for tax returns. The meeting gave formal support.

**4.3. Plymouth Royal Devonport Dockyard:** PJ reported on the pensions being protected.

**4.4. UCU:** no report

**4.5. Plymouth City Council:** KT spoke of the continued restructures and job losses.

**4.6. Southampton Local Government Strike:** talks continue

**4.7. Balfour Beatty Strike Action:** no action in Plymouth. The meeting agreed to support the disputes and protests across the country.

**5. Officer Reports:**

**6.1. Chair,** offered a verbal report including:

**5.1.1. PTUC Website:** updates made [www.plymouth-tuc.org.uk](http://www.plymouth-tuc.org.uk) All PTUC info can be found here, and at the PTUC Facebook site. There is also a Twitter account at #PlymouthTUC for instant information on upcoming activities, and activists were asked to join.

**6.2. Secretary, inc:**

**6.2.1. Correspondence:**

**6.2.1.1. Affiliated union branches:** TS reminded the meeting that this is the first meeting of the new financial year for Trades Councils, and subscriptions are due.

**6.2.1.2. PCS Left Unity meeting 7<sup>th</sup> January:** agreed support. DF to attend.

**6.2.1.3. People's Charter:** the meeting considered the new correspondence and **agreed** to support.

**6.3. Treasurer:** No report.

**6.4. Delegates to External Bodies:**

**6.4.1. South West TUC Executive 7<sup>th</sup> December:** SAM reported that the meeting after the 30<sup>th</sup> November heard from UNISON Regional Secretary that the strike action was not fully supported. The meeting also received a written report round-up from across the region with Plymouth only mentioned in terms of the "division" created by allowing Occupy Plymouth on the protest and rally. SAM expressed disagreement with the inaccuracy and unfairness of the Report, and detailed the success of the Rally. The Report was recalled as a result, with the Secretary agreeing to re-write the report.

**6.5. Campaign against Climate Change TU Group:** No report.

**6.6. Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament:** No report.

**6.7. Plymouth Climate Council:** No report.

**6.8. Pensioners Forum:** PR reported the development of the Exeter group, who mobilised for the N30 demonstration in the City. He reported on the start of a pensioners branch in Saltash, and the national fight against the erosion of the State Pension.

**6.9. Palestine Solidarity Campaign:** KT reported on the AGM this month.

**6.10. Unite Against Fascism:** No report.

**7. May Day 2012:** the meeting **agreed** a May Day 2012 committee, with the Roland Levinsky Building for the May Day Festival on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May. It was also **agreed** for a May Day celebration at 5pm at the Sundial on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May. The first meeting of the Planning Group will be Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January at 7pm at 124 Devonport Road, Stoke, as an open meeting.

**8. Motions:** There were none.

**9. Any Other Business:**

**9.1. Health Inequality in Plymouth:** PR circulated the Plymouth Herald article with Deb Laphorne warning of the extreme health inequalities in the City, with a gap of 17 years in life expectancy. He suggested a campaign on children's health should be organised. It was **agreed** to write to DL seeking a meeting.

**9.2. Morning Star:** advert for 14<sup>th</sup> Conference **agreed**.

**10. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012** at 171 Armada Way, starting at 7pm.

END