



**SURREY
COUNTY
BRANCH
RULES**

AS OF 1st April 2022

1 BRANCH NAME

The branch shall be called Surrey County Branch of UNISON.

2 RELATIONSHIP TO NATIONAL ORGANISATION

- a Branch rules shall be in accordance with national rules, decisions of the Annual Delegate Conference and the National Executive Council.
- b Any member may have a copy of the current Rule Book (henceforth referred to as The Rules) and Branch Rules.
- c The branch shall make an audited annual return of branch income, expenditure, assets and liabilities as prescribed by the NEC and in accordance with national rules.

3 AIMS OF THE BRANCH

- a The aims of the branch shall be in accordance with the aims and objectives of UNISON as agreed by UNISON's National Executive Committee annually, and in particular:
 - b To achieve the aims and targets set annually through the branch assessment.

4 MEMBERSHIP

- a Eligibility for membership shall be in accordance with The Rules.

5 BRANCH STRUCTURE

- a There will be an Annual General Meeting (or aggregate meetings) of the branch during March to confirm the election by ballot of branch officers and members of the branch committee and to receive an Annual Report on branch development from the Branch Committee.
- b Other general meetings may be called by the Branch Committee or by 125 members of the branch or 3% of the membership, whichever is the greater.
- c Stewards will be elected on the basis of 1:25 members or part thereof per workplace or group of workplaces as appropriate. Two stewards can ask to job-share one post.
- d Larger workplaces can have a constituency structure which reflects workplace organisation.
- e Groups of stewards in the same or similar workgroups should meet regularly in employer/directorate/service committees. Those similar workgroups will be identified by the Branch Committee as sections. At the first meeting following the AGM, or via email consultation, they should elect some of their number to the Branch Committee, on the basis of 1:100 members or part thereof.
- f Convenors who will coordinate the work of the employer/directorate/service committees will be elected/re-elected at the first relevant employer/directorate/service committee meeting following the AGM, or via email consultation.

- g Stewards from all employers shall be entitled to nominate at least one of their representatives onto the Branch Committee.
- h The quorum for a general meeting shall be 125 branch members or 3% of the full membership at a single meeting or through aggregate meetings.
- i Meetings will be convened and officers/convenors elected to ensure the democratic representation of all groups of members, irrespective of employer, in the branch decision making structure. A general quorum of 3% of eligible members will be used to determine the authority of any decision.
- j In the case of the AGM, all members will be notified in writing at least 12 weeks before the meeting (or the first aggregate meeting).

6 BRANCH FINANCE

- a. The branch shall keep a bank and/or building society account in the name of the branch. All members of the Branch Executive (Rule 9) shall be signatories.
- b. The Branch will work within the guidelines provided by the UNISON Branch Finance Handbook.
- c. An annual budget will be agreed in advance of the AGM each year, including proposed allocations to the various sections outlined within these rules. The Branch Committee will review the budget on a regular basis.

7 BRANCH OFFICERS

- a The branch shall elect the following officers annually;
 - chairperson
 - secretary
 - deputy branch secretary
 - treasurer
 - education coordinator
 - lifelong learning coordinator
 - equality coordinator
 - disabled members' officer
 - lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) officer
 - black members' officer
 - women's officer
 - health & safety officer
 - communications officer
 - international officer
 - young members' officer
 - welfare officer
 - membership officer
 - Labour Link Officer (elected by members who pay the political levy only)
 - retired members' secretary (elected at Retired Members' AGM)
 - environment (green) officer
- b Each section within the branch shall elect a convenor (senior steward) from amongst the stewards in that section in accordance with rule 5(e).

c Election of convenors – the process for nomination and election shall be as in 5(d-e) save that the nomination will be by the section committee or any two stewards employed in that section, and only stewards employed in the relevant section may participate in the election.

d 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 Labour Link members only.

e All nominations must be received in writing by the date on the election schedule agreed and published by the Branch Committee and circulated in an all-members' newsletter.

f Nominations should be received by the Branch Secretary (unless the branch secretary is contesting the post, in which case it should be the regional organiser)

g If any post is contested the nominees will be notified and given the right to submit an election address of not more than 200 words. This must be submitted no later than one week after the close of nominations. Nominees will also be given the opportunity to withdraw from the election at this point.

h If there is more than one candidate for any post a secret ballot will take place (unless the candidates were nominated as a job-share). Candidates wishing to job-share must clearly record this on nomination forms.

i In the event of a ballot, official papers will be supplied and each member of the branch shall be entitled to one vote in respect of each post to be filled. No less than one month will be allowed for ballot papers to be returned. The ballot must close before 1st March and the AGM/s.

j In the event of a post being uncontested this will be put forward for a confirmatory vote at the AGM, along with formal ratification of the ballot results.

k Any posts not filled at the AGM will be referred to the Branch Committee.

l If a vacancy occurs between Annual General Meetings nominations will be sought from the membership. If a vacancy occurs after the election process for the following year has started the vacancy will be referred to the Branch Committee.

m In the event of elections to outside bodies, these would normally take place at the Branch Committee (or via an email vote of Branch Committee members), with sufficient notice given. If any post is contested the nominees will be notified and given the right to submit an election address of not more than 200 words. This must be submitted no later than one week after the close of nominations. Nominees will also be given the opportunity to withdraw from the election at this point.

n The post of Retired Members' Secretary shall be elected at the Retired Members' AGM. Where more than one candidate is nominated and the candidates were not nominated as a jobshare, then an election of retired members shall be held in accordance with Rule 5 (h, i, j).

o During any branch election, activists will be reminded of the Code of Practice, the Working Together Guidelines and the national rules on elections and campaigning.

8 BRANCH COMMITTEE

a Representation on the branch committee will include:

- all branch officers (identified under 7a),

- all convenors
 - stewards as provided for in rule 5 (e) & (g)
- b The branch committee shall administer branch business in accordance with the national rules and guidance.
 - c The quorum for the branch committee shall be 33% (one third) of the elected members of the committee.
 - d The branch committee will establish arrangements for representation of members.

9 BRANCH EXECUTIVE

a A Branch Executive, comprised of the Branch Secretary, Deputy Branch Secretary, Chairperson and Treasurer shall be established, to ensure effective day-to-day management of the branch within the parameters of the decisions and guidance issued by the Branch Committee. The Branch Executive may commit to no expenditure, policy decision or affiliation that has not been previously agreed by the Branch Committee.

10 CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

- a. All meetings will be conducted in a fair and democratic manner, at all times abiding by the Working Together in UNISON guidelines (Appendix A).
- b. All meetings will be advertised widely as far in advance as possible.
- c. The procedures to be used at the meeting will be explained clearly.
- d. The branch will maintain minutes of meetings, financial records, books of accounts and other appropriate records to enable the branch to function.
- e. Meetings of the branch committee may take place either in person or by video conference.
- f. All committee members will be notified of the meeting arrangements and be provided with an agenda and other papers at least two weeks in advance.
- g. Steps must be taken to ensure the meeting is accessible and all members of the branch committee are enabled to participate fully. This applies both to meetings being held in person and those by video conference.
- h. The meeting quorum (as detailed in 5c) will be the same whether the meeting takes place in person or by video conference.

11 TAKING DECISIONS BETWEEN MEETINGS

- a Where the Branch Committee is not quorate or is not due to meet in time to make a decision where there is an urgent deadline, then matters can be determined by electronic consultation by email of all Branch Committee members, providing an audit trail of the process and responses received. Where any member of the Branch Committee does not have access to email, they will receive details by first class post together with a stamped addressed envelope and form to return their response.
- b Matters requiring a policy decision more than three weeks before the next scheduled meeting will normally be considered by email/post.
- c Where a quorate number of Committee members respond within two weeks, a decision will be deemed to have been made. The quorum will be one-third of the Branch Committee or four members, whichever is the greater.

- d Where a quorate number of members are in agreement, the matter will be reported to and ratified at the next meeting of the Branch Committee. If there are not a quorate number of members in agreement, the matter will be considered at the next Branch Committee meeting.
- e Electronic ballots may be used in place of postal ballots (subject to Rule 9c) provided they are carried out in accordance with The Rules.
- f Any electronic voting or balloting of members, for any reason, must take seriously the issues of confidentiality and comply with data protection legislation.

12 MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

- a Communications to the media, and via social media, on behalf of the branch shall be made only by the secretary, deputy secretary, chair, communications officer and any other members authorised by the branch committee to communicate on specific issues.

13 AFFILIATIONS

- a Affiliations to relevant Constituency Labour Parties will be decided by the APF membership.
- b Affiliations to trades councils shall be determined by the AGM or branch committee.
- c Affiliations to campaigning organisations and international campaigns will be decided by the branch committee as they arise and be ratified annually by the AGM.

14 SOLIDARITY REQUESTS

The Branch Secretary, or Deputy Branch Secretary if necessary, can respond on behalf of the branch, to urgent appeals for solidarity from the organisations to which we are affiliated, from UNISON national office, from members of the British Trade Union Congress, European Trade Union Congress, and the International Confederation of Trade Unions and their subsidiary federations,

When responding to appeals from these organisations, the Branch Secretary, or Deputy Branch Secretary if necessary, will make available the full text of their response to the next Branch Committee for ratification.

Letters/emails of protest or of support will only be sent providing they are in accordance with branch policies.

All requests for donations shall come to the Branch Committee for prior approval and be dealt with in accordance with Rule 12 and the rules, aims, policies, objectives and values of UNISON.

15 DONATIONS

Donations shall be agreed by a quorate general meeting or by the branch committee in accordance with the union's policies and objectives and subject to provisions of The Rules. Any donation of over £50 must be supported by a competent motion.

16) EXPENSES & TRAVEL

- a) Members should try to use public transport, or car-share, as much as is reasonably possible when carrying out UNISON business. Travelling by aeroplane for long-distance meetings/conferences should only be a last resort. The branch will not pay for First Class travel.
- b) Members who travel regularly on public transport on UNISON business and who are entitled to a Railcard can claim the Railcard cost from the branch.
- c) Expenses for members attending meetings, working at the UNISON office and working on behalf of the branch shall be paid at Surrey County Council staff rates. Full mileage will be paid less the member's usual/substantive home-to-work mileage.
- d) A passenger rate will be paid where members share a car. Passengers must be UNISON members on UNISON business.
- e) Car mileage expenses can be claimed for journeys up to 100 miles each way. Journeys over 100 miles should be travelled by public transport where possible and certainly where this is better value for money. Where a car is used, only 100 miles each way can be claimed, unless carrying a passenger/s, in which case the full mileage can be claimed.
- f) Claims should be submitted each month on the appropriate form, with all information clearly presented.
- g) Subsistence can be paid for members on UNISON business away from their usual base for a whole working day where food is not provided. Subsistence will be reimbursed, up to £20.00. Receipts must be provided.
- h) Subsistence for members attending conferences/events, as agreed by the Branch Committee, involving at least one overnight stay will be paid in advance at current HMRC Rates (where meals are not provided).
- i) Day visitors to conferences/events can claim subsistence according to Rule 15 (g) above.
- j) Reasonable child/dependent care costs and costs related to making events accessible (including taxis for members with reduced mobility for instance) will be met by the branch.

17 BRANCH EMPLOYED STAFF

- a. The Branch Secretary shall 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 chairperson.
- c. Any appeal arising from a first stage grievance or disciplinary hearing will be heard by the branch chairperson and other senior branch officers not involved at the first stage hearing.
- d. The nature of any disciplinary hearing will remain confidential and the outcome only will be reported to the Branch Committee on its conclusion.

18 APPROVAL/ALTERATIONS TO BRANCH RULES

- a Branch rules must be agreed by two thirds of members present and voting at a quorate branch general meeting or aggregate meetings as provided for in these rules..
- 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.