

CORE BRANCH RULES

1 Branch Name

The branch shall be called Staffordshire 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 Representation

To adopt and review such protocol(s) as are deemed appropriate by the Branch Committee to clarify and ensure the provision of a fair and effective service to all members.

5 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.
 - i. The annual meeting shall be held as soon as possible after the end of the relevant financial year and, in any event, no later than 28th February of the following year
 - ii. A minimum of 21 days notice of the annual or any general meeting shall be given to each member
- 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 resolution of the branch committee or by 20 members of the branch at any time stating the reasons for such a meeting and the issues for consideration.
- d) The quorum for any general meeting, including the annual meeting is a minimum of 30 (from 2011) at a single meeting or through aggregate meetings. There after this figure to increase by one every subsequent year with the aim to reflect the recommendations made in UNISON's Code of Good Branch Practice.
- 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 9 below.
- f) The branch committee will comprise all branch officers (see rule 7 below), and stewards, 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 core officers' 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 8 below.

6 Branch officers

- a) the branch shall elect the following officers annually in accordance with rule 6c:
- Chairperson
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Education co-ordinator
 - Lifelong Learning co-ordinator
 - Equality officer(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)
 - Others to be determined as necessary for the effective operation of the branch including Assistant Branch Secretary, Vice-chair, Women's Officer and Black Members' Officer. This list is not exhaustive and can be added to or changed as appropriate.
- b) each section within the branch shall elect a convenor (senior steward) from amongst the stewards in that section in accordance with rule 6d.
- 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 postal ballot in accordance with the procedure and timescales contained in the Code of Good Branch Practice.
 - 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.

7 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 (or all stewards where there is no sectional structure).
- b) The branch committee shall administer branch business in accordance with UNISON rules and guidance.
- c) The quorum for the Branch Committee meetings shall be 33% (one third) of the members of the committee. (updated following 2019 AGM Rule Change).
- d) 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.
- e) The branch committee will establish arrangements for the individual representation of members.
- f) The branch committee shall meet not less than 9 times per year
- g) The branch committee shall elect the Branch representatives to Regional Council, the Regional Service Group Committee(s) and delegates to the various national conferences for service groups and self-organised groups. The branch committee shall agree arrangements for substitutes in the event that an elected representative is unable to attend. Retired members are not eligible to represent the branch at Regional Council, Regional Service Group or National Group Conferences of UNISON, excepting those for retired members.

8 Core Officers Group

- a) The Core Officers Group shall comprise the branch secretary, branch chair, branch treasurer, Assistant Branch Secretary and/or section convenors, the branch equalities officer (and others as appropriate)
- b) The Core Officers Group will meet prior to the branch executive committee 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 Core Officers Group may commit to no expenditure, policy decision or affiliation that has not been previously agreed by the branch committee.

9 Sections

- a) To develop sections comprising all members within the relevant service group and/or 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 a convenor elected in accordance with rule 6d and who will be the senior accredited representative within the section, and a committee of all accredited representatives within the section.

10 Conduct of meetings

- a) All meetings will be conducted in a fair and democratic manner.
- 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.

11 Media communications

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

12 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.

13 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

14 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.

15 Honoraria Payments and Expenses.

Any payments to Branch Officers and Members shall be in accordance with the approved Scheme for Branch Expenses contained in the Branch Finances Handbook. Any amendment to the rates will be agreed by the AGM or branch committee.

16 Finance Delegated Powers.

The Branch Treasurer, Branch Secretary and Branch Chair collectively will have delegated powers to commit expenditure prior to branch committee approval, subject to financial limits agreed by branch committee.

17 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.

18 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.

19 Dissolution

The branch may be dissolved by a resolution passed at an annual or at any general meeting provided:

- a) at least 28 days written notice of the proposal to dissolve has been given by the secretary to each member of the Branch, and
- b) at least three quarters of the members present and voting, vote in favour of the proposal.
- c) It shall not be competent for the branch to dissolve and reform if such action would enable the Branch to escape any penalty or disqualification provided for by UNISON's rules.
- d) Where the branch is dissolved otherwise than by action taken by the National Executive Council, all net assets of the branch shall be dealt with as the National Executive Council may decide in consultation with the Regional Council Officers and members of the branch.

20 Alterations to these rules

These rules shall only be altered or rescinded with the consent of at least two thirds of the members present and voting at the Annual General Meeting, or at a specific meeting convened under Rule 5(c) and the notice convening the meeting shall state the terms of the proposed alteration(s).