

EQUITY

Greater Manchester Branch

Branch Meeting: Wednesday 19th April 2023, 7pm
At Friends' Meeting House, Manchester, M2 5NS, and on Zoom

Attendees – 20 members

In person - 10

Chris Clarkson	CC	Victoria Brazier	VB	Hazel Roy	HR
Dan Willis	DW	Susanna Amato	SA	Kathy Francis	KF
Linda Beckett	LB	Samuel Glyde-Rees	SGR	Matthew Heywood	MH
Jonny McGarrity					

On Zoom - 10

Joseph Ballard	JBa	Jamie Byron	JBy	Kerry Willison-Parry	KWP
David Cockayne	DC	Ffloyd Kennedy	FK	Liz Hulme-Dawson	LHD
Rachel Beach	RB	Lucas Smith	LS	Matthew Field	MF
Eleonor Burton	EB				

1. Welcome & Safe Spaces Statement

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

2. Apologies, Matters Arising & Previous Minutes

Lucas Smith, Robert Jackson, Tilly Sutcliffe, Andrew C. Husband, Norman Gilligan, Hayley Cartwright, Sebastian Taylor, Jonathan Young, Noreen Kershaw, Amy Drake, Chris Kerry. Plus North West Official, Paul Liversey.

Previous minutes proposed by KF. Seconded by JBy.

3. Introduction to the Committee

VB introduced the new committee members who were present and announced their respective roles. JBy had to stand down after being elected and VB firstly thanked him for his service to the branch.

CC reported on the following 3 bits of correspondence.

We have received an invitation to Maternity Action Unsupported Manchester event on 25th April. The event will look at the gaps in maternity pay, maternity benefits and other forms of

financial support for mothers, and ask what we can do to challenge this. The event has a Manchester focus and the speakers are women with lived experience, frontline charities, health workers and others with direct experience of supporting women facing these challenges. It will be held on Tuesday 25th April from 10am to 12.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS.

Recently at Council an emergency motion was passed calling on Equity to support and join 'The Big One' a climate protest in London at the Houses of Parliament 21-24 April. Equity has signed up to the list of supporters, along with PCS Union, Black Lives Matter, Greenpeace, etc. There will be a demonstration outside the Department for Culture, Media & Sport on Friday 21 April and a static hub for unions on the morning of Saturday 22 April.

At the last meeting we sent a motion to Council on the subject of the economics of theatre. The following is Council's response;

The Council supports the empowerment, education, and training of members around the economics of our industries, and the ways in which to better leverage our trade union power. These should be themes in our education programme which is being established, and the motion will be flagged to the Equalities and Education Officer for inclusion in that programme. Although working with real accounts and perhaps even with some producers, we must be cautious about allowing producers in whose interest it is to keep wages low, however well intentioned, to get privileged access to our members and shape our negotiating strategy.

Branches are empowered to invite their own guest speakers and create their own workshops, therefore we can put you in contact with branches that are more experienced (such as London South) at organising such events.

4. Updates from Council

JBa gave a run down from the recent Council meeting including how they discussed and debated the motions put forwards to Conference. He touched on some proposed changes to what being an Honorary Life member means, the changes brought about by branch reform, the 'strike fund', and Equity's investment policy.

JBa then went on to talk about his experiences of being attacked by the far-right. In Tennessee it is illegal to be in drag in a venue where there are under 18s present. Joseph works in drag more in the style of Danni La Rue. He started 'Storytime with Auntie Titania' in 2018 off the back of seeing a similar genre start up in America.

He has been the victim to abuse by organised neo Nazi groups; they're racist, misogynistic groups, not necessarily just parents complaining about what's happening to their kids. He received death threats, they published his address and photos of him online. He had to go for a safe house for 3 weeks but he was still attacked there. Even during panto season he's had to have security in place.

JBa spoke at length about the problems he has faced and what he's been doing to combat it. The meeting was hanging on his every word.

VB thanks Joseph profusely and her sentiments were echoed by the meeting. Joseph shared his email address with us before he left (get in touch with us if you want it).

VB then filled us in with a few more items from Council including the progress made on the sub-rep contract negotiations (on which she sat), Oldham Coliseum, the Trades Council and finished by encouraging people to stand for Equity Committees.

5. Treasurer's Report

We have £881.05 in our account but very soon we should receive last year's funding for both former branches and this year's funding for the new branch. That will add up to £1750 so our balance will be healthy. Our only regular outgoing is our Zoom payment. Room hire for meetings etc is reimbursed by the union. It is - within reason - up to us to decide how we want to spend the money, whether on workshops, campaigns, social events or anything else the branch and its committee consider important.

6. Variety

CC reported that there was a second Drag Network meeting earlier in the week but it was poorly attended. A working party of CC, TS and SA has been set up.

7. Equality & Diversity

SA started by saying we can call her Suzee! She wants to make sure meetings are as accessible as possible to all members. She plans on sending out a survey to find out what would encourage more members to attend more meetings and how we can aid their access needs.

8. Equity Conference – Branch Representatives

CC, TS, LS and DC have all stood to go to Conference as our 3 branch representatives.

A number of members were upset at the way the vote has come about as they were essentially just voting on 4 people they might know nothing about, their reasons for wanting to go to Conference or even what they looked/sounded like. How can they vote for someone they don't know anything about? VB said she'd take this back to Council.

Votes were made by secret ballot and CC, LS and TS were cordially elected and DC will be our stand by.

DC pointed out that we need to have another meeting before the Conference, VB suggested that maybe it should only be on Zoom.

9. What do members want from their new Branch?

SGR – Further education within the industry.

LB – More workshops!

KF – Is there anyone within the branch who could take sessions on anything.

DW – As a committee we would like to know where they would like the branch to go to, what they would like it to be, and how we can engage more members.

JBy – How about a physical feedback form being used at the end of meetings. Sometimes it's hard to get responses via email to surveys.

10. AOB

The latest show stop and subsequent cancellation at the Palace Theatre for a performance of *The Bodyguard* was discussed.

Meeting Closed at 8:48pm