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| **A REGION-WIDE STRATEGY FOR UNISON SOUTH EAST 2017 - 2021** |

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10. **Introduction**

Following the general election in May 2015 the Regional Objectives Group and Regional Committee had initial discussions on present and future challenges to UNISON South East and how the region could best position itself to face the government’s clear attacks on trade unions and the public sector. This strategy is the culmination of those discussions and subsequent wide-ranging lay-member consultation and input at branch and regional level.

1. **Recommendation**

That the “Region-wide Strategy for UNISON South East 2017-2021” be adopted.

1. **Background**

The process of developing a region-wide strategy started in the summer 2015. The meeting of South East Regional Council in November 2015 agreed “in principle” to the strategy, and a final version was discussed and endorsed at the Regional Committee in January 2016.

However, the Regional Council raised some concerns regarding details of the strategy, specifically the potential reduction in regional democracy and the matter was referred back to the Regional Committee.

As a consequence a Task and Finish Group consisting of all Chairs of Regional level committees was established to consider changes to the strategy and whether to propose a new version to a future Regional Council meeting.

Three work streams were identified for the T&F to discuss:

* Regional Strategy - To review the Regional Strategy and determine which areas are in train and which should be revised and progressed.
* Constitutional processes - To develop and agree administrative processes to support the Regional Constitution e.g. appeal processes, nominations / registrations processes and timetable etc.
* Access standards - To develop and agree good practice standards for the Region regarding access requirements for regional meetings and communications.

All three work streams were used to develop proposals, discussed at the 2016 Regional Strategy Weekend (held in Woking in September 2016) and then further reference via Regional Committee to the Regional Council for decision.

1. **Task & Finish Group Review**

The Task & Finish Group reiterated the importance of the priorities identified in the first version of the regional strategy - Steward Development and improving Communications.

A project around organising in the Fragmented Work-Place based in the private and community sectors should be a third priority.

In addition:

* Member Recruitment and Mapping should be embedded in everything we do.
* There was a recognition that we work with limited resources – money, time and people – so planning and prioritising was becoming ever-more important.
* Additional contemporary issues may overtake long-term priorities eg TU Act and DOCAS agreements.
* That the “Regional Strategy” should become a standing items on all committee agendas, to ensure that all areas of the region were focussing on the regional priorities.
* A more inclusive revised constitution should seek to address gender imbalances in regional positions eg chairs of committees
* The strategy should be more long-term - with a rolling 4 to 5 year horizon.

The review also noted that a number of initiatives included in the original strategy were in progress or had been implemented including:

* Regional intervention in failing branches and those requiring enhanced support
* the launch of the “Proud to be in UNISON” campaign
* the publishing of the Guide to Democracy and Committees Structures
* Branch annual wall planner
* Stewards Pocket Guide and poster
* production of Regional Guidelines on grievances, disciplinaries, sickness and capability, and changes to terms and conditions.
* Standards of communications should be developed with branches to ensure all members were reached
* More use is being made of existing resources eg AGM pack, newsletter templates, “Proud to be in UNISON”
* The website project is being rolled-out branches
* Joint Branch Assessments would include Branches identifying actions on communications and steward development again in 2017

1. **Objectives**

The strategy must take into account the different types of branches and service groups we have in the region, both large and small, and should promote the co-ordination of work across all.

It must also compliment the strategic planning being undertaken by the National Executive Council and the NEC sub-committees.

As a high-level strategy document it can only set objectives and relies on branch activists and members to be the key agents of change in the workplace.

1. **Priorities**

Over the next 4 to 5 years we must seek to improve our recognition, presence and relevance in the workplace by:

* Increasing the number of trained and active stewards
* Greater membership densities
* More workplace recognition and facility agreements
* More locality based / cross service group working across branches in their communities
* Promoting good branch practices
* Higher news media profiles at regional and local levels
* More consistent and interactive “conversations” with our members – through social media
* Better involvement of our Retired Members as a respected and valued resource
* Improving transparency in our internal decision making processes
* Be an organisation which is open and accessible to all to participate at all levels

1. **Practical application**

Stewards Development

All branches will seek to prioritise stewards’ development and communications with members in their work plans. The ET&D Committee will continue to monitor statistical information on recruitment / retention and training of stewards and promote training options and opportunities. It will also continue to review the training programme and methods, in consultation with branches.

The Region will continue to produce materials to support stewards’ development

Fragmented Workplace Project

The Region will seek to resource recruitment and organising in the private / community sectors in pan-branch / cross regional projects. The focus of the project will be to recruit and develop stewards to support and represent members in those employers identified. To ensure maximum success and avoid duplicate working, decisions on the employers to prioritise and appropriate targets to set will be made following discussions with Regional Community Service Group and the national Strategic Organising Unit.

A database of private / community sector contracts across the region will be developed as a resource for all branches and organising staff, to help assist with recruitment and bargaining plans.

Communications

Information, templates and support will be provided to branches on communication with members; including face to face, newsletters / bulletins and social media.

Branches will be supported to develop their own websites, based on the Regional template.

Outcomes of national initiatives, such as social media campaigns and placing of local adverts will be used to inform the design and development of communication strategies and projects.

1. **Moving Forward**

An annual review of the Regional Strategy will be conducted through consultation with all branches and regional committees in advance of the Regional Strategy Weekend every autumn. The review will include outcomes of specific projects; what worked well; what needs to change and what the priorities should be in the forthcoming year.

1. **Implementation**

* Considered for amendment / revision by Regional Committee 12 January 2017
* Enact revised provisions at Regional Council AGM in February 2017
* Include standing item on all lay-member committee agenda within the region after February Regional Council
* Include objectives in all Joint Branch Assessments discussions
* Seek appropriate resources for Fragmented Workplace project

1. **Background reference papers**

* Response to the 2015 General Election - A Region-wide Strategy for UNISON South East (Regional Council - November 2015 / February 2016)
* Task & Finish Group working papers (July / August 2016)
* Regional Strategy - Presentation to Regional Strategy Weekend (September 2016)