

Minutes of the Support Staff Members' Advisory Group (SSMAG) meeting held on Saturday June 11th 2011, at the ATL London Office, Trafalgar Events, Red Room, starting at 1.15pm

Present: Jenny Inglis (Chairperson – JI), Shelagh Hirst (Honorary Secretary – SH), Gail Atkinson (GA), Kathryn Booth (KB), Gloria Clarke (GC), Marilyn Dixon (MD), Bella Hewes (BH), Lee Mumbray-Williams (LM-W), Debbie Polwarth (DP), Stella Thompson (ST), Peter Morris (National Official – PM), Mike Loates (Member Advisor – ML), Mark Baker (EC – PM – for agenda item 6)

1) Welcome from Chair

Ji welcomed everyone to the meeting and members introduced themselves briefly. Mike Loates introduced himself. Mike is the Lead Member Advisor on support staff issues, and works in the Legal and Member Services department at the London office.

2) Apologies for absence

Yvonne Walls

3) Minutes of the last meeting (March 12th 2011)

The minutes were AGREED, with the following amendments:

- i) Item 7 - ATL Membership update – Delete “support staff” in paragraph 2.
- ii) Item 10 - Equalities – insert “may appear to” between “issues” and “rest” in paragraph 1.

6) Equalities

MB introduced this item. He reported that the Equalities sub-Committee of the EC had met that morning, and expressed their desire to work in collaboration with the sector advisory committees, including SSMAG. He suggested that SSMAG may wish to appoint a “link” member to work with the Equalities Committee on pertinent matters.

4) Maintained Sector Pay (2011/12) – Update

PM reported that Unison have asked their Reps to approach schools with a view to securing the payment of the £250 per annum paid out to the rest of the public sector. He will be asking members for any information on this initiative in the forthcoming edition of “Support Staff News”.

KB said that efforts by Dorset CC to enforce six days leave without pay for every employee have been rebuffed.

5) Academies

There were now 704 academies operating in England. It was expected that 1 in 3 of all English secondary schools will have converted to academy status by the end of 2011. ATL's membership in academies had quadrupled in the past year, with more than 7,000 members now based in academies.

DP mentioned the considerable challenge faced by Branches in ensuring that recognition rights are maintained.

In response to a query about training, PM said that he was working with other colleagues in the R&O Department to re-establish an academies Reps training programme.

7) Schools Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)

There was still no indication as to the outcome of the UNISON consultation exercise. PM also said that he would liaise with Philip Dixon (ATL Wales Director) on any progress towards the establishment of a Welsh version of the SSSNB.

Action 1: PM to liaise with Philip Dixon about the Welsh SSSNB.

8) ATL Pension Campaign

The teachers' ballot result was to be announced on Tuesday (14th June). Detailed guidance to members, including support staff, would then be circulated via email during the course of the following week. Whilst support staff cannot strike on the day, members would be asked not to cover for absent teachers, and also to wear an ATL badge and/or yellow clothing to demonstrate their solidarity.

KB asked if her school was closed, could she join a picket at another school? It was confirmed that she (and other members in a similar position) could do so.

Talks on the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) were not as advanced as those relating to the Teachers Pensions Scheme (TPS), but come the autumn, things would begin to move, with negotiations commencing in earnest, and Unison and the GMB threatening to ballot their members, including their school support staff members. The ATL Executive Committee would then need to consider the position of our own support staff membership.

9) ATL Membership update

PM reported that, as at the end of May, there were 14,496 Standard, Group and Individual Affiliate members of ATL. There were a total of 272 new joiners during the month, which compares very favourably with the same month last year, when 205 new support staff joined our ranks.

10) Independent Sector Recruitment

We now had more than 1,500 support staff members in the sector.

PM reported that he had visited 17 of the Girls Day School Trust's (GDST) schools, to talk to the support staff about the benefits of membership.

A letter was scheduled to go out very shortly to Reps and Contacts in the sector, pointing out to them the myriad recruitment aids now available to aid them in their support staff recruitment efforts.

Action 2: PM to organise the distribution of the letter to independent sector Reps and Contacts

11) Communications

The Summer Term edition of *ATL Support* was due out with the next *ATL Report*; and the next *Support Staff News* would be circulated by the end of the month.

12) Twitter

KB presented her paper on the merits of opening an SSMAG Twitter account. The Committee enthusiastically endorsed the concept, and the following action points were agreed:

Action 3: PM to liaise with Vic Barlow (Head of Communications)

Action 4: JI to submit a recommendation to the Finance Committee

13) ATL CPD

PM said that he would be talking to Kate Quigley about the dates and venues for the 2011/12 support staff-exclusive training days: 3 x *Supporting Yourself* and 2 x *Managing Challenging Behaviour for Support Staff*.

Preferences for venues were suggested: Somewhere on the East Coast Line (York, preferably), and Dorset.

The Group had previously asked for clarification on the new policy on course expenses. PM had spoken to Kate's team, and they had confirmed that full expenses are paid for *Supporting Yourself*, as it is a hybrid Reps/CPD course, but not for *Managing Challenging Behaviour for Support Staff*, which is pure CPD.

14) ATL Conference 2011

PM reported on the ATL Annual Conference in Liverpool. The Support Staff Sector Conference was a success, with more than 30 members in attendance.

There were two Resolutions carried at Main Conference, which relate exclusively to support staff concerns: No. 28 on "Support Staff Jobs", and No. 58 on "School Libraries".

15) SSMAG – Vacancy

A vacancy had risen, as a consequence of DP's "elevation" to the Executive Committee.

PM said that he had taken advice from the General Secretary's office, and that he would advertise the vacancy in the next edition of *Support Staff News*. He would also draw up a timetable to ensure that the new member would be able to attend our next meeting in November.

Action 5: PM to draw up a timetable, and then advertise the SSMAG vacancy.

16) Any Other Business

A wide-ranging discussion took place on the impact of the public sector cuts on various aspects of pupil support.

MD asked if ATL would be responding to the SEN Green paper, and if so, could the SSMAG submit their views? PM said that he would speak to the Education, Policy and Research Department (EPR) to find out.

Action 6: PM to liaise with EPR about the SEN Green Paper, and report back to the SSMAG.

17) Date of Next Meeting

November (exact date to be confirmed)