



Central Executive Council Special Report

GMB BRANCHES – A FUTURE THAT WORKS

INTERIM REPORT TO ANNUAL CONGRESS 2014 CAPITAL FM ARENA, NOTTINGHAM

CONGRESS – SUNDAY 8 JUNE - MONDAY 9 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm

CONGRESS – WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm

CONGRESS – THURSDAY 12 JUNE

9.30 am – close of business

Following to the adoption by Congress 2013 of the CEC Special Report “GMB BRANCHES – A FUTURE THAT WORKS” a Branch Review Working Party was formed. The membership of the Working Party is:

CHAIR	MALCOLM SAGE, VICE-PRESIDENT
BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS	MARGI CLARKE
LONDON	JOE ISAACS
LONDON	PENNY ROBINSON
MIDLAND & EAST COAST	VIC BAINES
NORTHERN	STUART GILHESPY
NORTHERN	JOY THOMPSON
NORTH WEST & IRISH	KEVIN FLANAGAN
GMB SCOTLAND	JOHN MARR
SOUTHERN	ANDY NEWMAN
SOUTHERN	BARBARA PLANT
WALES & SOUTH WEST	ROGER HUNT
WALES & SOUTH WEST	WENDY WESTON
YORKSHIRE & NORTH DERBYSHIRE	ERIC BATTY
GENERAL SECRETARY	PAUL KENNY
REGIONAL SECRETARY	PAUL MALONEY, SOUTHERN
REGIONAL OFFICER	HITEN VAIDYA, LONDON
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS	ROSE CONROY
PRESS OFFICER	STEVE PRYLE
MEDIA & CAMPAIGNS CO-ORDINATOR	CHARLOTTE GREGORY
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	STEVE SHORT
EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	PAULA KEANE
NATIONAL ADMIN. UNIT	ALISON TURTLE

The Working Party were provided with comprehensive background information covering recruitment activity and branch participation in GMB democracy over a 5 year period from 2009 to 2013.

The Working Party has met four times.

Following the initial meeting the Working Party formulated a series of questions. Consultation on these questions was wide ranging. A questionnaire was sent directly to every Branch Secretary, and all Regions were consulted.

The Working Party met three times to discuss responses and to formulate recommendations and associated rule amendments.

229 Branches (23%) completed questionnaires which were received by the closing date of Friday 10 January 2014. A further 38 completed questionnaires were received after this date.

A summary of responses to questions, Working Party recommendations and associated rule amendments are set out below:

1. What is the template for a model branch?

Working Party members gave many different views on this question. Key words and phrases from responses to include in any template for a model branch include recruitment, solidarity, activism, communication, training, education, mentoring,

organising, campaigning, service, income, support, meetings, strategy, respect, accountable, accessible, promote GMB, participate in GMB democracy, action plan, Branch Committee of at least 9 members, pro-active.

The Working Party recommends this list will formulate a template for a model branch which both illustrates the purpose of a branch and how that purpose is achieved. The Working Party recommends the key issues for branches should be: recruitment, representation, communication, organising, campaigning, meeting and participating in GMB democracy.

A basic outline template for a model branch is attached at Appendix A.

2. Do all branches submit a recruitment plan as per rule 35.1b?

Regional responses show that not all branches submit a recruitment plan.

Although a rulebook requirement not all branches submit a recruitment plan. It was clear from the Working Party discussion that there is confusion between a recruitment plan and a branch development plan. The Working Party recommends that Officers become more involved with branches in submitting a development plan, the development plan should have a standardised template and come with guidelines to assist a branch secretary in completing it. The Branch Development Plan would also be a useful tool to evaluate the activity and performance of the branch.

The Working Party recommends that Organisation Officers become more involved with branches as outlined in their job description:

- “ - Motivating activists, representatives, and Branches to recruit and organise members, monitoring this organisational work, as necessary*
- Establishing recognition, and maintain workplace and Branch organisation, encouraging the highest level of self-sufficiency consistent with high quality representation*
 - Assisting Branches in developing their Recruitment/Organisation plans”*

Officers should focus on non-performing branches and branch performance should become a standing item on all Regional Committee agendas.

Officers must support branches and scrutiny of branch performance must fall to Regional Committees. The Regional Committee will report to each Regional Council meeting.

A basic outline template for a Branch Development Plan is attached at Appendix B.

Working Party suggested Rule Amendment

Rule 35 Branches

Clause 1b

Delete clause 1b: Insert:

“b In January each year, branches will set out a development plan for the year ahead. The development plan will identify:

- recruitment plan*
- schedule of branch meetings including dates and venue(s)*
- union democracy activity*
- branch servicing and retention*
- branch organising*
- branch resources*
- communication*
- training*

A branch recruitment plan will identify:

- the local areas and workplaces in which the branch will make the most effort to recruit new members;*
- the opportunities the branch has to increase the number of members;*
- the resources the branch considers necessary to carry out the recruitment campaign;*
- the branch officials and members who will carry out the campaign; and*
- the timetable for the campaign.*

The branch secretary will send the development plan to the regional secretary for them to register it with the regional committee. Branch development plans will also be referred to the Regional Council.

c A region may set up a recruitment fund to help its branches to carry out their recruitment plans. Branches can apply to their regional secretary for support from the recruitment fund.”

3. Do all branches submit a Branch Financial Return? If not, do they still receive branch commission?

Not all branches submit a BFR. Those that don't do not receive commission.

The Working Party recommends that the National Administration Unit provides a quarterly report to Regional Secretaries identifying branches who have not been paid commission as no Branch Financial Return has been submitted. The Working Party also recommends that rule 34 should make clear that a branch that does not submit a quarterly financial report will not receive commission.

Working Party suggested Rule Amendment

Rule 34 Payments to Branches

Insert New clause 5

“5 Any branch which does not provide their quarterly financial report in line with the timetable set by the National Administration Unit will not receive the next quarters payment from the region”

4. If a branch has not recruited any new members in the last 12 months is it failing?

Working Party members felt that branches which had not recruited in the last 12 months should be looked at on an individual basis to determine why recruitment is not happening. It may be that a workplace branch has 100% membership so there is no room for growth, local issues and/or the local economy may also be factors for no growth in recruitment.

Regional responses show that Regions constantly monitor branch recruitment activity. Where a branch is not recruiting an Officer is asked to investigate why there is recruitment inactivity and report back. Action can then be taken from closing or merging the branch to support, training and development of branch officers, as appropriate.

The Working Party recommends that it should be standard practice for Regional Officers to investigate why a branch is not recruiting and report their findings back to the Regional Secretary and Regional Committee.

The Working Party further recommends that the National Administration Unit provides a report to Regional Secretaries to forward to Regional Committees showing Branches in the Region who have not recruited for six months.

5. If a branch does not participate in the internal democracy of GMB e.g. a nomination for Congress delegate, submitting a motion to Congress or voting in a Regional Council election, is it failing?

Working Party views varied, responses included:

- Branches must participate in Union democracy, if not they are failing
- Branch cannot be failing if it asks branch members the questions relating to Congress. If no nominations or motions are forthcoming this doesn't mean the branch is failing.
- Although a branch appears to be participating, if for example the same member goes to Congress each year as a delegate is the branch failing because a new delegate is not being promoted or developed?

Responses from Regions indicate that branches are monitored and reviewed. If they are not participating they are encouraged to do so, however some Regions feel that a branch cannot be forced to participate if it does not wish to.

The Working Party recommends that it should be standard practice for Regional Officers to investigate why a branch is not participating and report their findings back to the Regional Secretary and Regional Committee, and a report of all non-participating branches is made to Regional Council annually with action taken.

6. If a branch does not meet at least in line with the rulebook is it failing?

The view of Working Party members was mixed. Some felt that a branch is failing if it does not meet at least in line with the rulebook to provide the opportunity for members to partake in the Unions' business and if it doesn't meet it should explain why not to the Regional Committee who may take action. Other Working Party members felt that if the branch is communicating with members in other ways by website, social media, email or newsletter or if a virtual meeting rather than a physical meeting was held then the branch is not failing.

All Regions involve Officers to intervene and investigate why a branch is not meeting at least in line with the rulebook. Appropriate action can then be taken, up to and including closing or merging a branch, if it can't or won't meet.

Below is a summary of the responses received from the questionnaire sent to branch secretaries:

How often does your branch meet?	
Quarterly	44.54%
Less than quarterly	3.93%
More than quarterly	41.48%
As & when required	4.37%
Branch does not meet	3.06%
Unanswered	2.62%

The Working Party recommends that whilst branches must meet at least four times per year in line with the rulebook, the rulebook should not be prescriptive on which months branches must meet in.

Working Party suggested Rule Amendment

Rule 35 Branches

Clause 18

Delete clause, Insert:

"18 The meetings of each branch will be held at least once in each quarter."

7. Should there be a minimum number of members in a branch?

The overwhelming view of Working Party members is that the minimum number of members in a branch should remain at 20 as per rule.

The majority of Regions use the rulebook limit of 20 as a minimum. Some Regions do not have a position on this and one Region has a minimum of 100.

The Working Party recommends that the minimum number of members in a branch should be not less than 20.

8. Should branches below this minimum number be merged into other branches?

Most Regions will consider merging a branch of less than 20 into another branch but will investigate the individual circumstances before doing so.

The Working Party recommends that subject to investigation, monitoring and discussions with the Branch Secretary a branch of less than 20 members will be merged into another branch.

9. Where and when should a branch meet?

Below is a summary of the responses received from the questionnaire sent to branch secretaries:

Where do you meet?	
Civic facilities	17.47%
GMB Office	18.34%
Social facilities	21.83%
Workplace facilities	12.66%
Pub	10.48%
Local Labour Club	1.75%
Various locations (including work sites)	5.24%
Home address	0.87%
Commercial facilities	3.06%
Other union head office	0.87%
Currently looking for a venue	0.87%
Other	2.18%
Unanswered	4.37%
Why did you choose this location?	
Central location	51.09%
Work site(s)	10.04%
Cheap, good facilities and accessible	4.37%
To encourage / accommodate attendance	1.75%
Free of charge	4.37%
Historical	2.18%
Other	6.55%
Unanswered	19.65%

In addition to the above information, eight branch secretaries suggested that a branch secretary's forum was needed to exchange information and good practice. It has not been made clear whether this should take the form of physical meeting or a forum facilitated using IT and social media.

The Working Party recommends a branch should continue to meet were it is most practical to do so, but in a safe, welcoming environment conducive to the conduct of the branch meeting. However further investigation will be made into the setting up of branch forums, and the use of technology to assist branches to hold virtual meetings via video or telephone conferencing.

10. Should each branch have its own website?

Below is a summary of the responses received from the questionnaire sent to branch secretaries:

Do you have a branch website?	
Yes	15.72%
No	79.48%
In the process of setting one up	2.62%
Unanswered	2.18%
If not, and you were provided with technical support would you have a branch web site?	
Yes	48.47%
No	23.58%
Not sure / possibly	10.48%
Unanswered	17.47%

The Working Party recommends that a package be developed so each branch can have their own website.

11. How many branches are currently under the stewardship of a full time employee of the Union?

According to GMB records at 1st April 2014 the total number of Branches under non-lay member control is 194, covering 49,405 members

Of this total 140 Branches are under the control of an officer or staff member.

The remaining 54 Branches are under no Branch Secretary control.

Many of these Branches are not functioning and exist in name only.

Each Regional Secretary has been sent a list of branches in their Region currently under non-lay member control for them to check and action. This will be an on-going process.

12. Are the branches administered by officers the ones that don't meet regularly, if at all?

Responses from Regions to an initial request for branch activity information show that of the 194 branches under officer or staff control or under no Branch Secretary control only 6 branches are known to meet on a regular basis.

Each Regional Secretary has been sent a list of branches in their Region currently under non-lay member control for them to check and action. Branches should be organised or merged.

13. Should there be better training for Branch Secretaries?

All Regions arrange training for new and existing Branch Secretaries, usually by way of an induction for new Branch Secretaries with the Regional Finance Officer which covers finances and GMB democracy. Regions reported that on-going Officer assistance is provided or in some cases an experienced Branch Secretary is assigned as a mentor. Another Region reported GMB@WORK training is also provided. One Region suggested that a Branch Secretary Handbook is produced so all Regions are providing the same information. The Handbook could also incorporate a Training Programme.

Below is a summary of the responses received from the questionnaire sent to branch secretaries:

Should there be better training for branch secretaries?	
Yes	71.62%
No	13.10%
Not sure	3.06%
Did not know that there was training available	0.87%
Unanswered	11.35%
If so in which areas?	
Finance/accounts/auditing	19.72%
Role & responsibilities of branch secretary	10.21%
Employment Law/Legislation/TUPE	10.56%
Recruitment/Retention/Organising	5.99%
GMB Rule book/Policies/Procedures	2.82%
Health & safety	0.35%
How to address branch meetings	0.70%
Political	0.35%
Publicity & Press	0.35%
Public speaking/speech writing	1.41%
Tribunals	0.35%
Communication skills	3.17%
Admin	4.23%
IT	7.04%
Social Media	0.70%
Congress	0.35%
Other	1.06%
All areas	4.23%
Unanswered	26.41%

The Working Party recommends that a mentoring scheme be set up in each Region and a regionally defined branch secretary handbook be produced which would

include contact details of where a branch secretary could seek support from. A branch officer training course for all activists in a branch covering the operation of rules 34 to 43 should be introduced.

14. Does a branch need more or less branch committee positions?

Below is a summary of the responses received from the questionnaire sent to branch secretaries:

Do you think that a branch needs more or less branch committee positions?	
As it is	51.09%
*Additional committee positions needed	9.17%
Less committee positions needed	10.48%
Committee should be dependent on size & nature of the branch	10.04%
Struggles to fill current positions	9.61%
Unanswered	9.61%

***Additional committee positions needed**

The following suggestions were included in the responses from branch secretaries:

- Deputy Branch Secretary (4)
- Health & Safety
- Officer for all equality strands (3)
- Treasurer (2)
- Membership Retention Officer (3)
- Community Officer
- Women's Officer
- Training & Development Officer
- Welfare Officer
- Vice president
- Vice Chair

Additional comments in relation to committee positions:

- Some committee positions could be merged
- Race Officer & Equality Officer should be merged
- 'Equality Officer' term out-dated should now be 'Diversity Officer'
- Youth Recruitment Committee needed

The Working Party recommends that outside of the core branch officer positions of Branch Secretary, Branch President, Branch Equality Officer, Branch Member Auditors and Branch Committee members a branch can fill or not fill other rulebook or non-rulebook offices at their discretion according to the needs of the branch. These roles should be defined by a branch by-law and set out in the Branch Development Plan in consultation with and agreement of the Regional Secretary and Regional Committee, bearing in mind the provision in rule 35.3 that each branch will have a committee of no less than nine members.

15. Does a branch need to meet face to face. Can a “virtual” branch meeting be held?

In responses received from the questionnaire, five branch secretaries reported using Facebook to provide branch information and communicate to members. Two reported using Twitter as a means of communication.

The Working Party was provided with an example of very good branch communication where branch members were using the I-pads that are provided to them by the employer to communicate branch business. This way of communication was a solution for branch members who were unable to physically attend branch meetings for reason of geography, shift work and availability.

The Working Party acknowledged the benefits of IT and ‘virtual’ meetings and the opportunity for communication it offers, but suggested that new rules and protocol will need to be developed and introduced.

The Working Party recommends that ideally branch meetings should be held face to face, but with the permission of the Regional Committee a branch meeting can be held virtually via video or telephone conferencing.

16. If a branch does not meet what is the 10% commission fund being used for?

The Working Party were concerned that if a branch is not meeting to make decisions it should not be spending any money, but recognised that branches may be using commission funds to finance shop stewards even if the branch does not meet.

The Working Party recommends that funds should be used to develop branches and funds held by Regions should be available for branches to draw from so long as there is an audit trail for these requests. In line with current policy Branches can make requests on their Development Plan for additional resources to grow the branch.

17. How can branches embrace technology to allow for online nominations and/or voting?

The Working Party recommended that a strictly controlled limited experiment be carried out to ascertain the merits and/or benefits of online nominations and/or voting e.g. branch committee elections.

18. Should part of the role of a workplace organiser / shop steward be to attend / report at branch meetings?

Below is a summary of the responses received from the questionnaire sent to branch secretaries:

Should part of the role of a WO/SS be to attend / report at branch meetings?	
Yes	58.52%
No	9.17%
Yes - a percentage/min. number should be attended	2.62%
Yes - but it is not practical / possible	26.64%
Unanswered	3.06%

Responses from the branch secretaries' questionnaire included reasons for not being able to attend all branch meetings, these included:

- No facilities time off
- Shift work
- Distance/geographical
- Caring responsibilities

The Working Party recommends that workplace organisers / shop stewards attend branch meetings whenever possible. If they are unable to attend they should submit a report via the Branch Secretary. If the branch has a delegate to Congress that delegate should report back to the next branch meeting.

19. Why don't members vote in elections?

In the case of Central Executive Council elections a number of options are being considered for the next election which it is hoped will lead to greater number of members voting:

- The number of nominating branches being listed with a candidates supporting statement
- A longer election address
- Photographs to accompany an election address
- Limited campaigning to be allowed
- Regional hustings
- Contact members by email or text message to remind them ballot packs are on their way to them in the next magazine mailing.
- GMB App to remind members ballot packs are on their way.

The Branch Review Working Party will continue to meet and will bring their next report to Congress 2015.

OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED BY THE WORKING PARTY

The Working Party considered four motions referred from Congress 2013, and one motion referred from Congress 2012:

Congress 2013 Motions:

Motion 4 Decline in Number of Delegate Nominations to Congress

The Working Party has taken note of the content of this motion and has considered it in their discussions and recommendations

Motion 5 Women's Under Representation

The Working Party discussed this motion but determined that at the present time it was not possible to implement this motion. However branches should encourage more women members to come forward to seek nomination. The 10% appointment of Congress delegates under rule 8.6 should allow Regions to target the under representation of women delegates. The Women's Task Force are also looking into this issue.

Motion 38 Activist Title

The Working Party determined that as no one title fits all posts the most appropriate title should be used.

Motion 71 Domestic Violence (DV)

In line with the Working Party recommendation on question 14 above, branches can fill or not fill other rulebook or non-rulebook offices at their discretion according to the needs of the branch. These roles should be defined by a branch by-law and set out in the Branch Development Plan in consultation with and agreement of the Regional Secretary and Regional Committee, bearing in mind the provision in rule 35.3 that each branch will have a committee of no less than nine members.

The Daphne Project material would be re-issued and domestic violence information should be added to workplace organiser / shop steward training.

Congress 2012 Motion:

14. CEC Election Procedure

In line with question 19 above, changes for the 2015 CEC elections are being considered.

The Working Party had detailed discussions on retention which are subject to a Senior Management Working Group and will be reported on separately.

APPENDIX A

(Basic outline template for a model branch)

This list below sets out some of the basic functions a branch should aim to achieve. Whilst it is hoped the branch is able to achieve all these functions the Working Party recognises that what makes a model branch is not always the same and even though a branch may not achieve the entire list it is still considered an active, thriving and participating branch.

Key issues for a model Branch should be to:

- **Recruit**
- **Represent**
- **Communicate**
- **Organise**
- **Campaign**
- **Meet**
- **Participate in GMB democracy**

Other issues a model branch should hope to achieve:

- **Train branch officers and activists**
- **Educate members**
- **Mentor members**
- **Show solidarity with other organisations**
- **Be active in the workplace and in the community**
- **Service members**
- **Retain members**
- **Generate income**
- **Support members**
- **Develop strategies**
- **Be Respectful**
- **Be Accountable**
- **Promote GMB**
- **Be pro-active**

APPENDIX B

(Basic outline Branch Development Plan Template)

BRANCH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NAME OF BRANCH:

BRANCH PRESIDENT:

BRANCH SECRETARY:

OTHER BRANCH OFFICERS:

Email Addresses:

Telephone / Mobile No's:

Branch Website Name:

Facebook Address:

Twitter Account:

Following a review of the previous Branch Development Plan the Branch reports progress on the following activities:

The following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats have been identified in the last 12 months:

BRANCH DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 20____

Recruitment Plan

- 1. In 20____ the branch will concentrate its recruitment work on the following areas and workplaces:**

Name of Target / Employer	Timetable	Target number of new members

- 2. The potential and target membership growth in the next 12 months is:**
- 3. The branch has chosen these recruitment targets because:**
(For example: access, workplace expansion, industrial issues, terms and conditions issues in workplace, strong activists, job losses)
- 4. The following Branch Officers / Shop Stewards / Workplace Organisers and members will carry out the recruitment campaign:**

5. The branch has identified the following resources it considers necessary to carry out this recruitment campaign:
(For example: travel costs, costs of producing leaflets/posters, meeting venue hire)

6. The branch is investing the following costs in the recruitment campaign:

7. The branch is applying to the Regional Secretary for support from the Regional Fund:

Schedule of Branch Meetings

The Branch met on the following dates during 20__ (previous year):

Branch meetings will be publicised and members will be encouraged to attend Branch meetings on the following dates / time / venue during 20__ (current year):

Union Democracy Activity

The Branch will

- be sending a motion to Congress 20__
 - be nominating a delegate(s) to Congress 20__
 - be voting in Congress Delegate Elections
 - Sending a delegate to the Regional Equality Forum
 - Send a delegate to the local CLP
 - Send a delegate to the local Trades Council
 - Other Union Democracy Activity _____
-

The branch will (in election years only)

- be nominating for the Central Executive Council
- be nominating for General Secretary
- be nominating for Regional Council

- be voting in Regional Council elections
- be nominating for General Member Auditor
- be voting in General Member Auditor elections

Branch Servicing and Retention

(For example: updating membership records, retention initiatives)

Branch Organising

(For example: filling of Branch Officer vacancies, recruiting more stewards, addressing equality issues)

Branch Resources

(For example: how the Branch funds are spent, admin costs, recruitment material costs)

Communication

The Branch communicates with its members by letter / email / text messages / Branch website / word of mouth / other _____

The Branch proposes to improve its communications with members by:

Education and Training

Branch Office holders and / or Committee members will be attending the following courses during 20__:

Branch Office holders and / or Committee members would like further training on:
(For example: Branch Finances, website training)

SIGNED:

Branch Secretary.....

Branch President.....

Regional Organiser.....

Date:

PROGRESS WILL BE REVIEWED QUARTERLY WITH THE ORGANISER

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CURRENT STEWARDS AND THEIR WORKPLACES