

## Workstream 2

### Recommendation 10

#### Committee Remit, Purpose and Structures Review

**Recommendation 10. Engaging with relevant regional bodies, to review the scope of our committees to better define the purpose and scope of those committees. To further consider the remit, overlap, structure of our regional committees to strengthen and enhance democratic decision making and make them more easily understood and accessible.**

In order to conduct the review, the project lead researched the structure of other regions to consider the core requirements, purpose and business of our regional democratic structures. Structured conversations were then carried out with the Chairs of the Standing & Strategic Committees to consider:

- The purpose of each committee as currently conducted
- The constitutional purpose of each committees and if it fulfils this purpose
- If this is different to the constitutional purpose or has changed since the constitution was created
- Understand what the core business/decision making is of the committee
- Consider what changes may be necessary to help the committee meet it's purpose:
  - o Understand if/where there is any overlap with other committees
  - o Understand if there is other powers/information/oversight the committee needs to fulfil it's purpose
  - o Understand who needs to be part of the committee/discussions to fulfil their purpose
  - o Consider other ways of structuring to improve participation

The project lead also attended meetings of different standing & strategic committees to widen the discussion, learn from committee members why they had put themselves forward for the committees, what attracted them to the committee, what they felt the purpose of the committee was initially vs what they now thought the purpose was, and what they would like to see change or done differently.

Each discussion was informative and interesting, with the majority of participants fully engaged and open to change. Discussions were refreshing and supportive, with ideas explored, with personal experiences of long standing activists helping to drive discussions alongside the information gathered through the participation review.

## **Background**

### **Functions**

The functions of the Region are set out in Rule F.3.1, with these functions carried out by regional council and regional committee as set out in Rule F.4 and F.5

The functions are as follows:

### 3 FUNCTIONS OF REGIONS

3.1 *Each Region shall have the following functions, namely to:*

- .1 monitor the deployment of resources allocated to the Region to ensure that the objectives of the Union are being pursued in the most effective manner*
- .2 assist and advise the Regional service groups on issues relating to or of concern to the wider membership*
- .3 encourage the development and maintenance of a strong and flexible branch structure, in accordance with principles laid down by the National Executive Council*
- .4 assist in implementing national policy and developing campaign strategies, particularly relating to recruitment and retention within the Region*
- .5 consult with devolved administrations on public services and relevant economic, political and social issues.*
- .6 ensure that appropriate education and publicity activities take place within the Region*
- .7 advise the National Executive Council on matters of policy, outside the responsibility of the Service Groups, and assist in its development*
- .8 assist in the administration and organisation of the Union's welfare and retired members' activities*
- .9 discuss branch motions as appropriate for the National Delegate Conference agenda on issues outside the responsibility of Service Groups*
- .10 assist branches in promoting proportionality and fair representation among conference delegates*
- .11 ensure representation of the union on outside bodies including TUC Regional Councils.*

Each region then determines how to carry out these functions and the most appropriate structure for doing so. Each structure is different, although there are some consistencies, and each region has their own constitution and standing orders.

The South East Regional Constitution is 31 pages long including 5 appendices. It is the longest constitution. The shortest regional constitution is 8 pages with the vast majority between 12 and 18 pages long including appendices. Additionally, the majority of constitutions follow the same logical order without duplicated information. The South East constitution is an outlier which includes duplicated information. An in depth review of the constitution would be helpful to streamline the constitution, make it easier to read and understand for all activists whilst still maintaining it's core processes.

#### **Structures**

The South East Regional Constitution delegates responsibility for carrying out the rulebook functions to regional committee, three strategic committees and three

standing committees (Retired members is also a standing committee constitutionally due to rule F.3.1.8 above but it excluded for the purposes of this review) as well as three sub-groups, for a total of 9 committees/groups within the regional democratic structure (excluding regional committee which is a rulebook body). This is the highest number of committees/groups in any region.

The next highest has four committees and five open forums, followed by the second highest number of committees with 6. Several regions have 3 or 4 committees and then one or two networks or forums, with the remaining regions have 3 or 4 committees or groups maximum.

Of these, the vast majority of either committees or networks/forums are for: International, H&S, Welfare and Education. Only one region has three other committees that are similar to our structures, with the functions grouped differently (D&O, Comms & Campaigns, Finance & General Purposes). The majority of regions either have one committee that covers the functions of the SE strategic committees ( i.e. Finance, Development & Organising Committee) or have the majority of these functions covered by Regional Committee (i.e they were not delegated). The majority of regions also include recruitment and/or organising within their committee structures (if delegated).

## **Research & Comparisons**

Whilst each region is structured uniquely, there are some notable features in each structure and some consistency across regions and through the approaches taken. This can help inform our decisions and shape alternative options.

International, H&S, Welfare:

- The majority of regions have international, welfare and H&S committees. However, several regions have either forums or networks for each of these functions. These meet between 2 and 4 times a year, the majority either have directly elected representation from each branch or are open to the relevant branch officers.

Education

- Several regions have a standalone Education & Training committee, solely carrying out E&T functions. Several regions have either Education Forums or Networks. The remaining regions combine Education with Organising & Recruitment. Aside from one region that aside from international, welfare & H&S, carry out all remaining functions through one committee (see below), and two regions with no additional committees.

Finance

- Only 1/3 of regions have a committee that includes finance in some form, the remaining regions have an elected officer, i.e finance convenor, regional treasurer etc.

- Only two regions, including the South East, have a standalone 'finance' committee (the other region is has a 'budget' committee)
- Several regions have a 'finance & general purposes committee' which broadly combine the functions of finance committee with the regional funds functions of P&C and branch development (branch rules/restructures) of E,T,D

### Organising & Recruitment

- The majority of regions include a committee with responsibility for recruitment and organising. This is either combined with education/learning or finance. None of our committees currently include this within their constitutional purpose.

### Branch Development

- For most regions, this is included within the remit of the regional committee. Some regions combine it with finance and/or organising, we are the only region that combines it with Education.

## **Alternative Structures & Proposed Remits**

Whilst there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to regional democracy, there are positive changes that can be made in order to better structure and address the purposes of each committee to ensure they have the information, oversight and authority to meet their purposes and to support them in directing their limited resources and attract 'time poor' new activists.

### **Option 1) Status Quo**

The first option is to do nothing- the region has historically struggled to make significant constitutional changes. However, the structural review has been largely welcomed, whilst the committees are currently functioning, there is clear frustration from activists with reoccurring issues or lack of available information of authority and all committees recognised difficulty in attracting new activists. There is also broad recognition that the purposes or function has changed from their constitutional purpose- as set out in rule, the committees either do more than originally intended, cover different remits, or have a different focus. Additionally, some committees have lost focus on 'business' or decision making- the participation review has determined that members are more likely to get involved if they are there to take decisions, influence policy or represent their members. With the significant turnover in activists over the past year, it's more important than ever that our committees have a clear

focus, that this is easy to explain and understand and that we make best use of members limited time and resources.

## **Option 2) Status Quo with Minor Changes**

### *Standing Committees*

The standing committees remain unchanged.

### *Strategic Committees*

The strategic committees change names to reflect their current purpose with no change to their remits.

- Budget Committee
- Regional Funds Committee
- Education & Branch Governance Committee

This would support some increase in participation, however overall the majority of issues identified in the review would remain, including overlap between the committees as well as the contradiction between some remits (i.e Education and governance). Recruitment & Organising does not sit within these committees and the standing committees would not see any additional changes to resolve ongoing frustrations.

## **Option 3) Two Strategic Committees & Four Regional Networks**

### *Standing Committees*

Welfare, H&S, International become 'Networks' or 'Forums' (Networks has been welcomed, it is more descriptive, more attractive and reflects the needs/wants of branch officers who may feel intimidated by 'committee' or even 'forum').

The composition changes to include every designated branch officer (i.e Branch H&S, Branch Welfare, Branch International officers) invited to attend the network (suggest that there is an option for branches without an designated elected officer to send someone else- this would support small branches or members who are interested in getting involved but not certain). At their first meeting, they elect Co-Chairs to work with Secretary/Chair to organise three/four events/briefings/training sessions/activities throughout the year.

This would ensure: increase informality, focus on networking, more attractive for new reps/officers to get involved in the region, activities geared towards supporting branch activities, branch officers, easier to distribute materials, able to identify common issues across branches/service groups and create tools/training/activities and respond quickly to changing circumstances with greater flexibility.

Education:

Create new Education Network with a similar composition to the above. It would create two way communication with Branch Education Co-ordinators, create a space for more innovation and ensure that all member barriers to participation can be more easily identified and addressed. Ensure greater networking across branches and particularly support smaller branches that may struggle to put on branch-based courses due to numbers. Identify change that is taking place in branches more easily.

### *Strategic Committees*

Merging and reconfiguration of the function and purpose of the strategic committees. This option would (other than education) ensure all current purposes and responsibilities remain and potential expand the responsibilities. However, there would also still be some overlap between the committees.

#### Finance & General Purposes Committee

- Co-ordinate all regional financial activities inc. regional pool, honoraria (via panel), branch funding, campaign fund
- Administer and monitor all Regional funds including bids for funding (Regional Pool, Campaign Fund, Outreach Fund, Organising Fund)
- Agree regional committee budgets and scrutinise activity on regional action plans

With one committee administering all funds, a review could be undertaken on the current function and use of funds to ensure that it is fit for purpose and give advice to branches and regional committees on how to fund projects/activities based on the most appropriate fund, including when it should be included in regional committee budgets and ensure fair distribution of funds across the committees, encouraging activity in line with UNISON objectives.

#### Regional Development & Organising Committee

- Monitor branch constitutions/rules
- Develop proposals for branch restructuring where there is disagreement or strategic need
- Branches/Organisers/Service Groups/FGP refer 'struggling' branches to D&O for support (possible options: regional pool funding for additional resource, branch merger, change to branch rules, organising plan)
- Monitor recruitment & retention, responsible for implementing and promoting recruitment activity
- Monitor organising plans & scrutinise branch activity around OF to identify patterns and create resources/tools.
- Ensure organising embedded into all regional activity

Development includes supporting the structural development of branches via rules and mergers, as well as recruitment and organising which would include branch

reps, loss of members, branch instability etc. However, the weakness of this proposal is that the committee can only signpost support or offer structural changes via branch rules/mergers, the resource to support organising plans sits with the FGP which reduces the remit of the committee to largely monitoring. Although Education can form part of development, this could be best served with the Co-Chairs invited to the Education Network to support development of activists by delegating identified education/training needs to the Network to develop or by network identifying trends related to the development of branches for the D&O committee to consider.

## **Option 4) One Committee, for Networks and increased use of panels & working groups**

### *Standing Committees*

As Option 3 in regards to creation of three 'Networks' and additional 'Education Network'.

### *Strategic Committees*

Merge the functions of all three strategic committees into one main committee, it would serve as a 'business and development' committee that would complement regional committee whilst also allowing for more in-depth and focussed discussions and keep the region running operationally. However, this proposal would also suggest the election of 'panels' from within the committee membership to carry out the more detailed work needed between meetings to then be reported and agreed at the main meeting. This would decrease the 'bureaucracy' and paperwork of meetings, whilst also ensuring committed activists have the appropriate oversight of core functions.

#### Finance, Development & Organising Committee

- Co-ordinate all regional financial activities inc. regional pool, honoraria (via panel), branch funding, campaign fund
- Administer and monitor all Regional funds including bids for funding (Regional Pool, Campaign Fund, Outreach Fund, Organising Fund)
- Agree regional committee budgets and scrutinise activity on regional action plans
- Monitor constitutions/rules
- Agree proposals for branch restructuring where there is disagreement or strategic need
- Branches/Organisers/Service Groups/FGP refer 'struggling' branches to FD&O for support (possible options: regional pool funding for additional resource, branch merger, change to branch rules, organising plan)
- Monitor recruitment & retention, responsible for implementing and promoting recruitment activity

- Monitor organising plans & scrutinise branch activity around OF to identify patterns and create resources/tools.
- Ensure organising embedded into all regional activity and is appropriately resourced

## Panels

- Honoraria Panel : Remit as currently- report patterns/concerns to FDO (i.e issues with branch rules, concerns regarding branch financial governance)
- Branch Rules Panel: Panel would have delegated responsibility to consider branch rules and prepare report for FDO. Would allow for more detailed discussions and greater scrutiny of paperwork to ensure consistency whilst retaining oversight by committee. Increase flexibility- panel can be called throughout year as and when needed. Smaller group of activists for branches to ask for help or meet with for discussion if issues raised.
- Branch Merger Development Panel : Similarly, would consider proposals for branch mergers where there is conflict/disagreement (as per NEC guidance) or where there is a strategic need to prepare report and recommendations to committee for agreement. Increase flexibility, can be called throughout the year to then meet strict branch merger timetable. Smaller group of activists for branches to ask for help or meet with for more open discussion if issues raised.

This proposal would also maintain and encourage flexibility to create other working groups i.e to develop organising plans or one off panels i.e Annual 'Organising Framework' panel. Would increase capacity for smaller groups to have more detailed/indepth discussions whilst maintaining the committee for decision making and overall monitoring and scrutiny. Time poor activists would be able to participate in important decision making, whilst ensuring that there is still appropriate space and governance for demand driven panels to have more detailed discussions. The proposed committee would have the information and oversight to identify issues and the resources to address them.

## Recommendation

The Working Group agree options 3 or 4, and the appropriate Rule Changes to be proposed to Regional Council AGM 2022.



## Appendix One

### Feedback from Discussion Frameworks- Strategic Committees

#### Education, Training & Development

| Constitutional Purpose                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Feedback                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Core Decision making                                                                                                             | Issues & Ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <i>Responsible for the internal development of the union's organisation and the union's Education and Training programme within the Region and Branches. It shall assist in the co-ordination and training functions of other committees and groups.</i> | <p>Development part is less understood, some successes previously i.e small surrey LG branches mergers, but hard to develop overall strategy.</p> <p>Training- better understood but often overtaken by development- particularly discussions over rules.</p> <p>Overlap with P&amp;C- resources to support development is.</p> <p>Name is misleading- activists joined because of interest in training/education, may not be interested in development, can be off putting.</p> | <p>Branch Mergers – where branches are reluctant, there is a strategic reason</p> <p>Branch rules- approve changes after AGM</p> | <p>E/T runs well with little need for more intervention, more focus on strategy for supporting outsourced/ fragmented reps/members. More about providing support/info for branches in accessing</p> <p>If branch 'failing' or struggling via 'health check' or OF, need resources to support as well as oversight to recommend mergers</p> <p>Recruitment/organising as part of branch development but difficult without resources to support or information.</p> <p>Can be overloaded by branch rules discussions- only some of the committee feel passionate but it is important that there are discussions that take place as tough decisions need to be made.</p> |

#### Publicity & Campaigns

| Constitutional Purpose               | Feedback                              | Core Decision Making         | Issues & Ideas        |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Responsible for the focus and</i> | Originally intended to be a 'business | Regional pool bids- meetings | Need better link with |

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| <p><i>direction of regional campaigning and providing a forum for development of regional policies, including the allocation of funds from the General Political Fund (where devolved) and the Regional Pool.</i></p> <p><i>Publicise and promote regional policies. Provide support and encouragement for branch communications in all formats and provide communication resources to other committees and groups within the Region.</i></p> | <p>committee' or how to spend money and what we spend it on<br/>Remit widened to include a focus on supporting branches with limited resources or to provide support for projects outside of 'normal' branch work. Support recruitment, organising, development, activist development.<br/>Responsibility for campaigns is with regional committees/SOGs/SGs, no responsibility for campaign. Policy sits with regional committee/SGs/SOGs<br/>Publicise understanding over different funds and how they work/how – overlap with finance committee.<br/>Committee is about finance/paperwork, this is not reflected in name.</p> | <p>cancelled if no bids.<br/>Monitoring &amp; evaluation of bids<br/>Reports on other funds (outreach and organising)- not well understood, few bids, little change.<br/>GPF mostly dealt with nationally.<br/>Core business may change- depends on BSOF guidance.</p> | <p>strategy/SGs/wider national/regional trends when taking decisions- taking decisions in a 'vacuum' i.e why wasn't it included in regional committee budget? Other funding avenues? Not clear if funds are getting where they are needed i.e often same branches, are other branches not aware/don't understand or don't have capacity to make bid.<br/>Preference to still have a committee with oversight of financial matters rather than single person, but need to be linked in to overall strategies/wider context and be more accessible.<br/>Need to be more obvious what people are signing up for<br/>Need to find a different way to support branch comms officers.</p> |
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## Finance

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|------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------|
| Constitutional Purpose | Feedback | Core Decision Making | Issues & Ideas |
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| <p><i>Responsible to the Region for monitoring all regional lay finances; proposing an annual budget to the Regional Council/Committee; allocating additional funds in accordance with the regional objectives as agreed by the Regional Council.</i></p> | <p>Not all lay finances- only have oversight of regional committee budgets and monitor through the year. Don't have any responsibility for two funds or regional pool/GPF but overlap with P&amp;C of what bids are being requested for. Ensure finances are audited and report to RC AGM. Important oversight role in budget setting. No link to branch finances, some overlap ETD. No actual link/responsibility for honoria as devolved responsibility from regional committee except chair's on panel and no link with overall health of branch (overlap with P&amp;C) or ability to resolve occurring issues identified.</p> | <p>Budget setting- Have started to propose cuts to budget as overall budget allocation is more than actual funding. Receive reports and ask questions.</p> | <p>Name is misleading- doesn't cover all financial matters, limited to regional allocation and regional committee budgets. Preference for a committee over one person with responsibility. Better links needed with other funds.</p> |
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Feedback from Discussions- Standing Committees

**H&S**

| Constitutional Purpose                                       | Feedback                  | Core Decision Making                           | Issues & Ideas                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organise events and activities and responsible for providing | Organises the H&S seminar | No core decision making beyond organisation of | Essentially no 'business', mostly Chair works with secretary to set |

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| health & safety support to and encouraging activity in branches. | No real engagement/involvement with branches<br>Working with education to create webinars for new reps, ability to connect with H&S reps is expanding and welcomed.<br>More informal than other committees | Some responsibility for developing tools, mostly produced nationally. | up seminar/webinars or create guides/tools<br>Needs to work more closely with H&S officers, currently no place for H&S reps to get dedicated support or input into H&S training programme.<br>Nowhere for branches to share issues, collate H&S issues with SOG/branches and develop tools or strategy to respond. |
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## International

| Constitutional Purpose                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Feedback                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Core Decision Making                                               | Issues & Ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <i>Focus on international and European affairs, both on issues of solidarity and those that affect the sphere of work and employment. Responsible for providing support to and encouraging activity in branches in the context of international relations.</i> | Responsible for promoting national international priorities and supporting them by disseminating information but not enough links with national NEC committee, sits separately to branches and national when making decisions/deciding priorities.<br>Invite speakers/have briefings but to committee members who are not always BIROs and therefore have limited influence. | Donations/affiliations once a year in line with national guidance. | Less formality= more capacity to put on events/activities/training/briefings aimed at BIROs linked with UNISON objectives.<br>Create place for branches to send potential BIROs or where can get involved if too small to have a BIRO.<br>More direct discussion/input from BIROs who undertake international work.<br>Greater focus on turning national priorities into |

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|  | <p>BIROs have nowhere that is responsible for their training and ongoing development, feel isolated. Best attendance is when advertised directly to BIROs, use of virtual has helped.</p> |  | <p>regional and branch priorities.</p> |
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## Welfare

| Constitutional Purpose                                                                                                 | Feedback                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Core Decision Making                                           | Issues & Ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p>Provide support to the network of branch welfare officers and organise fundraising activities and welfare days.</p> | <p>Share information received nationally with branches<br/>Encourage branches to donate/fund raise to There For You<br/>Share information between branches about what support members have needed and what steps taken- but this is limited to those elected from RC, and not all those elected are branch welfare officers.</p> | <p>Provide training for Welfare officers every other year.</p> | <p>Need greater links with branch welfare officers- can directly communicate, create space for discussions.<br/>Network and create links between branch welfare officers and place for support for branches that do not have BWOs.<br/>More people involved = more fundraising, more innovative ideas.<br/>Welfare more important that ever<br/>Formality puts people off, don't get facility time so more focus on training/briefings and make more attractive.</p> |

