

CORE BRANCH RULES

1 Branch Name

The branch shall be called the “Bristol” Branch of UNISON and is referred throughout the rules as “the branch”

2 Aims of the branch

- a) to support and pursue the Aims and Objectives contained in the UNISON Rule Book, and the Objectives agreed by UNISON’s National Executive Committee annually, and in particular:
- b) to achieve the aims and targets set annually through the branch assessment.

3 Membership

Eligibility for membership shall be in accordance with the Rules of the union

4 Branch structure

- a) There will be an Annual General Meeting of the branch to confirm the election by ballot of branch officers and members of the branch committee, to receive the branch accounts and report on branch development from the branch committee. The AGM may comprise one meeting or a series of aggregate meetings based on sections or geographical areas in order to maximise the active participation of members.
- b) The AGM will determine the basis of representation in the branch and the number of stewards and other representatives to be elected in each work group or workplace.
- c) Other general meetings may be called by the branch committee or by 20 members of the branch or 5% of the membership, whichever is the greater.
- d) The quorum for any general meeting, including the annual meeting is 2% of the branch at a single meeting or through aggregate meetings. The branch will monitor proportionality and fair representation at members meetings.
- e) Sections will be established for each bargaining group covered by the branch to provide for the participation and representation of members in that section in accordance with rule 8 below.
- f) The branch committee will comprise all branch officers (see rule 5 below), and convenors of all stewards sections and one representative from each Self Organised Group and will be responsible for the general organisation and development of the branch and for policy and decision making on matters affecting all members within the branch between general meetings.
- g) The branch management group will be responsible for the day to day management of the branch in accordance with the decisions and authority delegated by the branch committee. Its membership and role is as described in rule 7 below.

5 Branch officers

- a) the branch shall elect the following officers annually in accordance with rule 5c:
 - Chairperson
 - Vice Chair
 - Secretary

- Treasurer
 - Education co-ordinator
 - Lifelong Learning co-ordinator
 - Equality Coordinator(s)
 - Health and safety officer
 - Communications officer
 - International officer
 - Membership officer
 - Young members officer
 - Welfare officer
 - Labour link officer (elected by the members who pay the political levy only)
 - Retired members' secretary (elected by the retired members)
- b) each section within the branch may elect two convenors (who will usually be senior stewards) from amongst the elected representatives in that section in accordance with rule 5c. One of the section convenors must be a woman in *'fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate.'* (as defined in the UNISON rule book. 2.13.2)
- c) election of branch officers
- i. branch officers may be nominated by the branch committee or any two members, with the exception of the Labour Link officer who will be elected by the APF members only.
 - ii. nominations will be invited 12 weeks before the AGM and nomination forms will be made available through the branch web-site. All nominations must be received in writing at least 7 weeks before the AGM
 - iii. each nominee will be notified and given the right to withdraw not later than 6 weeks before the AGM.
 - iv. if there is more than one candidate, a vote will be held.
 - v. the vote will be conducted by a combination of electronic and postal ballot in accordance with UNISON National Guidance
 - vi. where no valid nomination has been received before the deadline, nominations may be called for and candidate elected at the AGM, or endorsed by the branch committee subject to ratification by the next general meeting.
- d) election of convenors
- i. the process for nomination and election shall be as in (c) save that the nomination may be by the section committee or any two members employed in that section, and only members employed in the relevant section may participate in the election.

6 Branch Committee

- a) Representation on the branch committee will be agreed by the AGM and will include:
 - Branch officers
 - Representatives of self-organised groups
 - The convenors for each section
- b) The branch committee shall administer branch business in accordance with UNISON rules and guidance.
- c) The quorum for the branch committee shall be 11
- d) In addition to this any workplace representative present at the meeting can vote.
- e) Issues carried over from a non-quorate Branch Committee, (or in the event that a decision has to be made prior to the next Branch Committee) can be voted on electronically by all Branch Officers and Convenors with a recommendation from the meeting to vote for or against in line with the debate and the vote that has

been held at the meeting. The result of the online vote will aggregated with the offline votes to give the end result The quorum remains at 11 in line with the criteria set out in 6a

- f) The attendance at branch committees will be recorded and reported annually at AGM to ensure proportionality and fair representation
- g) The branch committee shall ensure that sections within the branch are appropriately and equitably resourced to ensure the effective participation of members, recruitment and organisation, representation, and collective bargaining and campaigning on behalf of members in each section.
- h) The branch committee will establish arrangements for the individual representation of members
- i) The branch committee shall meet monthly

7 Branch Management Group

- a) The Branch Management Group shall comprise the branch secretary, branch chair, branch treasurer and the branch equalities coordinator. Other branch members may be co-opted onto the Branch Management Group to undertake specific pieces of work. Branch and Regional staff may be asked to attend from time to time to inform specific discussions. The Branch Management Group will meet monthly to ensure the effective day to day management of the branch within the parameters of the decisions and guidance issued by the branch committee. The Branch Management Group may not commit to any expenditure above £500, or to any policy decision or affiliation that has not been previously agreed by the branch committee. For expenditure under £500, the Branch Management Group is authorised by the detail of the branch's annual budget (which is finalised annually in the Branch Development Plan) and for the urgent replacement of equipment/resources.

8 Sections

Sectional structures will reflect the structures within individual employers and be able to support members who are transferring from one employer to another.

- a) Sections comprise all members within the relevant bargaining group and will have autonomy within the branch in respect of collective bargaining with their employer(s) only, subject to the policies and any guidelines and procedures of the branch, region and national union.
- b) Sections will be led by two convenors, elected in accordance with rule 5d and who will be the senior representatives within the section, and a committee of all elected representatives within the section. One of the section convenors must be a woman in *'fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate.'* (as defined in the UNISON rule book. 2.13.2)
- c) In employers where there are insufficient representatives to form a committee of elected representatives, section convenors can be elected by two members working for that employer.

9 Conduct of meetings

- a) All meetings will be conducted in a fair and democratic manner and in accordance with the Bristol Unison Branch Meetings guidance. (appendix 1)

- b) All meetings will be advertised widely as far in advance as possible (in the case of the AGM, all members will be notified in writing at least 12 weeks before the meeting (or first aggregate meeting).
- c) The procedures to be used at the meeting will be explained clearly.
- d) The branches will maintain records of all meetings and other appropriate records to enable the branch to function.

10 Media communications

Communications to the media on behalf of the branch shall be made only by officer(s) authorised by the committee.

11 Affiliations

- a) Affiliations to relevant constituency Labour Parties will be decided by the APF membership.
- b) Affiliations to trade councils shall be determined by the AGM or branch committee.

12 Finance

The branch shall keep a bank/building society account in the name of the branch and will maintain a financial record of all assets and transactions in accordance with UNISON guidelines

13 Donations

Donations shall be agreed by the AGM or branch committee in accordance with the union's policies and objectives and subject to provisions of national rule.

14 Expenses

Rates of expenses for members attending meetings or carrying out other activities on behalf of the branch shall be agreed by the AGM in accordance with the Scheme for Branch Expenses contained in the Branch Finances Handbook.

16 Branch staff

- a) The branch secretary will be responsible for the employment, direction and supervision of any staff employed by the branch consistent with employment law and current good practice.
- b) In the event of any first stage hearings of staff disciplinary or grievance matters, the branch secretary will be joined by another senior branch officer other than the branch chair.
- c) Any appeal arising from a first stage grievance or disciplinary hearing will be heard by the branch chair and other senior branch officers not involved at the first stage hearing.
- d) The outcome of any disciplinary or grievance hearing will remain confidential and the outcome only will be reported to the branch committee on its conclusion.

17 Approval/alteration to branch rules

- a) Branch rules must be agreed by two thirds of members present and voting at a quorate branch meeting.
- b) Branch rules must be approved in accordance with UNISON's procedures.
- c) Any changes to branch rules must be agreed and approved in the same way.

Appendix 1

BRISTOL UNISON Branch Meetings

Introduction

UNISON is committed to the fullest possible participation of all its members in the activities of the trade union. These guidelines are produced to ensure that branch meetings are held in a manner that enables everyone to participate in the democratic process of their branch.

Working Together

It is important that everyone feels able to participate. So:

- *Listen to what others have to say, and avoid being dismissive of their contribution.*
- *Wait until a speaker has finished and do not interrupt their train of thought. If you wish to speak please indicate to the Chairperson and wait for them to invite you to speak.*
- *Aim to have reasoned discussion, not arguments.*
- *Any criticism should be constructive*
- *Make your own contribution as clear and concise as possible and do not dominate the discussion.*
- *Ensure that everyone who wishes to speak is given encouragement and the opportunity to do so.*
- *It is equally important that members can speak openly about problems they or their members have experienced in the full knowledge that personal or sensitive information is restricted to the meeting.*
Confidentiality must be respected.

Language

This brings with it a responsibility for all of us to make sure that we do not use language which others might find offensive. This means thinking about, for example, how you talk about individuals or groups.

Jargon

Jargon is a barrier to good communication. The more we become involved in trade union work the more likely we are to use jargon. Take care to explain any jargon so that everyone understands what you are talking about.

Harassment

There must be no harassment of any kind. Harassment creates an unpleasant or intimidating atmosphere and should be challenged.

Time Keeping

Meetings have a tight agenda and members are responsible for their own time keeping. It is important that we get through the agenda whilst allowing proper debate. Please make every effort to make the start of the meeting, aim for 10 minutes before the meeting is due to start.

Mobile Telephones

Please switch these off during the meeting. If you need to keep them on silent please ensure that you have previously cleared this with the chairperson.

No Smoking during the meetings

Appendix 2 Guidance to the core branch rules

Section 8

Sectional structures will need to reflect the structures within individual employers and be able to support members who are transferring from one employer to another.

Within Bristol City Council, sections will be established to reflect the employers bargaining structures.

Where viable, sections in employers other than the local authority will be created. These may include but are not limited to:

- Schools
- Further Education
- Care
- Fire and Rescue

The branch has a well established Health and Safety Structure which reports to the Branch Executive through the Health and Safety Officer.