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**MINUTES OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE 2022/2024 COUNCIL HELD AT  
GUILD HOUSE AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2022**

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- 5.1 Announcements**
- 5.2 Minutes**
- 5.3 New Members**
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- 5.9 Finance**
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- 5.11 Motions**
- 5.12 Branch Reform**
- 5.13 Committee Elections and Conference**
- 5.14 BAPAM Mental Health Support 2023**

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**Councillors Present:** Lynda Rooke (President, in the Chair), Jassa Ahluwalia, Joseph Ballard, Sean Biggerstaff, Victoria Brazier, Jo Cameron Brown, Julia Carson Sims, Di Christian, Jackie Clune (Vice-President), Tonia Daley-Campbell, Dan de la Motte, Rachael Fagan, Nick Fletcher (Vice-President), Trevor Fox, Shenagh Govan, Graham Hamilton, David John (Honorary Treasurer), Mary Lane, Eva Lorraine, Kerry Kyriacos Michael, Leila Mimmack, Hywel Morgan, Louis Rolston, Sam Swann, Paul Valentine and Louie Whitemore.

**Staff Present:** Paul W Fleming (General Secretary), Louise McMullan (Deputy for the General Secretary), Hilary Hadley (Assistant General Secretary, LP), Beccy Reese (Assistant General Secretary, O&F), Sam Fletcher (Head of Membership), Ian Manborde (Equalities and Education Officer), Nick Baker (Executive Assistant to the General Secretary) and Sam Winter (Council Secretary).

**Apologies for Absence:** Lizzie Cooper, Dan Edge, Zainab Hasan, Maureen Hibbert, Helen Monks, Genevieve Say, Annie Wallace and Jack Wilkinson.

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### 5.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

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### 5.2 MINUTES

#### 5.2.1 Corrections

None.

The Draft Minutes and Confidential Minutes of 1 November were **proposed** by Mary Lane, **seconded** by Di Christian and **AGREED** unanimously as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

#### 5.2.2 Matters Arising

None.

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### 5.3 NEW MEMBERS

The new members were **proposed** by David John, Honorary Treasurer, **seconded** by Graham Hamilton and **AGREED** unanimously.

#### **Points made in discussion:**

- David John, Honorary Treasurer, said it looked like another good month. *Reply – the General Secretary said last month we had seen a net gain of 31 members, which was neither here nor there. This was the first month where we had recruited more members than in 2020, but it was less than in a normal November. For us and other comparable unions, it seemed like membership growth was slowing. More members seemed to not be renewing their membership. We were on track to end the year with 47,000 members and we had more members than at the beginning of the year. The overall trend was good, but the economic crisis was having an effect.*
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### 5.4 LEGAL CASES

This item was placed in the confidential minutes.

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### 5.5 STAFFING

The General Secretary said we brought a staffing document to every meeting. He highlighted the changes this month.

This was **NOTED**.

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### 5.6 REFERENDUM RESULT 2022

The General Secretary said the referendum on the new Rules of the Union had concluded. 76% of members had voted yes on a 10% turnout. This was the highest turnout we had had in a referendum since at least 2011. If we went back to the last referendum over a really contentious topic, in 2012, this had

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been 60% in favour on a 6% turnout. Almost two-thirds of those who had voted had done so online.

Following this announcement, the vast majority of these Rules would take effect at the end of this Council meeting. Some would not, as had been set out in the paperwork accompanying the voting papers.

He said we were bringing forward new Standing Orders and Procedures about how various bodies of the Union were governed and setting out various complaints processes.

Sam Winter said we were proposing a couple of amendments to the Standing Orders and Procedures provided:

- Proposers and seconders must also be qualified to stand for the applicable committee.
- No member could stand in more than one section of an industrial or equalities committee (e.g. Directors & Designers or LGBT+).
- We would also apply a small number of drafting changes, for clarity.

### **Recommendation:**

**That the Council APPROVES (as amended) the attached Standing Orders (Council, Industrial/Equalities/National Committees and National/Regional/General Meetings) and Procedures (Member Complaints, Disciplinary, Appeals and General Secretary Disciplinary) in line with the new Equity Rulebook and timetable for its implementation.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Graham Hamilton, **seconded** by Sam Swann and **AGREED** nem con, with one abstaining.

### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor asked why some Standing Orders spoke of notes rather than minutes. *Reply – A Councillor said this was based on a principle that notes required less detail and so were more appropriate for some areas of the Union’s work.*
- A Councillor asked for the thinking behind national committees being able to send only two representatives to the conference. *Reply – the General Secretary said this was about balancing out the geographic representation at conference (as we increased the numbers from branches) with representation from industrial and equalities areas The*

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*number of representatives each part of the Union could send to the conference was a matter of the Rules, not Standing Orders.*

The report from the Independent Scrutineer (Popularis) is enclosed as follows:

### **EQUITY RULE CHANGE REFERENDUM 2022**

Total members entitled to vote:	46175	
Total voted by post:	1774	39%
Total voted on web:	2813	61%
Total ballot returns:	4587	10%

Result of votes cast:

### **QUESTION**

Do you approve the new Rulebook for Equity, to take effect as per the timings outlined in the Summary of Substantive Changes?

YES	3464	76%
NO	1107	
Spoilt/no vote	15	
Spoilt/ballot number removed	1	
Total received	4587	

I am satisfied that there are no reasonable grounds for believing that there was any contravention of a requirement imposed by or under any enactment in relation to the election.

I am satisfied that the arrangements made with respect to the production, storage, distribution, return or other handling of the voting papers used in the election, and the arrangements for the counting of the votes, included all such security arrangements as were reasonably practicable for the purpose of minimising the risk that any unfairness or malpractice might occur. Members were entitled to return their vote by post or on a secure web system. No member was entitled to vote by both post and web in the ballot.

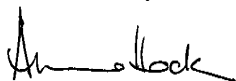
I have been able to carry out my functions without such interference as would make it reasonable for any person to call my independence in relation to the union into question.

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I have inspected the register of members and no matters were revealed which should be drawn to the attention of the union in order to assist it in securing that the register is accurate and up to date. I was not requested by any member or candidate to inspect or examine a copy of the membership register.

Equity appointed Document Dispatch as an Independent Person for the purposes of the distribution of ballot papers to members. I am satisfied with the performance of Document Dispatch.

Certified by:



Anne Hock  
Independent Scrutineer

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022

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### 5.7 COMPLAINTS

Louise McMullan said we had received six complaints. The first three were about the process adopted for the Rules referendum process and the final three were about the branch reforms.

#### 5.7.1 Complaint I

A complaint had been received under Rule 29.1 that the Council was breaching 46.4 and Rule 16.3.6.

#### **Initial Report: Findings**

1.) That Rule 46.4 is as follows:

*Rule 46.4 Notwithstanding Rules 46.1 and 46.3, any alteration by referendum shall not be effective unless the general subject matter of the alteration has been discussed within the period of two years prior to the holding of the referendum at an Annual or Special Representative Conference, or at two or more open meetings of members held under Rule 38, notice of which shall have been given in the trade press and of which one at least shall have been held in London.*

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My emphasis has been added. The Rule has been complied with. Within two years of the holding of the referendum (specifically on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022) two open meetings were held in person. These were notified in The Stage newspaper on the 1<sup>st</sup> September. Three online meetings were also held on the 20<sup>th</sup> September, and three on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September. These were also listed in The Stage. Additionally all members were informed of all the meetings on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1<sup>st</sup> September, and 13<sup>th</sup> September. These were opened by between 45% and 59% of members.

- 2.) Written submissions have also been submitted, which have each been individually considered, and run into around 150.
- 3.) This Rule has clearly not been breached.
- 4.) That Rule 16.3.6 is as follows:

*The Council shall at all times act in the best interests of the members in accordance with the Objects of the Union and shall determine anything wherein the Rules are silent but in no case shall it alter or depart from the Rules of the Union.*

- 5.) The Council has acted in line with the Rules of the union, as the Rules set out a process for revision of the Rules. The Council has acted with a belief that this process is in the best interests of the members of the union, in line with the Objects.
- 6.) No rule has been breached or is about to be breached by the actions of the Council by making a choice as to which revision route to embark upon as set out in Rule 46.4.

### **Recommendation:**

**That Council DISMISSES the Complaint under Rule 29.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Mary Lane, **seconded** by Louis Rolston and **AGREED** nem con, with one abstaining.

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### 5.7.2 Complaint II

A complaint had been received under Rule 29.1 that the Council had breached the consultation process required by the Rules.

#### **Initial Report: Findings**

- 1.) The Complainant requested that the complaint is investigated by the President. However, this is a Rule 29 complaint, and identifies no complaint against the General Secretary himself. The Complainant does not have the right to choose which officer looks into a complaint. Therefore, it is the General Secretary who is responsible for the investigation
- 2.) However, despite being addressed to the President, the attached correspondence is sufficient for the General Secretary to make preliminary enquiries as required under the Rule 29 Process. The notice sets out the complaint in full and no further information is required to determine it/dispose of it fairly.
- 3.) That the Process to be followed should be the process at the time the complaint is submitted.
- 4.) That the proposed Rulebook consultation process followed by the Council was in excess of the consultation required by the Rules - in that it consisted of two physical and six virtual meetings, as well as invitations for written submission.
- 5.) That the process for change is required only to examine the 'General Subject Matter'; the 'General Subject Matter' in this case being the introduction of a completely new rulebook.
- 6.) In addition, the summary paper that went forward to both the physical and online open members meetings set out the general subject matter of the alterations: identifying those involving no substantive change but a change of wording only so as provide a set of rules that might be more readily understood and, those where a substantive change was proposed. Where the latter applied, the change was explained. It was not necessary for the Chair at each meeting to also go through each proposed rule change and Rule 46 does not require this.

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7.) That 'General Subject Matter' is not so specific as to mean each individual change in the instance of bringing about a proposed whole new rulebook. It is clear at all the meetings, and in correspondence to all members, that a new Rulebook is the 'General Subject Matter'. Members were provided with the alterations in their full form by virtue of having the new set of set of rules before them as well as the summary paper to inform their discussions.

### **Recommendation:**

**That Council DISMISSES the Complaint under Rule 29.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Kerry Kyriacos Michael, **seconded** by Hywel Morgan and **AGREED** unanimously.

### **5.7.3 Complaint III**

The General Secretary said this was an unusual one. It had been submitted to the Certification Officer and they had dealt with it without informing us. The Certification Officer had informed us that they had dismissed the complaint and so we were providing this to the Council for their information.

The complaint related to the referendum in 2021, and the fact that a summary of arguments against the question had not been provided for all the questions.

This was **NOTED**.

### **5.7.4 Complaints IV, V and VI**

Louise McMullan said these were all Rule 29 complaints about the General Secretary or the Council, about the branch reforms as passed last month. The findings were all the same and she took the Council through these.

### **Findings by the Investigating Officer:**

1. The following allegation in the complaint submitted by the members is factually incorrect: *"As you are aware the proposed merger of the Branches was brought to the Council by the General Secretary. This document we believe was drafted by the General Secretary without Councils knowledge."* A paper on branch reform was presented to the Council by the General Secretary at its meeting on 1 November 2022,

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and approved. A further paper outlining the fine detail of the reforms is due for consideration at the Council meeting on 6 December 2022.

2. Regarding instruction (1) The 'democratic process' outlined in the Rule book has been followed. The Council has the power under the Rules to determine the branch organisation of the union, as per Rule 16.2.1: *"The Council shall have power to organise and maintain offices and Branches of the Union in such places as may be decided on from time to time after rules necessary for their constitution have been approved by the Council."*
3. The assertion *There is nothing under Equity's own rule book, or even the new rule changes (to be held at the referendum on 6.12.22) allowing equity Council or general secretary to close a branch (variety branch in the wording of the second and third complaints submitted by one of the members) this can only happen with the branch membership approval* made in all three complaints is therefore also incorrect.
4. Regarding instruction (2) no consultation is required for the Council to fulfil its powers under 16.2.1.
5. Instruction (3) is not in order with respect to a Council meeting and is not relevant to the process of investigating complaints under Rule 29.

### **Recommendation:**

**The complaints have no basis in fact, the Council and the General Secretary have acted in accordance with the Rules of the Union and therefore the complaints should be dismissed.**

The recommendation, with respect to Complaint IV, was **proposed** by Rachael Fagan, **seconded** by Sean Biggerstaff and **AGREED** nem con, with one abstaining.

The recommendation, with respect to Complaint V, was **proposed** by Paul Valentine, **seconded** by Sam Swann and **AGREED** nem con, with one abstaining.

The recommendation, with respect to Complaint VI, was **proposed** by Julia Carson Sims, **seconded** by Sam Swann and **AGREED** nem con, with one abstaining.

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### Points made in discussion:

- A Councillor asked whether these complaints were confidential. *Reply – the General Secretary said we did not disclose the names of the people complaining, but unless they addressed anything confidential, the response to the complaints could be included in the minutes.*
  - Nick Fletcher, Vice-President, asked about the potential conflict of interest with the Council voting to dismiss these. *Reply – Louise McMullan said this was the process under the Rules. The Council was being asked to vote on a recommendation she was presenting to them as the investigating officer. The General Secretary said this was not the same as a disciplinary complaint against the Council, it was a complaint that the Council had broken the Rules. The investigation had been given to an independent member of staff and the report then came back to the Council. If the investigating officer believed that the Council may have broken the Rules, they would recommend how the Council could fix that.*
  - A Councillor said she had been informed about the branch reforms and would vote to dismiss this complaint, but said it would have been useful if more notice had been given for these reforms.
  - The President said she had received an unofficial complaint in addition, in the form of a vote of no confidence in the Council. She would be responding to say it was noted but there was nothing further to be done.
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### 5.8 EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

Ian Manborde said he would be talking about two equalities themes, one of which also related to his role as Education Officer.

The first theme was the work we were doing around parents and carers. He drew attention to the problems around publicly funded work not having budget lines for childcare. We would continue to speak to producers about how they needed to start including these costs before they knew whether the person cast would need that support.

We were doing a whole range of other work, including with Parents in Performing Arts (PiPA) as well.

The second theme was around training we were doing for members, activists and staff. He said we had learned a lot from the Welsh National Opera's

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apprenticeship scheme and he thanked Julia Carson Sims for the introduction to this project. In Yorkshire, metro mayors had funded a dedicated skills post within the regional TUC to encourage employers to engage more with apprenticeships across the region. Those skills posts were now opening up across the TUC and we were hoping to work with them across the country to encourage employers to open up further to apprenticeships. He thanked Dominic Bascombe for his support on this.

He said he had also updated the Council on the training schedule for 2023. He asked for feedback on the training so far.

### **Points made in discussion:**

- The President said the work for parents and carers and on training was fantastic. She asked Ian Manborde to pass on her thanks to Dominic Bascombe as well. We wanted to see this as a legacy of the cities of culture as well: Leeds, Coventry, etc. She thanked Tom Greenwood for his training session this morning, it had been really valuable. All sessions had been excellent so far and she thanked everyone involved.
- A Councillor said all the sessions had been great, she had learned a huge amount including this morning.
- Ian Manborde thanked everyone for the feedback. We had taken the lead on developing the first year of sessions, but we would evaluate after the year was up and ask Councillors what sessions they would like.
- A Councillor asked about the recent PiPA event in Scotland. The information and materials sounded brilliant, could we access them?  
*Reply – Ian Manborde said we could share those with the Council.*
- A Councillor asked about the REC motion and Spotlight. Had Spotlight responded about their database and how they included mixed identities?  
*Reply – Ian Manborde said they had not, he needed to follow up on this.*
- A Councillor said the trainings had been wonderful. Was it feasible, in terms of staff time, to request them for other parts of the Union?  
*Reply – Ian Manborde said he would support this. We had not done much of this work before so we were starting from scratch. Next week, we would be piloting training for the new committees to be elected next year. We wanted to roll out a training programme for all structures within the Union. We planned to include networks in this as well. The Councillor thanked him and said the training/induction programme for deputies was particularly exciting to see. Reply – Ian Manborde agreed that this was particularly important.*

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- A Councillor asked what we were planning around training for branches as well. *Reply – Ian Manborde said that, rightly or wrongly, we had focused on Council, committees and deputies at first. We knew that branches had to be part of the equation and we planned to get to this after we had developed the new training of the committees. We had piloted training for branches with the Northern Ireland Branch Committee already and it had gone really well. Louise McMullan added that sometimes it would need to be about putting together resources, e.g. recorded trainings and practical guides which could be accessed by incoming branch activists at any time.*
  - Nick Fletcher, Vice-President, said that because deputies were in post for such a short period of time, it would be good to provide training to all those potentially interested in being deputies as well.
  - A Councillor thanked Ian Manborde for all his work. The new merged branches would need the Union's support to get going and training would be an important part of this. We had to be honest about why the former structure had failed, and this may be part of the puzzle.
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### 5.9 **FINANCE**

#### 5.9.1 **Budget 2023**

David John, Honorary Treasurer, presented the budget for 2023.

On income, he said that we were projecting around £6.7m from subscriptions. Income related to members mostly referred to the ERA (Educational Recording Agency) money. This was not currently distributable but it would become distributable one day. Investments were also an important part of our income. When the Truss government had crashed the economy, we had been fortunate that this had not affected our investments significantly. Beccy Reese said there had been a brief dip, but we hoped that most of this would have been recovered by the end of the year.

David John, Honorary Treasurer, said that on expenditure, our biggest cost was staffing. We now had more staff than previously. The General Secretary said we now had pretty much a full complement of staff, with one exception, for the first time since he became General Secretary. Staff had been awarded a 6% rise this year, but 1% would be put back into their pensions from 2025.

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David John, Honorary Treasurer, added that postage and printing costs would be increasing significantly due to inflation. Democratic costs would reduce slightly, as we would be holding committee elections this year rather than Council.

The budget for 2023 was **proposed** by Eva Lorraine, **seconded** by Kerry Kyriacos Michael and **APPROVED** unanimously.

### Points made in discussion:

- A Councillor thanked David John, Honorary Treasurer, and Beccy Reese for their work on this. She asked what we had in terms of an ethical investment policy. *Reply – Beccy Reese said we did not invest in tobacco or armaments but we did not have a broader policy. This was something we could consider in the future but it was a complicated exercise.* Another Councillor said he believed we may have had a policy in the past. *Reply – Beccy Reese said she would look into this.* Another Councillor said we had conducted an exercise to trial the impact of a more ethical policy, and it had not delivered enough income.
- A Councillor asked about irrecoverable VAT. Could we do anything about this? *Reply – Beccy Reese said this was because not everything we did was classed as a business activity. If it was not classed as a business activity, then we could not reclaim VAT for any related expenditure.*
- The General Secretary said we did need to do more to put an ethical policy in place, but we also had to be aware that capitalism was unethical. There were organisations which leveraged their shareholder power to influence companies in the direction they wanted to see ethically – this was an approach we could consider. This would be a detailed piece of work which was long overdue. We hoped to be able to look at it around the end of next year though it could be slightly later.
- A Councillor said there was a way to divest whilst being robust and pragmatic. In addition to tobacco and armaments, divesting from fossil fuel companies had to be our priority and it would be good to have this debate before the end of 2023 as we were living in a climate crisis. This was a fundamental part of being a progressive union.
- A Councillor agreed that we should add divestment from fossil fuel companies to our policy. She asked about our affiliation fees and the line on grants as well. *Reply – Beccy Reese said the majority of our affiliation fees went to the TUC, a large part went to FIA as well and the remaining amount went to smaller bodies (e.g. Scottish TUC, Unions21,*

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etc.) The grants line was for grants we paid to external bodies, e.g. BAPAM. Benevolent fund grants were listed under benefits to members.

- A Councillor said he would be uncomfortable waiting another year to start a conversation around our ethical investment policy. Reply – David John, Honorary Treasurer, said the investment houses had said they would be happy to present to us about this. The General Secretary said the Council was responsible for our ethical investments policy. He said that investing in a no-carbon fund was an option, but it would be wrong to call this ethical. It would not be more moral to then invest in anti-union companies. There was a complicated conversation to be had about how we could engage as a more active shareholder, wherever we did decide to invest. The Council's view on this was clear and we could make a start on this sooner. The Councillor asked for clarity on when we could start the conversation on this. Reply – the General Secretary said Beccy Reese presented to the Council every three meetings. We could bring an update next time she presented.
- A Councillor asked if we could have a presentation from the investment houses sooner. Reply – the General Secretary said we could look at doing that in the spring, it may require a separate meeting for a group of Councillors outside a formal Council meeting.
- A Councillor asked if we could request a list of where our money was invested at present. Reply – the General Secretary said we could ask the investment houses for this, but it would not be nearly as valuable as a presentation to put this in context.
- A Councillor said when we heard from the investment houses about their proposals, we should also hear from activists to make the case for greener investments. Reply – the General Secretary said we could consider it, but we had to be clear about who had the expertise when it came to where to put our investments. The group could be chaired by the Honorary Treasurer and advised by Beccy Reese. We could run it over the next nine months to bring recommendations to the Council.
- A Councillor thanked David John, Honorary Treasurer and Beccy Reese for being so transparent about our finances to allow this level of scrutiny. A training session on finance would be valuable at some point.

### 5.9.2 Member Expenses

David John, Honorary Treasurer, said the main principle was that we did not want members to be out of pocket due to their activism. It may be that some members' personal circumstances were not quite covered and members should contact him in that case.

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There were increases to meal allowances. He reminded Councillors to keep hold of their receipts for all claims.

Becky Reese said we were proposing one amendment. Under subsistence, we wanted to clarify that one meal could be claimed if away from home for more than five hours (not eight).

The member expenses policy was **proposed** by Louis Rolston, **seconded** by Jassa Ahluwalia and **APPROVED** nem con, with one abstaining.

### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor said she had been pleased to see that the section on claiming for childcare was much more open and flexible. This represented a progressive union that was thinking about inclusion.
- A Councillor said she agreed with having a policy in line with the staff expenses policy. If Councillors were stuck on a train, they were hours in which they did not get paid, but staff did get paid in those circumstances. It was great that the meal allowances were being increased. She asked why the petrol allowances had not been increased. *Reply – Becky Reese said they were standard HMRC rates and we could not do anything about them. They had not changed for years.*
- A Councillor asked if they still did not have to provide receipts for public transport under £10. *Reply – Becky Reese said we would be asking for receipts for all public transport moving forward.*
- A Councillor asked when the new rates came in and whether we were now paying the full cost of a railcard. *Reply – Becky Reese said the new rates came in on 1 January 2023 and yes we would be reimbursing the full cost of a railcard.*
- A Councillor asked if we would pay the cost of a two-year railcard. *Reply – the General Secretary said the policy outlined where we were obliged to pay expenses but we could make small alterations case by case.*

### **5.9.3 Benevolent Fund Grants**

David John, Honorary Treasurer, said we were very busy processing grants at the moment. He reminded the Council that welfare grants were there for quick, emergency, small payments. We had spent more than we had budgeted for this year, though nowhere near what we had spent in the first year of the pandemic (over £1m). He drew attention to the new cap within proposal 2.

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### Proposals:

#### **Welfare grants**

Proposal 1: To offer welfare grants only to members in benefit of the following type: Abeyance, Full, Long Service, Life, Graduate, and Retired Members. Child. Student and Honorable Withdrawal members would not be eligible for a welfare grant.

Proposal 2: Introduce an annual grant cap in line with the minimum subscription rate. Grants will be calculated at 3 times the minimum rate to keep the offered grants current and up to date. E.g. a maximum cap of £468 based on the 2023 rate of £156 x3. This is to be reviewed by the Honorary Treasurer (HT) annually.

Proposal 3: Priority Assistance: members who are in need of urgent support because of a workplace problem; unfair dismissal, loss of equipment, compassionate leave etc. This will be referred to the Honorary Treasurer, General Secretary (GS), or Assistant General Secretary (AGS) as appropriate.

Proposal 4: The re-introduction of evidence to support applications to ensure members are using the funds to stay in the industry, as this was temporarily removed to reduce workload during the pandemic.

Proposal 5: Ruling out offering re-training grants for members to leave the industry.

#### **Subscription grants**

Proposal 6: Members can only receive the equivalent of one years' membership through the subscription grants at a time. This could be four separate grants of quarterly instalments, or two payments for half-yearly payments. Once members reach the yearly equivalent cap, the request will be referred on to the Honorary Treasurer. If members are not working in the industry for more than a year, the Honorable Withdrawal scheme is better suited.

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### Re-join Fee Waiver

Proposal 7: If a member re-joins the union within a month of their termination, they can make a request for their fee to be waived under mitigating circumstances. The re-join fee waiver can only be offered to members within the first month of their termination with a justifiable reason for their request.

Proposal 8: The re-join fee waiver can only be offered to members once throughout their time with the union. Further requests should be passed on to the HT, AGS, or GS for review.

The HT will be kept informed and updated on any re-join fee waivers.

### **Recommendation:**

**That the Council adopt the proposals in this report.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Shenagh Govan, **seconded** by Jo Cameron Brown and **AGREED** unanimously.

### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor asked about proposal 1. Why were student members not on this list? He understood this might be to encourage them into full or graduate membership. *Reply – the General Secretary said we had never had a policy on this before. Student members were not full members and had not been given grants before. We would be reviewing the benefits of student membership over the next 18 months as there was a huge amount we did not understand. This was a clear and transparent presentation of the status quo, for now. He thanked Beccy Reese, Sam Fletcher and particularly Nusrat Raahi, who had contributed a huge amount to the working of the benevolent fund and to this policy. David John, Honorary Treasurer, added his own personal thanks for all their help.*

### **5.9.4 Branch Funding**

David John, Honorary Treasurer, presented the new policy and said the headline was the increase to £750 for all branches.

The General Secretary highlighted a small change to what we had said at the last Council. Instead of a £200 float, it would be a £250 founding grant (so

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that it was a round £1,000 for new branches). This did not require a procedural motion as it was over and above the existing commitment.

### **Recommendation:**

#### **That Council:**

- **RESCINDS all existing policy on branch expenses and funding;**
- **APPROVES the above new policy on branch expenses and funding.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Sam Swann, **seconded** by Sean Biggerstaff and **AGREED** unanimously.

#### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor asked about the maximum about a branch could hold – was it £5,000 in their general fund and another £5,000 in their benevolent fund? *Reply – Becky Reese said yes, this was correct.*
- A Councillor pointed out that five branches in London were being reduced to two branches and so would actually receive less funding as a whole. *Reply – the General Secretary said we could look at this.*
- The General Secretary said the Union currently had one vacancy for a trustee. The new Rulebook slightly changed the wording around trustees' responsibilities. At least one, maybe two, had wanted to resign in the past and we had asked them to continue. So we would also be asking them to confirm that they wanted to carry on. It may be good governance to do this every five years moving forwards. He would report back in February on the number of vacancies we needed to fill and some ideas on how to proceed. We had also not had a trustees meeting since perhaps the start of 2019 and we needed to do that as well.

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### **5.10 VISION, MISSION AND VALUES**

The General Secretary said this followed on from Sam Swann's policy development discussion at the last meeting. It was about creating a framework for staff to operate within in order to achieve the Union's aims and to be clear about how we identify priorities and our role as a trade union.

We had to think about what our role was: was it to be nice, to do good and benevolent things, or was it to operate as a trade union? And we had to empower staff to be able to prioritise effectively within this. We wanted to

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create a framework that shifted us to an industrial-first approach. To be clear, by this we meant that our role as a trade union was to improve people's working lives and to gain pay and conditions for members. The benevolent fund or BAPAM mental health support were both examples we could think about to contrast with our industrial work.

We wanted to move from an approach of resilience to resistance. Looking at BAPAM (and we would be looking at the amount we could afford to fund this to later), we were effectively operating by building members' resilience to the bad practice of engagers, rather than organising members in resistance against that bad practice. We had to look at this and start to foster a better, more trade union focused activist core.

We also had to look at the negativity that surrounded a lot of our approaches. We had to be bolder and more positive about our ability to deliver change in our industry.

We had to look at embedding a shared agenda among staff and members. This cut both ways – staff had to find new ways to engage members in what we were doing as a union, in line with the approach outlined above. And we had to acknowledge (contrary to the views of those claiming to advocate for a "member-led" union) that staff did operate within a framework led by members, and that staff did not work in a way that was contrary to those aims.

This would not necessarily mean the ending of the services we provided to members, but it would mean we wanted to understand all the services we provided in an industrial-first context.

We had to understand that members' workplaces were the primary place of union activity. We appointed more members as deputies than were involved in branches – where was their voice in our decision-making? We had had a habit of running two parallel unions over the years, and we had to look at integrating the industrially-focused part of the Union with the democratic structures of the union. This was not about bad intent, it was about centering the voices of those closest to workplaces and their priorities. We had to bring these two sides of the Union together in an effective way.

What would this mean for the Union in 2023? As the elected manager of the staff, he had to advise on what we could realistically and strategically achieve in a year. We therefore needed to focus on core priorities. This was not to say

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we would not do anything else, but it was to say that this was where we would be focusing the majority of our time:

- **Through organising and campaigning, including ensuring that we are industrial action ready, deliver a radical improvement in pay and holiday in the West End.** These structural interventions will raise the cap on theatre pay for all sectors in future negotiations.
- **Through organising and campaigning, including ensuring that we are industrial action ready, protect secondary payments whilst delivering full employment rights on all continuing dramas (soaps).** This will not only defend the union against the threat of HMRC changes, but uncompromisingly advance overdue improvements in maternity, paternity, sick and other benefits.
- **Deliver continuous improvement in the union's operational systems.** To ensure that they are driven by the need to support the delivery of individual and collective empowerment and power and pride.
- **Deliver a collectively bargained agreement for audiobooks, through campaigns and the credible threat of direct action from members.** This will justify the union's approach of collectively bargained secondary payments in the face of demands for statutory remuneration.
- **Structural intervention in the digs system** for members in subsidised and commercial theatre.

Each department would then have three further departmental priorities. Some of these would be around raising local issues and objectives to the extent that they could be union-wide objectives.

This was a slightly new and more strategic way of approaching our work. It was also an approach that was more honest about where our resources would be used. Every single member of staff would play a role in at least one of these priorities. We had come a long way as a union, but frankly the real work of delivering pay and conditions for members was still ahead of us.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **That Council:**

- **RESCINDS 'Organising for Success' and all related organising strategy as policy;**
- **APPROVES the Vision, Mission, Values strategic approach.**

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The recommendations were **proposed** by Kerry Kyriacos Michael, **seconded** by Nick Fletcher, Vice-President and **AGREED** unanimously.

### Points made in discussion:

- A Councillor said this was brilliant. Would it be an internal document or would we be presenting a version for the members as well. *Reply – the General Secretary said it would be accessible, but we would not be presenting it only to be told that we did not care about certain parts of the Union. We would start to integrate it into our messaging.*
- A Councillor asked for further clarification on “from resilience to resistance”. *Reply – the General Secretary said that our members were constantly told that they were resilient and how jolly good they were, without reflection on the fact that they would not have to be resilient if bosses and funders did something about the problems in the industry. We passively accepted that it was a compliment to be called resilient, but really we had to question whether it was. We therefore had to move members away from this and towards resistance. We were not the regulator – we had to hold the bosses to account for lack of policies and for not doing more to protect members and treat them better. We had to acknowledge where our leverage was as well – it was with the employers, not with funders and other agencies.*
- A Councillor said this was great. It would be good to include actions as an additional level of detail and to talk about and celebrate when we achieved them.
- A Councillor asked for clarification that we were not rescinding Performance For All here. *Reply – the General Secretary clarified that we were not, but this was a good example. We wanted to achieve the things in Performance For All, but we had to be serious about what we had influence over and how we could exert our power towards these aims.*
- A Councillor said this was fantastic and thanked the General Secretary. This was exactly where we needed to be and how we needed to think of ourselves as a Union. We had been cap in hand to producers for too long and afraid to use our collective power. We were not asking for the earth, we deserved to be treated with respect (as did Equity staff).
- A Councillor said he loved the “from resilience to resistance” line and it had made him reflect. He had a concern about the arms-length principle. When we conflated these bodies with government, we failed to acknowledge the fact that their funding was being systematically reduced. *Reply – the General Secretary said the ENO was the protest we had managed to get the most traction with. This was because we were*

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*leading the agenda with the ENO and it meant our people being made redundant. Compared with Oldham Coliseum, the impact of the funding cut on our members was less clear. Talking about arts cuts in general did not generate a huge amount of interest in the media. DCMS staff were about to go on strike and we would be very supportive of their action as well. Talking about terms and conditions allowed us to drive an agenda. He recommended that Councillors listen to Mick Lynch on Radio 5 Live this morning. A caller had asked if he had considered how rail strikes around Christmas would impact on the entertainment industry. He had responded that they had the full support of their brothers and sisters in Equity, and that we were precarious workers facing huge challenges as well. At the same time, solidarity worked both ways, and we could not just fight for the causes of other unions.*

- A Councillor said it would be really good for us to be able to question members as to where their requests of the Union were coming from – testing that they were deeply and widely felt by members engaged in our industries. He hoped this would lay the groundwork for a clear, serious and focused conversation about industrial action within this Union.
  - A Councillor said we could feel from the energy in the room how exciting this was, but the challenges were vast. We had taken industrial action in the West End some years ago. The cuts had mainly been aimed at theatres with union agreements and some amateur companies which had been funded.
  - A Councillor said we should take a more combative approach. This made the activism of recent years feel worth it.
  - The General Secretary thanked everyone for the positive comments. However, achieving this would amount to overturning hundreds of years of how our industries had worked – it would be a huge challenge. We had sometimes talked about access to art because we were embarrassed about what we did and who we were as a trade union, that we were here to defend our members' pay and conditions. In the past, we had sometimes driven resources into campaigns which were good things to do, but which were not an appropriate use of union resource. We were not here to be nice – we were here to exert our power as a trade union. This would amount to a huge cultural shift from everyone: staff, members and activists alike.
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### 5.11 MOTIONS

#### 5.11.1 Motions Referred to Council by the General Secretary

##### 1. Young Members Committee

The Young Members Committee asks Council to co-opt Helena Wilson onto the YMC for the remainder of this committee term.

The most recent election for the Young Members Committee was not contested, and as it stands the YMC is made up of eight members.

We have exciting aims for our current term, including engagement with young Equity members and non-members, and inspiring Union Activism amongst our demographic. With more members, the YMC will be able to reach further afield and share responsibility more evenly. Crucially, we will have more voices round the table, and a committee that reflects a wider range of its constituents.

One of the YMC's key focuses is the Climate Crisis, and, as the vice-chair of Equity for a Green New Deal, Helena will be an invaluable addition to our team. She will strengthen our connection to EfGND, and ensure that we are working together where possible, rather than working parallel to one another.

We also believe that co-option is imperative to the survival of the Young Members Committee, and we want to include as many young members as possible in our fight to bring young people to Equity and this will lead to us meeting our target of nine committee members.

Please find Helena's statement here:

*I wish to be considered for the Young Members' Committee and I believe I have the skills and experience to make a positive contribution. As vice chair of Equity for a Green New Deal this year, I have co-ordinated and fed into a range of projects and campaigns, working hard to keep the network motivated but also to reach the wider Equity membership and raise awareness about our actions. I am so proud of the work Equity for a Green New Deal is doing and I believe there are a lot of opportunities for collaboration with the Young Members' Committee. I would love to gain more experience from the other brilliant members on the YMC. I hope we might work together to keep fighting for employment and environmental justice, which are crucial issues for everyone but which affect young people and young workers in specific ways.*

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### Response:

#### Support

The response was **proposed** by Sam Swann, **seconded** by Paul Valentine and **AGREED** unanimously.

#### Points made in discussion:

- Leila Mimmack, speaking as Councillor for Young Members, said Helena Wilson was an excellent activist and would be a great member of the Committee. She said the Committee were discussing the possibility of raising the upper age limit at some point in the future.  
*Reply – the General Secretary said he had offered to meet with Karrim Jalali as Secretary to the Young Members Committee to discuss this.*

## 2. Race Equality Committee

Motion on Spotlight to Equity Council

On behalf of REC I present to you a motion to hold Spotlight UK to account for a gross injustice they actioned over the Covid period.

This may seem like an issue which is long gone, that we must accept they got away with, however in light of this cost of living crisis and to instill faith in our precious union its important we hold them to account- especially as such actions disproportionately affect those from BAME and working class backgrounds.

The whole issue is explained on my twitter thread here:

<https://twitter.com/KenBirk/status/1255793918937047041?t=BWxO-zZC6Wf1Av8edJpeKQ&s=19...>

Basically during the pandemic spotlight (after only a userbase outcry) concocted a way to deliver a free three month subscription in light of limited opportunities to ensure uptake was low but so that they were still seen to offer something from a PR perspective. Hence unsurprisingly uptake was low as it was buried in amongst a number of emails many missed.

This motion calls upon Equity to:

- A) Firstly negotiotate that this offering is extended to all who wish to take it up who didn't benefit in light of the cost of living crisis

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- B) If they refuse that Equity start an open letter that is co-signed by notable members of public traction, artistic directors and any others who may support this issue.

In a meeting our now president Lynda Rooke had with Spotlight, they said that if everyone had taken up the offer this would have had detrimental affects on their revenue and supposed company stability. However, we would argue there are proposals we can make around this so that all those who unfairly missed out receive justice: e.g. A subscription year payment with two free months over two years (hence spreading out cash flow). This would be an example of something amicable that can instill trust in both the union and that Spotlight will not try and pull a stunt like this again when workers in our precarious industry are left vulnerable in any future unforeseen circumstance. This suggestion also shows an option of working with Spotlight by offering proposals in a first instance if they refuse.

Many protested against Spotlight's refusal to extend the offer to all, an example of a letter that was written was by theatre director and Equity member Andrew Keates which can be found here:

<https://twitter.com/KenBirk/status/1328109511626862592?t=yvpvKf7Y7J2DiL54KEkS8Uw&s=19>

Reasons they gave him in response were:

- They had to furlough their staff. This is rejected as furloughed staff still received 80% of pay unlike freelance workers many of whom furlough was not an option. It is also arrogant to suggest that freelance creatives have a moral duty to keep staff employed at Spotlight.
- Breakdowns were still appearing. This is rejected as many of these briefs required performers to be living in very specific demographic "bubbles" and thus were negligible.
- They argued they were still offering casting director 121s and other workshops. This is rejected as many could not obtain a slot and it is clear the only reason performers subscribe is to obtain work (even though its not technically legal and hence such complimentary offerings have allowed them to get around this).

Crucially, many people had their gym memberships and other subscriptions automatically frozen without having to request this. In addition, after announcing the three month offering Spotlight sent a message asking users to

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NOT get in touch with them regarding opting in to the scheme and that they will explain this later, and hence the offering was disguised in a mass email easily missed amongst a mass of non applicable breakdown emails users would have received.

It is important to point out that perhaps some on the council may have concerns about how this might affect Equity's relationship with Spotlight, however there are amicable ways we can ask for this injustice to be rectified (as mentioned before such as over the course of two years), so that Equity are seen to have dealt with the issue and protected members. It also helps to set an example that despite the bureaucracy things can get done if one is patient and not going straight to twitter to denounce the union for example.

Below I have included my alarming correspondence with Matt Hood (which you can firstly see in an email explained to our presidential body) which went on for many months so that all councillors are informed. Please note the alarming quote : "Like any service you pay for as an actor, if you do not believe that Spotlight is worth your money, you should not use it or pay for it."- Do any actors have a choice in this matter, can they really keep an agent doing so, a man of his stature knows this!

Despite my views on what I think actually went on behind the scenes there is the argument that we are approaching an Equity ally and hence this should not dampen our relations. REC would argue that from a PR perspective they cannot be seen to stop all talks with the union on equality issues etc. (Due to the fact as mentioned before scandals like this disproportionately affect those from marginalised communities).

As a PR response to the cost of living crisis, Spotlight have offered a bursary scheme however this is a one off, the selection criteria is not clear and we do not know how many places they actually offer in proportion to revenue (hence the class network questions how genuine this is). Hence, referring back to this technicality loophole they exploited, this motion proposes that this scandal should be an integral part of Equity securing more of a concession in what will apply to MANY members in these extremely tough times.

With alarming statistics of working class and BAME (particularly female) performers leaving the industry, this cannot be regarded as a minute issue to raise, as we need attention to detail in these times to ensure people don't fall through- and show our union isn't afraid to be firm on such exploitation. Just

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because Spotlight is a monopoly does not mean there are not organisations like ours strong enough to hold them to account.

**This was DEFERRED until the policy development discussion in February.**

### **3. Bristol and West General Branch**

Drag performers should be free from persecution and harassment

The Equity Bristol and West General Branch notes:

1. Drag is a core element in British theatre.
2. Aida H Dee the Storytime Drag Queen performs stories with the aim of celebrating difference, and giving children positive LGBTQ+ role models.<sup>1</sup>
3. She has performed around the UK, and in various settings in Bristol.<sup>2</sup>
4. Her performances, for example one in Reading,<sup>3</sup> have been mobbed by right-wing protesters. In Bristol, performances at Henleaze<sup>4</sup> and Junction 3<sup>5</sup> libraries had to be rescheduled so that they could take place safely.
5. Homophobic protesters have made personal threats to Aida H Dee, threatening to visit her home; also, they have harassed parents who brought their children to see the performances, accusing them of being unfit to parent, and claiming that they are subjecting their children to grooming.

The Bristol and West General Branch believes:

1. That Aida H Dee promotes kindness and diversity. These values are of the utmost importance for children growing up in a world beset by inequality and conflict, and they are principles that should inform our work and interactions as members of a progressive and inclusive union branch.
2. That children need positive LGBTQ+ role models, and performers are in a prime position to offer such role models.
3. That performers should be able to do their work without fear of persecution. An expression of solidarity would give advocacy to the idea of safer, more welcoming performance spaces.
4. That audiences should be free of harassment.
5. That the argument that drag performances for children constitutes grooming is erroneous, and a dangerous misappropriation.

The Bristol and West General Branch asks the Equity Council:

1. To voice our solidarity with Aida H Dee, and Drag Queen Story Hour in a statement of support.
2. To endorse the promotion of positive LGBTQ+ role models to children and young people.

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3. To campaign for safer performance spaces for drag performers and their audiences, in alliance with the wider trade union movement and allied groups.
4. To forward this motion to other branches and other relevant local and national committees.

### References:

1. <https://www.dragqueenstoryhour.co.uk/why-choose-us>
2. <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/drag-queen-story-hour-uk-7390716>
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-62305083>
4. <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/07/29/drag-queen-story-hour-bristol-protest-aida-h-dee/>
5. <https://www.bristol247.com/lgbtq/news-lgbtq/homophobic-protesters-thwarted-drag-queen-story-hours-take-place/>

### **Response:**

#### **Support**

The response was **proposed** by Dan de la Motte, **seconded** by Mary Lane and **AGREED** unanimously.

#### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor said that Drag Queen Story Hour was only one brand associated with this, other similar story hours were also under attack. He himself had come under attack again in the past week.

#### **5.11.2 Other**

##### **4. RMT Request for Solidarity Support**

At the June meeting of Equity Council, we passed a motion expressing the union's support of our comrades in the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers (RMT) in their industrial action to secure improved pay for railway workers, as well as protect jobs and terms and conditions from the privatised railway industry.

The RMT is entering into a critical stage of the dispute which has become a strategically critical, and high profile battle for all trade unions, with significant public support.

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With a difficult winter ahead for often low-paid RMT members, it is proposed that Equity sends a message of solidarity to the RMT, along with a donation equivalent to a month's wage on the West End in a Category A theatre, as well as send their request to all branches of Equity.

### **Recommendation:**

**That Council SUPPORTS the sending of the proposed reply, and forwards the request to all Equity branches for their consideration.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Paul Valentine, **seconded** by Hywel Morgan and **AGREED** unanimously.

A further motion was introduced on a related item, to support the UCU strike fund. This was a request of the outgoing TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady, as her retirement gift.

### **Recommendation:**

**That Council SUPPORTS the sending of funds to the UCU strike fund, as a retirement gift for TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Nick Fletcher, Vice-President, **seconded** by Dan de la Motte and **AGREED** unanimously.

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## 5.12 **BRANCH REFORM**

The General Secretary said we had written to every branch following the meeting in November. You would not get this impression from social media, but most had responded positively in general and we had had many constructive conversations.

He wanted to update the Council on various things we had done to implement the reforms:

- Elizabeth George (the Union's barrister) had recommended that branch committees should be an odd number of members. For simplicity, all branch committees would be standardised to nine members.
- We had realised it was impractical to say that the test for a viable branch was a "quorate" branch committee. Instead, a viable branch would be required to have a branch committee of at least five members.

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- We had created a reserved seat for a variety member on branch committees (so the variety officer could definitely be a variety member). For practical reasons, all branch committees would be required to have one variety officer, with a recommendation as a matter of policy that branches of over 1,000 members should have a second variety officer on their committee.
- Transition committees would be put in place in January/February, to steer the new branches until full branch committee elections could be held in the autumn. We would also implement (for the first time) a centralised timetable for branch committee elections, so that all nominations and ballots would take place at the same time around the UK. This would mean we could also move to a standardised Branch AGM season, which would be October/November. The reason for moving branch committee elections and AGMs to the autumn was to avoid conference season in the spring – it had been unhelpful in the past for branches to scramble to get their committee, AGM, conference motion and reps all sorted in the first few months of the year.
- In order to bring the total funding for new branches up to the round figure of £1,000 (rather than £950), floats (for those branches that needed them) would be increased to £250. Annual branch funding remained at £750 for every branch. Reserved branches would not receive funding and branches meeting jointly would be treated as one.
- English Area Networks would be removed.

He would bring to Council in February anything further we needed to inform them on in terms of implementation of the reforms.

Branch Officials and Councillors had been consulting with branches and we had received constructive engagement on boundaries and names. We were therefore ready to recommend the following changes to the original proposals:

- Belfast & East N Ireland to be named "Belfast & Northern Ireland East";
- Derry & West N Ireland to be named "Northern Ireland West";
- East Yorkshire & Humberside to be named East Yorkshire & Humber;
- Surrey to be named "Surrey & Berkshire";
- The South Coast to be named "Wessex";
- The boundaries of North Wales and South Wales to be redefined following advice from the Cardiff office;
- The geographical spread of Wiltshire, and its proximity and ease of access to two branch areas, meant that Wiltshire would continue to be

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divided between the West of England Branch to the north and the Wessex Branch to the south;

- The introduction of a new branch in the West Midlands: Black Country & Staffordshire. If the branch was to be reserved at any stage, it would meet jointly with the Birmingham & West Midlands Branch.

In the short term (until the first full branch committee elections in the autumn of 2023), the following branches were likely to start out as reserved branches:

- Northern Ireland West (to meet jointly with Belfast & Northern Ireland East under the name "Northern Ireland Branch");
- Black Country & Staffordshire (to meet jointly with Birmingham & West Midlands under the name "Birmingham & West Midlands")
- Surrey & Berkshire (to meet jointly with Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire under the name "Oxford & Home Counties");
- Wessex (to meet jointly with Devon & Cornwall under the name "Devon, Cornwall & Wessex Branch");
- West of England Branch (to meet jointly with Bristol under the name "Bristol & West of England Branch").

In the autumn of 2023, branch committee nominations would be called for all branches (including reserved branches). In line with the new Branch Standing Orders, if a reserved branch could get five nominations, it would cease to be a reserved branch and split from the branch with which it was meeting jointly.

The following table represented the changes to be implemented, updated in line with the recommendations above (the colours correspond to the branches which would meet jointly in the event that one of them becomes a reserved branch):

Equity Nation/Region	Current Branches	Proposed Branches
<b>East &amp; South East England</b>	6 (5 GB; 1 VB) - Brighton & Sussex GB - East Anglia VB - Essex GB - Home Counties West GB - Kent GB - Oxfordshire GB	6 (5 discounting reserved branch): - Brighton & Sussex - Kent - East Anglia - Essex & Hertfordshire - Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire - Surrey & Berkshire (Reserved)

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		Surrey & Berkshire and Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire to meet jointly as: Oxford & Home Counties
<b>London</b>	5(4 GB; 1 VB) - North & East London GB - North West London GB - South & South East London GB - Thames VB - West & South West London GB	2: - North London - South London
<b>Midlands</b>	4 (1GB; 3VB): - Birmingham VB - Birmingham & West Midlands GB - Coventry & Leicester VB - East Midlands VB	3 (2 discounting reserved branch): - Birmingham & West Midlands - Black Country & Staffordshire (Reserved) - East Midlands  Birmingham & West Midlands and Black Country & Staffordshire to meet jointly as: Birmingham & West Midlands
<b>North East, Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</b>	7 (3 GB; 4 VB): - Humberside VB - Leeds & Region GB - North East of England GB - North & West Yorkshire VB - North East of England VB - Sheffield & Region GB - South Yorkshire VB	4: - East Yorkshire & Humber - South Yorkshire - North & West Yorkshire - North East England
<b>N Ireland &amp; Isle of Man</b>	1 (1GB; 0VB) - Northern Ireland	2 (1 discounting reserved branch): - Belfast & Northern Ireland East - Northern Ireland West (Reserved)  Branches to meet jointly as: Northern Ireland

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<b>North West England</b>	5 (2 GB; 3 VB): - Blackpool VB - Greater Manchester & Region GB Liverpool & District GB - Manchester & District VB	3: - Greater Manchester - Lancashire & Cumbria - Liverpool & Cheshire
<b>Scotland</b>	3 (2 GB; 1 VB): - East of Scotland GB - Glasgow GB - Scotland VB	3: - Edinburgh & East of Scotland - Highlands & North of Scotland - Glasgow & West of Scotland
<b>South West England</b>	4 (3GB; 1VB) - Bristol & West GB - Devon & Cornwall GB - Dorset GB - West of England VB	4 (2 discounting reserved branches): - Bristol - West of England (Somes. Glouc. & North Wilts.) (Reserved) - Devon & Cornwall - Wessex (Dorset, Hants., Isle of Wight & South Wilts.) (Reserved)  Bristol and West of England to meet jointly as: Bristol & West of England  Devon & Cornwall and Wessex to meet jointly as: Devon, Cornwall & Wessex
<b>Wales</b>	3 (2GB; 1VB) - Cardiff & South Wales GB - North Wales GB - South Wales VB	2: - North Wales - South Wales
<b>Other</b>	3 (1 GB; 1 VB; 1 Other): - Isle of Man GB - Online - Overseas VB	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	40	29 (24 discounting reserved branches)

### Recommendations:

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- That the above proposals relating to the implementation of the branch reforms are approved by the Council;
- That the Council approves the above proposals relating to the boundaries and names of branches and notes the initial reserved status of branches.

The recommendations were **proposed** by Kerry Kyriacos Michael, **seconded** by Hywel Morgan and **AGREED** unanimously.

We now turned to the Branch Standing Orders. Sam Winter flagged two amendments to the paper. Firstly, we would be expanding the requirements around cheques to include all payment methods. Secondly, we would be standardising the quorum of all branch meetings and branch AGMs to 10.

### **Recommendation:**

**That the Council APPROVES the new Branch Standing Orders (as amended).**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Graham Hamilton, **seconded** by Louis Rolston and **AGREED** overwhelmingly, with one against.

### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor asked what the representation would be from branches to the VCEC. *Reply – the General Secretary said he would look into this and feed back at the February meeting.*
- A Councillor asked where Bedfordshire would sit in the structure and about the boundaries of the new North and South London Branches. *Reply – the General Secretary said members living in Bedfordshire would be in the Essex and Hertfordshire Branch. We had asked the branch if they would like to create a reserved branch within their boundaries, and where they would like that to be. All postcode areas were covered by the new structure. In terms of London, Greater London and the Thames were intended to be the relevant boundaries. At the moment, one of our branches went across the Thames. We had asked the branches if they would prefer for us to simply merge the existing branches – it would not have to be along north/south lines necessarily. We had received a number of thoughts but no consensus. We were therefore continuing with the original proposal. The Councillor responded that some members living in West London did not recognise themselves as living in North London. Reply – the General Secretary said some members were being*

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*constructive and engaging positively with ideas. Others were taking the approach that if they did not comply, this would not happen. So they were not engaging, which was why the proposals remained as they were. If Council wanted to give him authority to go away and see if he could get any further with this, he would be happy to attempt this. The Councillor said he would be happy with that.*

- *Louis Rolston, speaking for the Councillor for Northern Ireland, asked whether members travelling from Derry to Belfast would be able to claim expenses. Reply – the General Secretary said they could for branch committee meetings, yes.*
- *A Councillor asked if we could have a map of the new branch areas. Reply – the General Secretary said yes, we would provide a map and a postcode finder. We would also be emailing all members with a link to click to find out where their branch is. If members had asked to move branch in the past, we would be trying to keep them in the successor branch. But we would only approve requests in the future to move to the branch next door for geographical, professional or caring reasons.*
- *Trevor Fox, speaking as the Councillor for the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, said out of a company of 20, only three members knew what their branch was. Members in the Sheffield General Branch were not happy, he hoped that we might be able to keep them on board. Due to the RMT strikes, some members in his company would not be able to get home for Christmas – he had explained we were part of the broader working class struggle, but it was difficult. Reply – the General Secretary said our collective agreement was clear that the bosses were responsible for providing alternative forms of transport, they had to do that. On Sheffield, he had spoken to the key activist involved on three separate occasions about a single branch structure. He had been taken aback by the reaction and was unclear about what they would like to happen. The letter had been sent straight after the Council meeting and the member had not been back in touch until the long letter the other day. We would continue to reach out to try and bring them back on board – it was possible some of this was down to poor communication on our side or there might be something we could do to respond to their concerns. There was some confusion about the social/organising/governance functions of the branches, and where power around these lay.*
- *A Councillor asked about the quorum for the branches. Reply – the General Secretary said you needed to have at least five members signed up to the branch committee and the quorum for all branch meetings would be 10. If you couldn't meet either of these, then you would have to become a reserved branch and meet jointly with another branch.*

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- The General Secretary said he was taking it as the consensus of the Council that he should have a further conversation with the London branches about their boundaries and naming, and that he had their authority to decide this. This was met with general agreement.

A motion to extend the Council meeting by up to one hour was **proposed** by Eva Lorraine, **seconded** by Louis Rolston and **AGREED** unanimously.

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### 5.13 COMMITTEE ELECTIONS AND CONFERENCE

Sam Winter introduced the recommendations we were bringing forward. The case for moving these elections online as standard was partly environmental, partly financial, and partly in response to the increasing pattern of members engaging with elections online. Members who did not have a registered email address with the Union would still receive postal ballot papers. This would not apply to Council elections, which were statutory and had to be run as postal-only under the existing legislation.

#### **Recommendation:**

**That the Council approves the Committee Elections and future Referenda being held online as standard from 2023 onwards, with postal ballots only for those without a registered email address.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Sam Swann, **seconded** by Jassa Ahluwalia and **AGREED** unanimously.

Sam Winter said we had worked with Popularis for many years and we had been happy with their level of service. We were grateful to them for their years of work. We had, however, decided to look for a scrutineer with more to offer digitally. UK Engage came highly recommended by the Musicians' Union. They could run a digital nominations process and take on other aspects of the work we currently did internally.

#### **Recommendation:**

**That UK Engage is appointed as independent scrutineer to oversee the 2023 elections for the Equity Industrial, Equalities and National Committees.**

The recommendation was **proposed** by Paul Valentine, **seconded** by Jo Cameron Brown and **AGREED** unanimously.

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### Timetable – Committee Elections 2023

Wednesday 1 March 2023	Nominations open.  Online nomination instructions sent to all members by email. Paper nomination form available on request: email <a href="mailto:equity@uk-engage.org">equity@uk-engage.org</a> , or write to UK Engage, 10 Acorn Business Park, Heaton Lane, Stockport SK4 1AS or call 0161 209 4808.
Friday 5 May 2023	Nominations close at 12 noon.
Wednesday 24 May 2023	Ballot papers go to press.
Wednesday 31 May 2023	Voting opens.  Online voting instructions sent to members with an email address. Postal ballot papers sent to members without an email address only.
Friday 7 July 2023	Ballot closes at 12 noon.

Bank holidays 2023: England and Wales: 2 January; 7, 10 April; 1, 29 May; 28 August; 25, 26 December.  
Scotland: 2, 3 January; 7 April; 1, 29 May; 7 August; 30 November; 25, 26 December.  
Northern Ireland: 2 January; 17 March; 7, 10 April; 1, 29 May; 12 July; 28 August; 25, 26 December.

The timetable was **proposed** by Sam Swann, **seconded** by Kerry Kyriacos Michael and **APPROVED** unanimously.

Turning to the conference, Sam Winter explained the proposal for the conference to rotate around all nine of Equity's nations/regions, in alphabetical order. He outlined where we were up to with planning for 2024 and 2025.

#### Recommendations:

- 1. That the schedule of nations/regions for Equity Conference is approved.**
- 2. That the principles for selecting a location for Equity Conference within each nation/region are approved.**
- 3. That Birmingham is approved as the location for Equity Conference 2024.**
- 4. That the provisions for National/Regional Meetings and the Annual Accounts are approved.**

The recommendations were **proposed** by Tonia Daley-Campbell, **seconded** by Graham Hamilton and **AGREED** unanimously.

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### Timetable – Equity Conference 2023

January – February	Branches and committees meet to decide on motions.
Monday 13 – Friday 17 February	Emails giving notice of national/regional meetings are sent to all members. <i>Note: 28 days' notice required.</i>
Wednesday 1 March	Closing date for receipt of motions from branches and committees (12 noon).
Monday 13 March	Conference Business Committee (CBC) meets to review motions, make corrections and provide advice.
Tuesday 14 March	Council decides whether any motions are out of order.
Wednesday 15 March	Motions circulated to national/regional meetings for selection.
Thursday 16 March	Closing date for fringe event applications.
Monday 20 March – Wednesday 5 April	National/regional meetings select motions from branches.
Thursday 6 April	Closing date for receipt of motions from national/regional meetings (12 noon).
Tuesday 11 April	Council meets to decide its attitude to motions, motions and amendments in the Council's name, Council speakers and to finalise the substance of the agenda.
Wednesday 12 April	CBC meets to finalise the agenda. Agenda goes to print.
Friday 21 April	Closing date for representative names from branches and committees (12 noon).
Sunday 23 April	Closing date for member applications (23:59).

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Monday 8 – Friday 12 May

Agenda and other documents sent to representatives.

Sunday 21 – Monday 22 May

Equity Conference takes place in London.

Bank holidays 2023: England and Wales: 2 January; 7, 10 April; 1, 29 May; 28 August; 25, 26 December.  
Scotland: 2, 3 January; 7 April; 1, 29 May; 7 August; 30 November; 25, 26 December.  
Northern Ireland: 2 January; 17 March; 7, 10 April; 1, 29 May; 12 July; 28 August; 25, 26 December.

The timetable was **proposed** by Tonia Daley-Campbell, **seconded** by Graham Hamilton and **APPROVED** unanimously.

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### 5.14 **BAPAM MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT 2023**

Hilary Hadley referred to her written paper. This was a good proposal and she was grateful to BAPAM for working with us on this. We were a trade union and this was the appropriate level of support for us to provide.

#### **Recommendation:**

**Council is asked to note the changes to the BAPAM provision and to agree to Equity's revised annual payment of £26,000. This is in addition to the Equity core grant of £30,000 which provides for all members to access BAPAM for a consultation and referral for physical health problems.**

This was **NOTED**.

#### **Points made in discussion:**

- A Councillor asked whether the one-to-one support was limited to six sessions. *Reply – Hilary Hadley said this was correct.*

**The Council meeting concluded at 17:40.**