



RMG General Meeting

Thursday 22 September 2022

Held Hybridly at Stoke Gifford and via Zoom

Minutes

1) Welcome and apologies

The Chair was joining this meeting via Zoom and therefore asked the Vice Chair, Cheryl O'Brien, to chair this meeting as she was present in Stoke Gifford. A list of names of those who'd sent apologies for not attending today were read out.

2) Remembrance of deceased colleagues

No-one knew of anyone who had passed since the last meeting, so a minute's silence was not observed.

3) Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 28th April were agreed as a true and correct record, proposed by Luke Howard and seconded by Malcolm Wallace. There is an ongoing issue with documents being uploaded to the TSSA website. Luke will liaise with Walkden House and Tim Young to resolve this.

Officers' and Delegates' reports

4a) Secretary

Luke Howard

Luke is planning that the next meeting, the AGM in November, be held hybridly at Walkden House. The room needs checking to ensure the technology still works OK, but based on numbers attending today, everyone likely to physically attend should fit into the room that would be used. He anticipates a larger attendance in London but estimates the room will hold around thirty folk so should still be sufficiently large.

With the AGM in two months' time, we need to start looking at the officers of the RMG and who is up for re-election and who is standing down under rule. Luke advised that the current officers need to look at this as we appear to be moving towards a system where an officer does a job for a period, steps down under rule for three years and then returns as an officer to do the same job again. John Rees, the RMG Chair, cautioned that we don't want to get to a situation where the same folk come on the Committee and step down from it every few years. We need new blood on the Committee and all of us being retired, we're none of us getting any younger and we'll all want to permanently step back, in time.

There is an issue with those leaving the Association not being advised of the existence of RMG or invited to join it. Everyone who declares they're retiring is automatically sent a form inviting them to join RMG. Those who leave the travel & transport industry for other reasons or withdraw from TSSA membership are not so invited. Walkden House should be asked to send all those who leave the industry and/or TSSA and who are over 55 years old should be sent the form inviting them to join RMG and their local Retired Branch. Bob Bayley recommended that the form should be sent to all eligible members annually, and Cheryl, from the Chair, recommended RMG be a standard agenda item at all local Retired Member's branches and at all Divisional Council meetings. A letter will be going to all TSSA members with next year's diary making everyone aware of RMG's existence and their options.

4b) Newsletter

Bob Bayley

Bob gave a brief report on the newsletter. He has a quiz for the next issue but needs articles on hobbies or other topics likely to be of interest to RMG members. There were no questions to his report. Luke Howard advised that Walkden House are keen for RMG to use Mailchimp, for the newsletter etc., to better serve our members.

4c) Treasurer

Dave Porter

Dave reported that the only expenditure since the last meeting had been travel expenses for a delegate to attend an NPC meeting. He had also applied to Walkden House for a grant towards the future functioning of RMG and had received £1,000 in return.

Dave reported figures as outlined below.

Balance at the last meeting	£697.26
Less Travel Expenses for three NPC delegates	(£52.00)
Grant Received From Walkden House	£1,000.00
Balance at this meeting	£1,645.26

4d) Pensions

Neil Baker *et alia*

Neil reported that the rate of inflation this month each year is used to calculate the increase in pensions. Last year it was 3.1%. With the current rise in inflation generally we can hopefully look towards an increase in our pensions this year of around 10%.

The Minutes of a Committee of the Bank of England are to be released at noon today which may give a guide as to future trends in pension increases etc.

Neil then spoke about bond prices. Many coming up to retirement and those who have been in BRASS may well have chosen to invest money in Bonds which are generally seen as a safe investment. However, in recent months bonds have dropped in value by about 15-20%. Some, approaching retirement, and getting a quote of the pension they're likely to get, have recently found that the pension they do get is significantly lower than their quote for this reason. We can all hope that bonds soon recoup the value that they have lost.

Joel began, saying that BT, M&S and Ford had jointly sought a judicial review in the Courts against the Government's intention to change from RPI to CPI. The Judges ruled that there was no need for such a review. However, there are generally two parts to most cases; the ratio decidendi, the reasons for the decision taken, and the obiter dicta, the other factors or things mentioned in the case. No decision has been taken as yet as to whether this judgement will be appealed, but if it is, then it is likely to focus on the obiter dicta, the other things or comments the judges made, in delivering their judgement.

Joel then spoke about TfL pensions. These have been welded to RPI meaning that this year's increase should be around 12.1%. The TfL pension scheme is also one of the cheapest Final Salary schemes in the UK. Brendan Barber has recently reviewed the TfL scheme and sold it down the river, by recommending it change to a defined contribution scheme

Bob Bayley advised that when he was a staff rep with Network Rail, pensions had been discussed and NR were going to put a 5% cap on their pensions. Neil Baker and others were unaware of any capping policy on any railway pension scheme. David Northey, recently retired from NR and who knows a former colleague who's about to retire, offered to investigate what conditions were in place for NR pensioners, including capping, and whether we could campaign for any of these conditions to be repealed or amended.

4e) National Pensioner's Convention

Joel Kosminsky & Steve Whitehead

Joel began, saying that we have a number of our members on NPC and its constituent working groups. He reported initially on the Transport Working Group. That has been looking at TfL cuts and cuts in provincial bus services. However, its main area of concern has been e-scooters. These are becoming more prevalent and are generally ridden on pavements and shared spaces by young people, many of whom have worked out how to remove the speed limiter device on them. In consequence, the number of deaths and serious accidents involving e-scooters is rising alarmingly.

Joel then reported on the Structure Working Party. That working party is planning to merge the current EC and National Council of NPC into a single governing body. There were plans for a Special Delegate Conference in April, but the SWP will not have completed its necessary work by then, so the current plan is for a Special Delegate Conference to be held the day before the June Pensioner's Convention (aka The Pensioner's Parliament) which next year is due to be held in Blackpool. All this, though, is currently very provisional.

Joel concluded by saying that if this all goes ahead as planned, he will need to be in Blackpool early next summer and will require travel and overnight expenses.

Steve Whitehead commented that there was an NPC meeting in Birmingham yesterday which he and several other RMG members attended, which attracted an overall attendance of circa 130 people. The speakers were topical in talking about current problems and issues but not talking about how to solve them. The TSSA plays a leading role in NPC with TSSA members on most, if not all its working groups, and if NPC manage to secure significant improvements for pensioners the TSSA can be rightly proud that it played its part.

Malcolm Wallace fully agreed but was disappointed in that there was a protest by the three main rail unions recently outside King's Cross station about plans to close many ticket offices, and the only TSSA members present were himself and Andy Bain. No-one had come across from Walkden House to support this. He advised that the National Federation of the Blind have a petition ongoing against the closure of booking offices at stations and urged TSSA members to sign it on admin@nfbuk.org.

Cheryl followed up by saying she is also on the NPC serving on its NEC, the Transport Working Group and the Women's Group although she's leaving that to concentrate her efforts on the other subgroup, but as a newbie, she had thoroughly enjoyed the recent NPC Conference.

Luke concluded by saying that he's on the Digital Working Group. They are about to publish their first newsletter. They are seeking to address issues that older people have today, especially when so much is online, and they don't all have the necessary equipment, competence or confidence. Whilst online is convenient for many, there will always be those for which it's not the best option.

Steve Halliwell pointed out that his bank recently advised him that all documentation including statements etc., would only be available online and not in paper form. Whilst he could accommodate that change, he was certain many other bank's customers could not, and there had been no prior consultation on the issue.

4f) Pre-retirement Seminars

John Rees, Cheryl O'Brien

John Rees reported on this and informed the meeting that these seminars will soon resume and will be on Zoom only. Cheryl was stepping back from this in consequence. An appeal was made for others to assist John, but none were forthcoming. It would be good if a woman was involved, and maybe a newly retired member. Joel, who used to deliver these seminars, was concerned that things would be Zoom only. When they were face to face, issues could be dealt with that people would be uncomfortable dealing with online, and also, every delegate was invited to bring their partner with them. John Rees responded that when there is a cohort of potential attendees today, their geographical spread makes finding a venue, and possibly overnight accommodation prohibitively expensive. Zoom might not be ideal, but it is the best option.

David Northey commented that there were pros and cons with both. We need to make Zoom presentations work for the time being. He also volunteered as a new retiree to be a seminar presenter.

4g) Group outings

Luke had not progressed anything with this. David Porter offered to do a trip to his hometown of Huntingdon in November or December. He is a volunteer at the Cromwell Museum there, and in late Autumn, the museum is putting on a special exhibition on 'The Levellers'. He suggested this be discussed at Committee early next month.

5) Election Of A Committee Member

Stephen Lawrence has volunteered to join the committee and David Northey has volunteered. Both offers were unanimously approved, and Luke Howard will liaise with both as to what roles each would be interested in doing.

6) Luke Chester

Luke joined the meeting at this point and was asked to comment on current issues. He started by saying another strike has been called for Saturday 1st October, which, coincidentally, is when many Tories will be heading for their Party Conference in Birmingham. It's also historic, being the first time that all three main trade unions have gone on strike together.

With a new Prime Minister comes a new cabinet, and the new Secretary of State for Transport, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, had expressed a desire to meet all the Rail Union General Secretaries, including Manuel. This is in stark contrast to her predecessor, Grant Shapps, who adamantly refused to do so.

Looking at the current issues, Luke felt there was insufficient time between now and the next General Election for the Government and the Train Operating Companies to complete their consultations etc., to bring about the total closure of most railway ticket offices.

The consultation on changes in maintenance etc., were drawing to a close when our late Queen passed away. We are unclear at present whether that consultation period will be extended in consequence, or whether changes and cuts will be imposed.

Luke was confident that for our members specifically employed in maintenance, there was now a minimal threat to job cuts in the foreseeable future.

Cheryl asked two questions from the Chair, firstly asking Luke about rumours that TSSA was going to merge with RMT. Luke said that this was an EC matter, so he had little knowledge of it. He was aware TSSA had received a letter from RMT seeking more collaborative working with them. Cheryl's second question followed on, asking what the future was looking like for the TSSA, now that IBB were no longer interested in us. Luke said that we're operating at a significant and ongoing deficit, and a day will soon come when the money runs out. He added that TSSA staff are very concerned for their personal futures.

Malcolm Wallace asked about leaflets to hand out on picket lines and at other protests. Luke said he'd look at getting leaflets to branches and SOGs in future as well.

Luke Howard asked about pickets, where they were going to be, when they were going to be there etc. Luke Chester responded that due to Trade Union legislation, advice needs to be given a certain time in advance to the authorities as to when/where they will be and who will be supervising them. These details can change at the last minute if a picket supervisor can no longer attend their picket. Picket details should be in place on our website a day or two in advance, nevertheless. David Northey said that he'd joined several pickets recently in the Taunton area and had been warmly welcomed and included in them. Stephen Halliwell commented that at a recent TUC organised march, the TSSA representation was very low, and they had very few banners and flags. Luke C responded that for a march earlier this year, Walkden House had got their staff to run ad hoc phone banks cajoling people to attend but TSSA doesn't have the manpower to regularly do that. They have, though, recently acquired more flags and banners for future protests.

Peter Vincent asked if TSSA circulars could indicate who they were being sent to, so that branch/divisional council officers would then know whether they needed to be disseminated further. Luke said he would sort that.

7) TSSA Annual Conference and TSSA 125 Celebration 7th-10th May in Sheffield

Luke Howard was appalled that the EC should have invited the Chief Executive of Network Rail to the Conference Dinner, and complemented Dave Barnes for his comments publicly made to the Chief Executive.

The whole event was largely well run and well organised and well-liked by those who attended.

Joel condemned the response of the EC to a question concerning those with no computer access being denied a vote on the merger, labelling it as blatant discrimination.

8) Nominations

The RMG are invited to nominate up to five people to represent the TSSA at each of the following conferences in 2023.

TUC Black Worker's Conference
Our nomination is Dinesh Bhardwa

TUC LGBT Conference
Our nominations are David Northey and Aneurin Redwood White

TUC Disabled Worker's Conference
Our nominations are Bob Bayley, Pauline McArdle, Cath Murphy, David Northey and one other **whose name was unclear**

TUC Young Worker's Conference
Our nomination was Harry Gibb

All nominees need to confirm to Walkden House in writing that they accept nomination.

9) Follow On From Proposed Merger

Joel, Malcolm and Luke had tabled motions and amendments to motions in light of the IBB merger falling through. A lengthy discussion ensued. The conclusion was that there was no need to reconvene the 2022 conference as there was no meaningful business to conclude, and that the President has the power to declare the 2022 Conference closed, enabling the new Standing Orders Committee to begin work planning the 2023 Conference.

Motions From Members

10) Proposed Merger and Special Conference (Part 2)

Tim Bartlett had put forward a motion calling for the resignation of the General Secretary. It was noted that Manuel's term of office should have ended at the end of last year but was extended with the permission of the Certification Officer because TSSA was (past tense) planning to merge with IBB. Now that that has fallen through, the election/re-election of the General Secretary becomes a priority. David Porter opposes this motion because there are also allegations of sexual impropriety against unnamed TSSA staff, and we could be appointing a new General Secretary who is then named and shamed in the sexual investigations. After further discussion Tim's motion went to a show of hands in the room and on screen and FELL.

Luke Howard subsequently withdrew his motion.

Cheryl then invited comments on a potential merger with the RMT. There was disquiet due to its political stance, not being affiliated to the Labour Party, although it is affiliated to the TUC. Other potential partners include PROSPECT and UNITE. A lengthy discussion ensued. No-one seemed to want a merger with RMT for a variety of reasons. Most were resigned to TSSA needing to merge with another union but were uncertain as to which one.

11) Future meetings

Committee	4th October	Zoom
AGM	17th November	Hybridly at Walkden House
Committee	8th December	TBA

There being no other business to discuss, Cheryl closed the meeting at 14.50hrs

12) Attendees

There was someone online as 'Retired Members' Group' who was asked him to name himself in chat but made no reply. It might have been Phil Allen, John will email and ask him

Present in Stoke Gifford

**Bob Bayley
Gareth Davies
Marcus Fryer
Graham Gull
Luke Howard
David King
Joel Kosminsky
Cheryl O'Brien
Dave Porter
Peter Vincent
Malcolm Wallace**

Those Present Via Zoom

**Andy Bain
Dinesh Bhardwa
Steve Floyd
John Jenkins
Stephen Lawrence
Michael Maguire
David Northey
John Rees**

**Malcolm Scane
Dick Sharp
Steve Whitehead
Tim Young**

Plus Luke Chester (TSSA Staff)

Those Apologising For Their Absence

**Tim Bartlett
Derrick Codling
Mike Parker
Rod Payne
Simon Pearson
Donald Purdy
Sandra Vaughan**