**NEU Bargaining Priorities**

The Bargaining Strategy approved by the Executive in December 2019, agreed that the Union should annually publish a statement of national bargaining priorities to form part of bargaining agendas. This will be discussed at the next full meeting of the Committee in March.

**Proposal**

To encourage the development of co-ordinated school-based bargaining, it is proposed that a NEU Bargaining Calendar be created alongside this statement of bargaining priorities that fits with the rhythm of the school year. School groups will be encouraged (as a minimum) to meet at the start of each term and discuss a specified topic and elect a rep (if there is not one already) to represent the collective view to management.

This proposal would:

* Put member engagement and activity at the heart of issues raised and determining outcomes
* Encourage the development of a coherent NEU presence in the workplace, with elected reps at the centre
* Encourage the creation of formal workplace level negotiating structures, that may in turn lead to fewer bargaining units as a result of co-ordinated nature of the activity. Employers may increasingly recognise the negative implications of fragmentation and the benefits of consistent policies across employers and perhaps sectoral arrangements such as Framework Agreements.
* Give a clear focus to the orientation of the NEU towards building workplace organisation
* Ensure NEU is seen to be proactive in putting items on the agenda, rather than simply responding to management items
* Set up a common routine for all NEU groups / reps that establishes a continuing union presence. Given the decline of collective bargaining in education and the consequences on union structures, this should not be underestimated
* Give reps / members confidence in the knowledge that they are not alone in this – all NEU groups doing the same at the same time
* Facilitate (we would hope) ‘levelling up’ of terms and conditions
* Ensure employers see the NEU acting in a co-ordinated fashion in pursuit of establishing sector norms

The establishment of a Bargaining Calendar does not preclude the raising of other matters of concern to members. In fact, by establishing a regular, formalised dialogue between the union and management, it should facilitate it. We should see this proposal not as an end in itself, but as a step towards establishing that ‘every issue is a union issue’.

Establishing a routine NEU workplace presence that seeks to actively build a collective voice to improve the daily lived experience of members, should make us attractive to non-members. We should seize the recruitment opportunities that arise. All new colleagues to the school should be familiarised with the NEU’s school presence. Those not in a union should be invited to join as a matter of routine. Those members in sister unions should be made aware of our sincere commitment to collaborative working between unions.

**Alignment**

The Building the Base paper said the following:

*‘A central concern of the NEU is to build capacity in local areas, schools and colleges. Almost all the work of HQ and Regions can be seen as contributing to this vital task. Staff should see in their work that they are helping school and college reps and local officers to be more effective, by giving them tools, strategies, training, effective communications and much else’*

This speaks to the need to align the activities of the union. Specifically, this means developments such as:

* Bargaining Calendar and rep expectations to be incorporated into all Rep Training, with practical advice and guidance.
* The centrality of recruitment – with appropriate materials produced, support and promotion provided, and outcomes monitored.
* Provision of training to assist the consistent and co-ordinated by staff of the Bargaining Calendar and any related orientation on workplace organisation.
* Production by the Bargaining Support Unit of suitable materials, advice and associated resources in support of each priority issue. For example, at the start of the Summer Term, circulation of advice on Directed Time, with examples of DT calendars
* A central comms strategy for members and reps, developed to fit into the bargaining calendar, including a focus on sharing successes
* Utilisation of existing structures such as Regional Council, DBSB and Annual Conference to build momentum, organise activity, develop tactics etc
* Establishment of a cross - departmental Project Team, including both HQ and Regional staff to co-ordinate staff delivery.
* Bargaining SROs to be part of this Project Team and lead on Regional implementation
* Establishment of a lay Reference Group of officers, reps to liaise with the staff Project Team and monitor / evaluate on an ongoing basis
* Oversight and direction to be given by the B&N Executive Committee

The model of the Bargaining Calendar can be amended and adapted for other sectors where appropriate.

**Calendar in practice**

Pay, Accountability and Workload are likely to remain the bargaining priorities for the union. These are all part of current national campaigns, that can be strengthened by adaptation to the orientation outlined in the Bargaining Strategy of building workplace capacity.

**Autumn Term – Pay**

Meet the Head to ensure that the recommended pay award will be applied in their school. Reps to report back to members on the outcome of this meeting and monitor implementation to ensure compliance if the outcome is ‘yes’, or to discuss collective options if the answer is ‘no’.

The responses and outcomes should be collated by Branches with a view to ensuring all members receive a pay rise.

**Spring Term – Appraisal / Performance Management**

Ensure that agreed policies are being complied with and to offer members any advice and guidance that may be required. Monitor any relationship to PRP issues. Pursue any concerns on a collective basis wherever possible.

**Summer Term – Directed Time**

Meet the Head early in the term to ensure that DT calendars will be produced and arrangements for staff input. DT calendars can be monitored throughout the year to ensure adherence and counter any deviations that may raise workload concerns.

Each of the above are straightforward tasks for a rep - approaching the Head, with the collective view and reporting back to members. This is in line with the ‘negotiating cycle’ outlined in the Bargaining Strategy that aims to make bargaining meaningful in the workplace and ensure member – determined outcomes.