



Greater Manchester Branch

Branch Meeting: Wednesday 10th May 2023, 7pm
via Zoom

Attendees – 16 members

Victoria Brazier	VB	Hazel Roy	HR	Dan Willis	DW
Lucas Smith	LS	Tilly Sutcliffe	TS	Chris Clarkson	CC
Susanna Amato	SA	Robert Jackson	RJ	Liz Hulme-Dawson	LHD
Jamie Byron	JB	Linda Beckett	LB	Michelle Ashton	MA
Matt Heywood	MH	David Cockayne	DC	Andrew Santanna	AS
Skai Codey	SC				

1. Welcome & Safe Spaces Statement

VB welcomed those in attendance and TS read the Safe Spaces Statement.

2. Apologies, Matters Arising & Previous Minutes

Apologies - Rachel Beach, Roberta Kerr, Jonathan Young, Noreen Kershaw, Andrew C Husband,

Linda Beckett – In the minutes there was an abbreviation of TS that wasn't included in the attendees (because she didn't attend). CC apologised for his oversight.

Previous minutes proposed by TS. Seconded by LS
Unanimously accepted.

3. Equity Conference Agenda

VB - reported that as TS was now unable to attend due to new employment, DC would be one of our 3 representatives alongside CC and LS, with VB attending as NW councillor.

VB - described the outline of the Conference, including the addition of networking Fringe events which would be covered by our representatives as much as possible.

The link to Agenda has been provided to membership. Members are invited to contact any of our representatives with considerations, ideas and thoughts on any of the motions or events at conference.

Motions at conference will be proposed, seconded, then presented in detail by the proposer. Any representative in the room can debate the motion, and there will then be a vote to accept or reject the motion. Council's position on each motion has been emailed to all the attendees.

JB – Stated all motions are great, especially Motion 1, the Womens' committee, regarding first cast in person meetings. Requested to feedback to conference from Stage Management perspective: cast lists are usually sent to all new employees as standard, and therefore cast members would have time to know whom they would be working with and have an opportunity to address any potential issues before meeting. What are the reasons that this is not happening?

JB praised further motions, commenting that there are 5 motions about 2 subjects (self taping, & conference motions) which takes a degree of the time allocated to all motions. Feedback on Stage management motion – raised concern over implications of making changes to advertising jobs out of alignment with acting roles particularly in West End contracts. Questioned whether the Merseyside & Cheshire Branch motion (14), as voted by all North West regional branches, should have been allocated as a 'North West' Motion?

VB – Thanked JB - agreed it was an interesting point and would take that back to council/conference. As this is the first time the motions have been proposed in this way that there would likely be discussion at conference on this subject, and on the democratic input by all members. Commented that the Cast list motion could possibly be due to TV/Film where this detail was not often provided.

DC – On the subject of Area motions, David has raised this with the Conference Business Committee. Feedback from Ian Barritt (Vice President): Motions cannot come from the Area as they have not been 'adopted' by the area, merely chosen via vote. They still have to be proposed and seconded by the branches they originated from. There was a thought that the process could be more transparent in the future, including clarity on the area input.

Re the cast list motion from Womens' committee, concern that persons could be excluded if issues were raised prior to jobs starting, and that there is a potential contradiction within that could lead to job losses without a due process.

VB – encouraged this point to be raised at conference within the debate.

DC – Commented that Council are opposing the Motion (7) of the Welsh Committee to create a second regional representative seat on council, the reasoning being that the membership level within Wales is proportionately lower. This was echoed in the motion (9) from Devon, Cornwall & Wessex Branch.

VB – Clarified that 'Council Opposed' this means only 1 of council could not agree with the motion and there will still be debate and vote. Council receives the agenda in advance and have their own initial vote to bring to conference, but this does not preclude a motion from being carried.

LB – Commented in support of Jamie’s comments regarding regional proposed motion, and on the 3 motions regarding Self tapes, which shows how relevant this obviously is to the membership. Agreed that there is a financial burden through Self taping, and questioned how far this will be allowed to go by the industry.

TS- Felt this was also a most relevant subject to be debated, and also questioned why there are still different contractual clauses for jobbing actors and celebrities (no compete) as this was discriminatory.

VB – There is now a common occurrence in US to hire studio, and there is determination that this shouldn’t happen here. Also there is great concern regarding communication following self tape auditions with directors if a job is offered.

DC – further comments on Self Taping regarding Designers – the process wipes out ‘interviewing’ and a conversation with the person. How important a longer dialogue is, and particularly within offering access to those from different backgrounds.

DW – The Self Tape process removes ‘dialogue’ - there is no 2 way communication, and this is a great disadvantage to us, it becomes a completely one sided, commoditised impersonal process.

Other motions considered:

Working class network event

VB stated that DC would be attending and she and other reps would cover and feedback on as many as possible over conference. DC, VB, JB further discussed the definitions of working class including Education, Social, Economic, Geographic, Access to formal training.

TS – main concern is the huge disparity between those from different economic, ethnic, geographic backgrounds – how can we think creatively about how we can even the playing field, not necessarily about access to

JB – Motion 17 - Clarification on the term ‘Favoured Nations’

LS – Industry term (SAG) that you are getting equal contractual treatment to others on the project including Billing, wages, crediting, Etc.

DC – Related that there had been active ‘gagging’ clauses within contracts. As designers, there would only be parity if all shared what they were being paid, and that this is still be true today. This motion needed good scrutiny.

LHD – Commented it had been frequently required on contracts not to divulge a fee, and also not to reveal that accommodation had been provided/paid for.

JB – Commented that the balance of time at conference had been shifted and this was a positive step

4. AOB

AS – Regarding Oldham Council and its handling of the Coliseum. Nationally, there had been the biggest downturn on labour net seats on council, including interestingly the leader of the council who had taken Equity's questions on proposals for Oldham Coliseum to an independent councillor who campaigned on keeping producing theatre in Oldham.

VB related she had had a positive meeting with the new Chair of the (Coliseum) Board, which seemed to include people that were passionate about an open investigation into what had happened, keeping producing theatre for the people of Oldham, and other groups that were holding them to account.

HR – Do we know what is happening to the building itself?

VB – No clarity but more information would be presented as and when available

JB – asked what had happened in reference to the branch motion (regarding more connection between practitioners and producers within industry) which hadn't received enough votes to take to conference, but was voted upon to be carried forward to Council.

VB – commented that there had not been a huge amount of communication with how these were followed up. She would raise this at council.

Future dates:

Next Branch Meeting: 7th June including Guest speaker and reports from Conference.

2nd August: branch meeting

16th August: Equity4Women Toolkit Launch

VB extended thanks to all members attending this extra meeting.

Meeting Closed at 7:43pm