SOUTH WESTERN AMBULANCE TRUST BRANCH

OF

BRANCH CONSTITUTION

RULES

AND

STANDING ORDERS

1 BRANCH NAME

The branch shall be known as: -

SOUTH WESTERN AMBULANCE BRANCH

2 BRANCH MEMBERSHIP

The branch membership shall be composed of UNISON members employed by: -

- The South Western Ambulance Service (NHS) Trust
- NHS Direct (within SWAST area)
- Dorset Doctors Co-Op
- Devon Doctors on Call (Ltd)
- Serco health

3 BRANCH AIMS

It shall be the aim of the branch to: -

- Promote and establish a member-led Union and to carry out and fulfil decisions made by members in a spirit of unity and accountability.
- Allow branch members to attend all appropriate meetings, (at the chairman's discretion) and wherever possible allow them to contribute.
- Set up appropriate sub groups to undertake work projects and campaigns as raised by the membership.
- To support and pursue the Aims and Objectives contained in the UNISON Rule Book, and the Objectives agreed by UNISON's National Executive Committee annually, and in particular:
- To achieve the aims and targets set annually through the branch assessment.
- Organise workers within the branch's areas of responsibility for the purpose of improving the effectiveness and extent, of

influence of UNISON members in relation to our employers and the community as a whole.

- Provide minimum guaranteed standards of advice, representation and service.
- Campaign in support of the National Health Service, which is free at the point of need and capable of being accessed by all in need of health care.
- Co-operate with other trade unions as appropriate.
- Arrange social activity for the benefit of members in accordance with the decisions of members.
- Arrange for welfare advice as appropriate for members and their families where possible.

4 BRANCH STRUCTURE

In order to facilitate services to members and provide for membership participation in decision making within a fragmented employer structure covering a large geographical area, the branch organisation will consist of a Branch Executive Committee with overall responsibility for organising within the membership employed by those aforementioned.

There will be 6 Sub Branch Committees will be set up in sectors with the responsibility for organising,

- West Sector (including Cornwall, Plymouth and South Devon;)
- North Sector (including Somerset and North Devon;)
- East Sector (including Dorset and East Devon,)
- Clinical Hubs (East and West), Urgent Care Service, Support Services,
- NHS Direct
- Devon Doctors.

The boundaries of the sub branches will be determined at the inaugural AGM and may be reviewed by the Branch Executive Committee at its AGM.

The role of the Sub-Branch Committee will be to co-ordinate work groups in their areas, to carry out negotiations with the appropriate level of management, to co-ordinate policy and development and to consult and arrange meetings of the members at its level. Each Sub-Branch committee will be responsible to, and be represented by, elected members who sit on the Branch Executive Committee.

5 BRANCH REPRESENTATION AND PROPORTIONALITY

It is the branch's policy to secure the election of workplace representatives and other representatives as appropriate by the branch members to ensure the widest possible participation of branch members in decision making.

It is the branch's policy to encourage the election of workplace representatives in manageable constituencies that reflect the natural workplace grouping of members. By doing this, proportionality and fair representation is more likely to be achieved.

The branch is committed to the concept of proportionality and fair representation in the belief that the union will be a more democratic organisation and member's interests and aspirations will be best furthered by representatives who reflect gender, occupation, grades, sexuality, ethnicity, age, and disabilities encountered by members.

The branch Annual General Meeting will decide the appropriate numbers of stewards and constituencies in the branch having regard for these concepts.

6 ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES

The membership within each sector shall elect representatives, Sub-Branch Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Equality Officer, Health and Safety Officer and other officers elected in accordance with the union rules.

For each Operational Locality Manager (OLM) within South Western Ambulance Service there shall be nominated a senior representative. This will be confirmed at the next sub-branch committee meeting and ratified at the next full branch executive.

For NHS Direct and Devon Doctors Sectors it shall be decided at their sub-branch committee how to ensure proportional representation and structure.

In each sector it shall be for the sub-committee to build an organising structure and develop representatives in the following areas; Union Learning Representative, Health and Safety Representatives, Equalities Representatives.

The relevant branch executive officers will support sub-branch development through the lead co-ordinators.

The membership will elect from those representatives in accordance with paragraph 4 plus one reserve to represent the Sub-Branch on the Branch Executive.

These elections should be carried out within the principles of proportionality and fair representation as described above.

7 THE SUB-BRANCH COMMITTEE

Each Sub-Branch shall establish a Committee, which shall consist of (Where appropriate, taking into account the Code of Good Branch Practice):

- One or more Stewards, Health & Safety Representatives, Equality representatives, Union Learning representatives for each work group or workplace as the Branch Meeting may approve, (considering the size of the membership in that work group or workplace; the Stewards, Health & Safety Representatives, Equality representatives, Union Learning representatives shall be elected annually by the members in that work place).

- Such representatives of self-organised groups within the Sub-Branch as the Branch may determine.

- The Sub-Branch Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Equality Officer(s), Health and Safety Officer and other officers elected in accordance with the Unions Rules.

The Sub-Branch Committee shall administer Sub-Branch business in accordance with the Branch rules and any guidelines issued by the National Executive Council, and in particular:

- Shall co-ordinate local Sub-Branch negotiations conducted by stewards in the respective areas of the Trust.
- Shall establish effective representation of members' interests by stewards in each work place.
- Shall maintain a record of membership showing the work group and workplace in which each member is employed.
- Shall ensure that the Sub-Branch Officers are properly exercising their functions.
- The Sub-Branch Committee shall meet as necessary.

Meetings of the Sub-Branch Committee shall be convened by the Sub-Branch Secretary or in her /his absence by the Sub-Branch Chairperson.

In addition to the elected Sub-Branch Officers, the Sub-Branch Committee may co-opt additional members for special purposes, but such members shall not thereby have the right to vote at Sub-Branch Committee meetings.

8 SUB-BRANCH MEETINGS

All members of the Sub-Branch shall be entitled to attend Sub-Branch meetings. Meetings of the membership shall be held at least once annually and special meetings shall be held when summoned by the Sub-Branch Committee to discuss any matter affecting the Sub-Branch.

The purpose of the Sub-Branch Meeting shall be to: -

- Provide a means of communication between the Sub-Branch officers and the membership.
- Allow the members of the sub-branch sector to raise collective issues affecting their area and have discussions to find member led solutions.
- To provide a means of reporting to the main branch executive committee any issues which have a branch wide impact or benefit.
- Enable the membership to take decisions on matters of Sub-Branch policy.

- Ensure that the Sub-Branch Officials are accountable to the membership for conducting the affairs of the Sub-Branch.

At the annual meeting of the Sub-Branch, the following business shall be transacted:

- The receiving of reports from the Sub-Branch Officers and the Sub-Branch Committee, including a report on the Sub-Branch's finances and presentation of the Sub-Branch's accounts.

- The election or confirmation of election of Sub-Branch officers for the coming year.

- The election or confirmation of election of Sub-Branch representatives plus one reserve on the Branch Executive.

- Such other business as may be required by branch rules.

Meetings of the Sub-Branch committee shall be convened by the Sub-Branch Secretary or in her/his absence by the Sub-Branch Chairperson. Sub-Branch meetings can be requisitioned by the appropriate number of members in accordance with the Code of Good Branch Practice.

9 SUB-BRANCH OFFICERS

Sub-Branch Officers shall be the Chairperson, Secretary (Sector Secretary), Treasurer, Equality Officer(s), Health and Safety Officer and other such officers as approved by the Branch. The Sub-Branch Officers shall be elected annually.

10 SUB-BRANCH CHAIRPERSON

The Sub-Branch Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Sub-Branch and the Sub-Branch Committee and shall ensure that business is properly conducted.

In the absence from a meeting of the Sub-Branch Chairperson, the members present shall elect one of their number to chair the meeting.

11 SUB-BRANCH SECRETARY (SECTOR SECRETARY)

The Sub-Branch Secretary shall: -

- Convene and attend all meetings of the Sub-Branch and the Sub-Branch Committee and shall arrange for the minutes and other Sub-Branch records to be kept in a proper manner.
- Co-operate with the Trust Branch in keeping records of all members' names, addresses and work places and in communicating any changes in these matters to the Trust Branch Secretary.
- Be responsible for communicating with members and with the Trusts Branch Secretary on behalf of the Sub-Branch.
- In conjunction with the Sub-Branch Committee ensure that the Sub-Branch observes the Union's rules.
- At the end of her/his appointment (and at any other time when so required by the Branch Secretary) deliver to the Branch Chairperson, all minute books, records and other property belonging to the Union.
- to coordinate and lead the work of the team of UNISON representatives at the section or unit level within the degree of autonomy determined by the branch rules
- To develop branch organisation and recruitment at the sector level
- To negotiate and bargaining with the employer
- To support stewards and other representatives in advising and representing members
- To account to the sector and to the branch committee.

12 SUB-BRANCH TREASURER

The Sub-Branch Treasurer shall: -

- Conduct the Sub-Branch's financial business and keep accounts in accordance with the Union's rules.

- At the end of her/his appointment (and at any other time when so required by the Branch Secretary) deliver to the Branch Chairperson all accounts, financial records and money belonging to the Union.

13 STEWARDS, HEALTH & SAFETY, EQUALITY AND UNION LEARNING REPRESENTATIVES

The members in that work group or workplace shall elect one or more Stewards/Health & Safety Representatives/ Equality representatives/ Union Learning representatives / annually for each work group or workplace.

The election of each Steward/Health & Safety Representative shall be reported to the Sub-Branch for ratification and the issue of credentials.

The Stewards/Health & Safety Representatives/ Equality representatives/ Union Learning Representatives shall:

- Represent the interests of members in their work group or workplace in any grievance, dispute or negotiations at the level of the work group or workplace. To be the first and main point of contact for members with the union

- To recruit new members

- To work with members to establish an organised workplace

- To support and advise members on workplace issues

- To act as a spokesperson for the members they represent and for the branch

- To represent members with the employer, dependent on their experience and confidence

- To represent members within the branch committee

- To be answerable to the members they represent

- Establish and maintain Union organisation in their work group or workplace including the convening of work group or workplace meetings.

- Where appropriate, in line with the Code of Good Branch Practice, attend meetings of the Sub-Branch Committee and the Sub-Branch membership.

- Report to the Sub-Branch Committee all developments affecting members in their work group or workplace.

- Carry out their duties in accordance with the Union's Handbook for Stewards/Health & Safety Representatives.

- Provide assistance to the sector secretaries in representing members and conducting sub-branch business.

14 SELF ORGANISED GROUPS

- Where there is a recognised branch self-organised group, the group may elect a representative on to the branch committee.

- They may elect representatives to the branch committee in accordance with the branch rules

- They may formulate proposals, motions and other initiatives for Branch meetings or at the branch committee

- Reports on their activities shall be included in the annual report of the branch.

- The branch shall give them financial support within the Union’s guidelines

The purposes of self-organisation shall be, within the framework of the Rules of the Union, to enable the members within these groups to:

- Meet to share concerns and aspirations, and establish their own priorities

- Elect their own representatives to other levels of self-organisation and to other appropriate levels of the Union’s organisation

- Have adequate and agreed funding and other resources, including education and training, access, publicity and communications

- Work within a flexible structure to build confidence and encourage participation and provide opportunities for the fuller involvement of disadvantaged members.

- Work within the established policies, rules and constitutional provisions of the Union

15 THE BRANCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Branch shall establish a Branch Executive Committee, which shall consist of (where appropriate, taking into account the Code of Good Branch Practice): -

Sub-Branch Officers from each of the six Sub-Branch Sectors. The Officers shall be elected annually by their Sub-Branch Committees. (Substitutions may be made from within a Sub-Branch with full voting rights).

Each Area will be entitled to send representatives in proportion to their membership as follows: -

- West Sector - 5 Members
- North Sector - 5 Members
- East Sector - 5 Members
- Clinical Hub, Urgent Care and Support Services - 5 Members
- Devon Doctors - 2 Members
- NHS Direct 2 Members
- Such representatives of self-organised groups within the Branch as the Branch may determine.
- The Branch Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Education Co-ordinator, Welfare Officer, Equality Co-ordinator, Health and Safety Officer, Membership Secretary, Communication Officer/s and other Officers elected.

These numbers will be reviewed by the Branch, when required, at the AGM.

The Branch Committee shall administer Branch business in accordance with the Branch rules and any guidelines issued by the National Executive Council, and in particular:

The Branch Committee shall;

- Meet as necessary.
- Co-ordinate negotiations that have Trust wide implications to the Branch.
- Establish effective representation of members' interests by ensuring Stewards/Health & Safety Representatives and Officers are elected in all six Sub-Branch's.
- Maintain a record of membership showing the work group and workplace in which each member is employed.
- Ensure that the Branch Officers are properly exercising their functions.

In addition to the elected Branch officers, the Branch Committee may co-opt additional members for special purposes, but such members shall not thereby have the right to vote at Branch Committee meetings.

The Branch Executive shall have the power to change or amend its local constitutional rules, providing that it does not contradict or directly contravene the rules of UNISON as laid down by National conference.

16 BRANCH MEETINGS

All members of the Sub-Branch Committees shall be entitled to attend Branch Meetings.

Meetings of the membership shall be held at least once annually and special meetings shall be held when summoned by the Branch Committee to discuss any matter affecting the Branch.

The purpose of the Branch Meeting shall be to: -

- Provide a means of communication between the Branch Officers and the membership.
- Enable the membership to take decisions on matters of Branch policy.
- Ensure that the Branch officials are accountable to the membership for conducting the affairs of the Branch.

At the annual meeting of the Branch, (the March meeting of each year) the following business shall be transacted:

- The receiving of reports from the Branch Officers and the Branch Committee, including a report on the Branch's finances and presentation of the Branch accounts.
- The election or confirmation of election of Branch officers for the coming year. All posts will be elected for a one-year period by a method determined by the Branch Executive Members from nominations from the whole branch membership.
- The election of two branch Auditors (who shall not be members of the Branch Executive).
- The election or confirmation of election of Branch Representatives to other levels of the Union and to external bodies.
- Review the constitution
- Such other business as may be required by branch rules.

Meetings of the Branch shall be convened by the Branch Secretary or in her/his absence by the Branch Chairperson. They will normally be held at least quarterly during the months of March, June, September and December.

An attendance register of all Branch Executive Meetings will be kept. Any Branch executive member who fails to attend three Executive meetings without apology will be deemed to have resigned their position on the Branch Executive the Sub-Branch will then be asked to elect a replacement.

Branch Meetings can be requisitioned by the appropriate number of members in accordance with the Code of Good Branch Practice.

17 BRANCH EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUPS

The Branch Executive will form working groups to deal effectively with issues that are raised at the main branch executive and/or sub-branch meetings.

These number and task of each group will be decided by the branch executive and reviewed annually at the AGM.

Each group will have the following minimum quorum

- A Branch Executive Officer
- A Sub-Branch Representative
- 2 Members (not members of the branch executive)
- A member of a SOG or other appropriate specialised representative as required.

These groups will have use of the full facilities of the branch to conduct their business and remain accountable to the executive and the membership.

The groups shall deal with membership and branch issues and will provide assurance to the committee as well as direction and advice on specific issues.

They should give advice on campaigning issues and specialist issues to enable the branch executive to make informed decisions and take appropriate action.

18 BRANCH OFFICERS

General Branch Officers shall be the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Education Coordinator, Equality Coordinator, Communications officer/s, Welfare Officer Health and Safety Officer, Membership Secretary and other such officers as approved by the Branch.

Branch officers and coordinators have the responsibility to leading their respective areas of knowledge and are accountable to the branch executive committee.

The Branch Officers shall be elected annually in accordance with the Standing Orders.

In the absence from a meeting of the Branch Chairperson or Vice Chairperson, the members present shall elect one of their number to chair the meeting.

19 THE BRANCH CHAIRMAN

The Branch Chairperson shall: -

- Preside at all meetings of the Branch and Branch committee.
- Agree agendas for such meetings with the Branch Secretary
- Ensure that all Branch business is properly conducted
- Advise the branch and its officers and the branch committee is respect of maters
- Relating to procedure and interpretation of Branch and UNISON rules.
- Support the Sub-Branch Chairpersons

20 THE BRANCH SECRETARY

The Branch Secretary shall: -

- Convene and attend all meetings of the Branch and Branch Committee.
- Co-operate with the Union's Head Office in keeping a record of all members' names, addresses and work groups and in communicating any changes in these matters to the Head Office.
- Be responsible for communicating with members and with the Union’s Regional and Head offices on behalf of the Branch.
- In conjunction with the Branch Committee, ensure that the Branch observes Union rules.
- At the end of her / his appointment (and at any other time when so required by the General Secretary) deliver to the Branch Chairperson or to such person as the General Secretary may appoint all minute books, records and other property belonging to the Union.
- Support the Sector Secretaries

21 THE ASSISTANT BRANCH SECRETARY

The Assistant Branch Secretary, who may be one of the existing Sector Secretaries, shall: -

- Deputise and carry out the Branch Secretary's responsibilities as itemised above in their absence.
- Be responsible for, in association with the Branch Communications Officer/s, coordinating the Branch communication strategy.
- Arrange for the minutes and other Branch records to be kept in a proper manner.

22 THE BRANCH TREASURER

The Branch Treasurer shall: -

- Conduct the Branch's financial business and keep accounts in accordance with the rules.
- To advise the branch officers and the branch committee in respect of matters relating to financial management and appropriate expenditure.
- To provide reports on the branches financial position to the branch committee at least quarterly.
- At the end of her / his appointment (and at any other time when so required by the General Secretary) deliver to the Branch Chairperson or such person as the General Secretary may appoint all accounts, financial records and money belonging to the Union.
- Support the sub-branch treasurer, setting sector budgets and giving regard for fair and equitable allocation of branch funds

23 EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR

The role of the branch education co-ordinator is in the code of good branch practice and includes the following responsibilities:

- To make sure all new stewards and safety representatives receive initial information and guidance about their duties, e.g. stewards handbook, rulebook, service conditions agreements, etc

- To publicise the range of educational and training opportunities available to members and activists
- To get untrained stewards, safety representatives and other branch officers onto appropriate training courses
- To co-ordinate and support the work of learning representatives
- To encourage branch members and activists to make use of the UNISON Open College courses, especially 'Return to Learn' and 'Women, Work and Society' I to maintain contact with the regional education officer/regional education committee
- To establish a plan of training for activists and to produce an annual budget to meet its costs
- To keep records of what training has been undertaken and by whom within the branch
- To make sure that activists get paid time off for training where appropriate.

24 BRANCH EQUALITY CO-ORDINATOR

The branch equality officer is a post set out in the UNISON rule book and has a number of important functions. They do not have to be the fount of all knowledge on every equality issue, nor do they carry sole responsibility for the branch's equality work. Everyone shares responsibility for tackling prejudice and discrimination and promoting equality.

The roles of the branch equality officer are to co-ordinate and monitor this shared responsibility. They do this by:

- Being an identified and well publicised point of contact in the branch for equality issues
- Collecting and sharing information on equalities issues, including information from the regional and national self-organised groups
- Making sure other branch officers and the branch committee consider the equalities dimension of everything they do making sure equal opportunities is raised in all collective bargaining – not just in bargaining on 'pure' equalities issues
- Encouraging and supporting the development of branch self-organised groups on behalf of the branch committee
- Having a co-ordinating role between the self-organised groups and between the self-organised groups and the rest of the branch

- Making sure new recruits know about UNISON's commitment to equality and opportunities to participate in self-organisation advising the branch officers and branch committee on the development and monitoring of an action plan to achieve proportionality and fair representation

- Co-ordinating the development and training of members from under-represented groups.

25 COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER(S)

The role of the branch communications officer(s) is in the code of good branch practice and includes the following responsibilities:

- To explain UNISON's policies and to provide the information members need to play an active role in their union

- To assist with efforts to recruit new members

- To help support UNISON's national and regional campaigns

- To help create a positive image for the branch among members, potential members and the public

- To produce news-sheets or bulletins for distribution to branch members.

- To lead on the development of electronic communication with members – email, web, etc

- To ensure branch communications are in the accessible formats members need – audit for any particular requirements such as large print/Braille etc

- To ensure that nationally and regionally produced publicity and campaign materials are distributed, as appropriate, to stewards and onward to members and non-members

- To monitor local media for stories which affect the branch and take appropriate action

- To help ensure that the branch makes effective contact with the media whenever necessary by:

    - Creating and maintaining mailing lists to media outlets and contacts

    - Writing press releases

- Ensuring that appropriate individuals within the branch are available for comments, interviews, etc
- Writing 'letters to the editor'

26 WELFARE OFFICER

The role of the branch welfare officer is in the code of good branch practice and includes the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that branch officers, stewards and workplace representatives, and also employers, have regular up-to date-information about UNISON Welfare and its range of services
- To ensure that members seeking welfare assistance receive a prompt, supportive and effective response
- To liaise and co-ordinate with regional and national levels to ensure that UNISON Welfare support is provided effectively
- To undertake training and seek advice from UNISON Welfare where necessary
- To develop and implement local welfare activity
- To develop links with local charities and sources of support such as Citizen's Advice Bureau and women's refuges.

27 BRANCH HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER(S)

The role of the branch health and safety officer(s) is in the code of good branch practice and includes the following responsibilities;

- To increase the awareness of members, health and safety representatives and branch officers of health and safety issues
- To organise the information held by the branch on health and safety
- To co-ordinate the activity of health and safety representatives and to organise regular meetings of health & safety representatives to exchange information and consider priorities
- To be closely involved in all negotiations with the employer on matters related to health and safety

- To advise the branch committee on health and safety issues arising in the branch and to recommend policies and priorities
- To act as a link between the health and safety representatives and other branch representatives to ensure that health and safety issues are treated as an integral part of the work of the branch
- To maintain contact with the region and regional service groups, for example via the regional health and safety committee.

28 MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

The role of the branch membership officer is in the code of good branch practice and includes the following responsibilities:

- To map the branch's membership in order to identify membership density and steward coverage
- To monitor the branch's recruitment, and also leavers rate
- To work with the branch committee to develop and implement its organisation and development plan
- To make recommendations to the branch committee on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets, etc.

29 BRANCH ADDRESS

The headquarters of the branch shall be the establishment in which the secretary works. The branch should ensure it is conducive to good communications and the secretary has facilities available to carry out those duties.

********** Chairman

**********Secretary

Date

Appendix 1

Sub Branch AGM

Name of Sub-Branch Sector	

Names of elected reps

Role	Name	Workplace(s)/Areas

Names of Sub Branch Officers

Role	Name	Workplace
Sub-Branch Chairperson,		
Sector Secretary,		
Sub-BranchTreasurer, ,		
Sub-Brancch Equality Coordinator(s)		
Sub-Branch Health and Safety Officer		
Sub-Branch Union Learning Representatives		

Signed by Sub-Branch Chair and Sector Secretary

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Chair Secretary

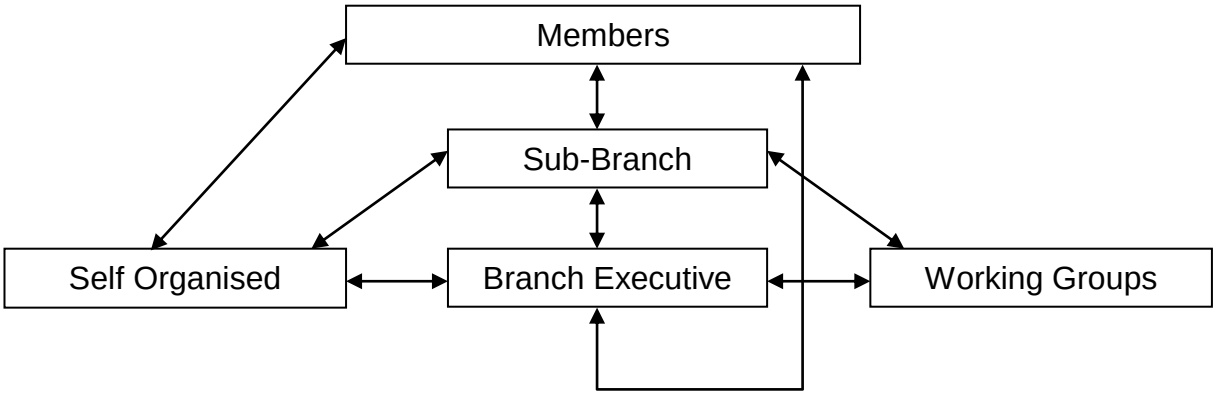
Appendix 2

Branch Executive AGM

Names of elected reps

Role	Name	Workplace(s)/Areas

Names of Branch Officers

Role	Name	Workplace
Branch Chairperson,		
Branch Secretary,		
BranchTreasurer, ,		
Brancch Equality Coordinator(s)		
Branch Health and Safety Officer		
Branch Education Co-Ordinator		
Welfare Officer		
Communications Officer/s		
Membership Officer		

Branch Accountability Structure