

The CWU Northern Ireland Telecom Branch Constitution

The CWU Northern Ireland Telecom Branch Constitution (incorporating Standing Orders for Branch and Committee meetings)

1. NAME

The Branch will be known as the CWU Northern Ireland Telecom Branch.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Branch shall be to:

1. Locally organise, recruit and maximise membership levels and to maintain accurate branch membership records.
2. Protect and promote the interests of members in accordance with the objectives as expressed in the national rules and policies of the union.
3. Keep members informed on local, regional and national matters.
4. Effectively consult members on local issues affecting their work.
5. Implement the policies and directives of the NEC, Industrial Executives and conferences of the union.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1. General

The Branch shall ensure that:

1. All applications for membership are dealt with in accordance with national rules
2. All members are aware of their entitlements and obligations as defined in the national rules

3.2. Branch Membership

The membership of the Branch shall include:

1. All relevant persons in the communications, financial services, information technology and related industries and in all businesses where the Union has recognition.
2. Retired Members.
 - a) Fully paid up retired member shall be entitled to attend all Branch meetings and participate in discussions and be able to vote on non-occupational matters.
3. Other groups or persons agreed between the Branch and CWU Headquarters.

4. BRANCH MANAGEMENT

4.1. Branch Constitution, Branch Rules and Standing Orders

1. The Branch shall operate according to the Branch Model Constitution agreed by the NEC and the Branch Officers and Branch Committee shall ensure the terms of the Branch Model constitution are complied with.
2. The Branch may also adopt and operate local Branch Rules and Standing Orders to govern any areas not specifically covered by the Branch Model Constitution, which shall be subject to the agreement of the Branch and approval by the NEC.

4.2. Management

1. The affairs of the Branch shall be governed by General Meetings of, which, in any given calendar year, there shall be an AGM and minimum of four others. In the intervals between General Meetings the affairs of the Branch shall be directed by the Branch Officers and Branch Committee.
2. There will be a Branch Emergency committee which will comprise the Branch Officers.
3. The Branch Officers along with the Chairperson will be responsible for ensuring the Branch is functioning and fit for purpose. They will meet twice a year or when deemed necessary to ensure this.
4. The Branch Industrial committee will comprise the Branch Officers.
5. The agenda for any Branch Meeting will be published on the Branch website at least 48 hours before the time the meeting is scheduled to start.

4.3. Minimum Standards

The CWU is committed to ensuring that all branches provide effective and professional representation to all members. To achieve this, it is a requirement that all branches ensure that the following minimum standards are adhered to:

1. All members and representatives will act in strict accordance with the rules and policies of the CWU at all times.
2. The Branch fully supports the CWU aim of providing all members with equality of opportunity, dignity and respect. Therefore, members and representatives of the Branch will be encouraged, and where appropriate supported, in participating in such events that support these aims. This includes attendance at CWU organised/supported events such as; the various Equality & Diversity Conferences, Retired Members and Youth events.
3. The Branch will appoint delegates and representatives to attend and take an active part in all national, regional and local meetings that affect the Branch membership.
4. All representatives of the branch have a responsibility to ensure that all issues are dealt with promptly and efficiently.
5. The Branch Committee will put in place effective communication channels throughout the branch area and ensure that members are kept fully informed on all relevant matters.
6. The Branch Officers & Branch Committee shall ensure that priority treatment is given to the recruitment and organising of new members throughout the branch area and that this important issue is properly funded and sufficiently resourced.
7. The Branch within its area shall ensure fair representation of all members, in terms of race, creed, religion, age, political affiliation, disability, marital status, sex or sexual or gender orientation.
8. The Branch shall strive to ensure proportionality in Branch organisation and leadership. In addition the Branch shall strive for proportionality on external representations, forums and

Conferences.

9. The Branch Office shall - as a minimum – contain the following basic items of essential equipment and it shall be the responsibility of the principle Branch Officers to ensure that they are operational / functioning at all times:

- Secure filing and storage facilities - • Telephone (including a 24-hour answer phone facility)
 - Fax - • Computer - • Branch email address – Branch Website
10. Where reasonably practical all Branch meeting venues should be accessible without prior request from members with disabilities. Timing and location of meetings will take into account the needs of all Branch members – and where reasonably practical no groups of members should be disadvantaged.

4.4. Branch Organisation

1. The Branch shall hold an Annual General Meeting by no later than 31st March of each year. Not less than 28 days' notice shall be given to members of the Annual General Meeting and branches shall be responsible for publishing the agenda and timetable for the submitting of motions and amendments etc.

The Branch shall elect a Branch Committee, which shall include as a minimum the following elected Branch Officers and members:

- a. *Chair*
- b. *Secretary*
- c. *Treasurer/Financial Secretary*
- d. *Equality Officer*
- e. *Women's Officer*
- f. *BAME Officer*
- g. *youth Officer*
- h. *Political Officer*
- i. *Eight other Branch Committee members*

2. The Branch may also elect other branch officers and branch committee members as required and agreed by the Branch (as per 4.4.6 and 7)
3. The precise composition of the branch committee and the duties of the branch officers shall be detailed in the branch rules and is attached as an appendix to this constitution.
4. Where a Branch has members in more than one Constituency of the union it shall establish Constituency Sections

5. Branches are responsible for promoting the interests of their retired members and for engaging with their retired members to actively involve them in dealing with these issues, accordingly Branches shall establish a Retired Members Section to ensure that the interests of their retired members are protected and promoted. The Retired Members Section shall be entitled to elect a Section Committee which shall be responsible for engaging positively with members of the section to actively involve them in pursuing their interests and issues.

One position on the Branch Committee will be reserved for a representative from the retired members section, elected by and from the members of that section. That individual shall be entitled to attend Branch Committee meetings to ensure that retired members' issues are raised and discussed at this level. Such a representative shall not be entitled to vote on any industrial/occupational issues at these meetings."

Note: No Branch Officer holding a position of (a), (b) or (c) may hold another post of (a), (b) or (c). Different people must hold each of the three posts.

Retired Members are not entitled or eligible to stand for election or be able to vote in the above elections a, b, d, e, f, g, and i

All candidates for the post of Political Officer must pay the political levy and with the exception of Northern Ireland members they must also be members of the Labour Party.

6. The NITB shall elect a Branch Committee, which shall include the following elected branch officers and members:

- (a) Branch Chair
- (b) Branch Secretary
- (c) Branch Treasurer/Financial Secretary
- (d) Equality Officer
- (e) Branch Political Officer
- (f) Branch Youth Officer
- (g) Women's' Officer
- (h) BAME Officer
- (i) Health and Safety Co-ordinator
- (j) Postal Officer
- (k) Area Section Secretaries (4) -(North, South, East and West)
- (l) Eight other Branch Committee Members
- (m) retired members representative

Note: The Postal Officer shall be elected by and from members of the Postal Section.

Each Area Section shall elect a Secretary by use of the procedures outlined within these Rules, only members of the relevant section shall vote in Sectorial Elections.

7. The Branch shall be divided into four Branch Area Sections: - North Area Section; East Area Section; South Area Section and West Area Section. Area Sections shall convene Section meetings as and when required by the Section.
- a) Each Area Section shall have an Area Section Committee comprising a Secretary (Deputy Branch Secretary), Chairperson and four Committee members all elected by and from members of the Area Section. The Area Section Secretary shall be elected by use of the procedures outlined in these rules (rule 4.5). The Area Section Chair and Committee will be elected biennially by the use of the procedures set-out in branch rule 4.5. (c).
 - b) Members of the Area Section Committee's shall be members of the Branch Committee.
 - c) Area Sections can co-opt additional ex-officio Committee members. Co-opted Area Section Committee members shall not be members of the main Branch Committee.
 - d) The Postal Section shall co-ordinate the Sectional activities and requirements of Postal representatives and members for the whole of the Branch Region. The Postal Section shall convene Section meetings as and when required through contact with members in the Section.
8. Term of office for branch officers & committee members shall be 2 years.
9. Members of the Branch holding CWU office outside the Branch can attend the branch committee meeting and branch meetings in an ex officio capacity therefore having the right to speak but not to vote.

4.5. Branch Election Procedures

1. The Branch has established rules governing the conduct of elections to ensure equality of treatment for all candidates. These are incorporated into this Branch Constitution/Branch Rules and shall be published to the membership.
2. All Officership Elections in Branches shall be held as individual membership ballots which may only be undertaken via the post, email and workplaces. The NITB elections will be by either a postal or electronic ballot organised by the SDGS Department during the month of February in any year in which such elections are due. The cost of balloting will be covered from branch funds.
3. The elections of Area Section Committees will be conducted at General Meetings of the respective Area Sections. The Branch Secretary shall make arrangement for Area Section General Meeting at which these elections are due.

4.5.1 Nominations

1. No member shall be elected to any office without first having been nominated in writing by two members of the Branch, one as a proposer and the other as seconder - and with the candidate's written consent to the nomination.
2. Such written nomination papers shall be sent to the Branch Secretary or Branch Chair which shall be shown in the notification inviting nominations. The notification shall also state clearly the closing date by which they must be received. This date will allow members 14 clear days to submit nominations.
3. Each nominee will be given the opportunity of submitting an election address of not more than 300 words; this must be received with the nomination form. All election addresses will be published at least 7 days prior to any election taking place.

4.5.2 Voting

1. Election material including voting documents will be issued on behalf of the SDGS Department to each member as is appropriate for each election to be held. All practicable efforts will be made by the branch to ensure that members on annual leave or absent for other reasons are offered an opportunity to participate in the ballot.
2. The HQ appointed Returning Officer/Auditor shall oversee the election process and count and confirm any election result.

4.5.3 Positions Becoming Vacant Between AGMs

Any vacancies, which may arise amongst the Officers between elections, shall be filled under the procedures detailed above; decisions not to invite nominations must be agreed by the Branch Committee.

5. BRANCH FINANCES

1. The Branch shall ensure that the finances of the branch are conducted in strict accordance with the rules and policies of the union.
2. The Branch shall produce a financial plan for the following year.
3. The rules governing all Branch financial matters shall be detailed in the Branch rules or attached as an appendix to the branch constitution.

The Branch Trustees, (Branch Secretary, Branch Chair, Branch Fin/Secretary), shall have the authority to authorise unforeseen/unexpected expenditure in the daily running of the Branch. Any two Trustees will suffice.

4. Lay Branch Auditors

- a) The Branch AGM shall elect two lay Branch Auditors who shall not be Branch Officers or Branch Committee members. Their names shall be circulated to members and notified to CWU HQ Finance Dept upon their election.
- b) The lay Branch Auditors shall examine and audit all Branch Accounts to ensure accuracy and shall have the right to examine and question the Branch Finances, financial policy, income and expenditure on behalf of the lay membership. All vouchers, receipts, bank statements, documents, accounts books, remittance forms and ledgers shall be examined to verify accuracy or otherwise. Lay Branch Auditors shall also verify all cash at the Bank and shall satisfy themselves that all Branch income and expenditure is accounted for.
- c) The Lay Branch Auditors shall produce a signed statement to Branch members and copy it to CWU HQ Finance Dept declaring they have executed their responsibilities.

6. DELEGATION TO CONFERENCE

1. All Conference delegations shall normally include the Branch Secretary.
2. The Branch Committee must ensure that all constituency / business interests are represented.
3. Each Branch shall strive to ensure proportionality in its delegations

7. AFFILIATIONS & LOCAL DELEGATIONS

1. The Branch may affiliate to organisations in accordance with National Rules.
2. Local delegations shall normally be appointed by and from members of the Branch Committee and whenever possible the Branch Secretary shall lead the delegation.
3. Each Branch shall strive to ensure proportionality in its delegations.

8. MEMBERS APPROACHING UNION HEADQUARTERS

The normal channel for communication between lay members and CWU Headquarters is via the Branch Secretary.

9. INTERPRETATIONS OF RULES

Should any point arise on which these Rules are vague or silent, such points shall be decided by the Chair and submitted to the next General Meeting. Should any dispute arise between any member or

group of members of the Branch, such disputes should be considered by the Branch Committee and report made to the next General Meeting.

10. INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The procedures to be followed must be in accordance with the prevailing National Rule and relevant legislation.

11. DISCIPLINE

All matters of a disciplinary nature arising from the rules and regulations of the Union effecting Union members shall be dealt with in accordance with the prevailing National rule.

12. ALTERATIONS TO BRANCH RULES & STANDING ORDERS

1. No Branch Rule or Standing Order shall be amended without the consent of a majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting called on the instruction of the General Secretary, at which any proposed amendments have been duly and properly notified.

2. Any amendments carried shall not be implemented until submitted to and approved by the NEC.

NORTHERN IRELAND TELECOM BRANCH STANDING ORDERS

1. Order of Business: A basic order of business shall be read by the Chairperson at the commencement of each meeting and shall be a minimum as follows:

- (i) Minutes of the previous meeting
- (ii) Matters arising there from
- (iii) Officers' reports
- (iv) Motions
- (v) Any other business (which must be notified in writing to the Chairperson prior to commencement of the meeting.)

2. Rules of Debate

(a) A member who speaks shall address the Chairperson and direct his/her speech strictly to the subject under discussion.

(b) Every motion on the agenda must be moved and seconded before it can be discussed or put to the vote. In the absence of either or both the proposer and/or seconder the motion shall fall. In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Chairperson, a member present at the meeting may deputise for either the proposer or the seconder and the motion may then be put. No speech shall last longer than three minutes without the consent of the meeting.

(c) The Chairperson shall ensure the orderly conduct of the meeting and shall warn any member of unruly conduct or persistent interruptions, after said warning, and if the member persists in his or her behaviour, they shall be required to leave the meeting by the Chairperson who will seek majority assent from the body of the meeting to that effect.

(d) No member, except the mover of an original motion, or the mover of an amendment which, having been carried becomes the substantive motion, shall address the meeting more than once on any subject.

The mover of an original motion shall have the right of reply, but such reply shall be confined to answering points raised by previous speakers and shall not include any new matter. After the reply the vote shall be taken.

(e) Any member shall be entitled, with permission of the Chairperson, to rise to a point of order. A member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

(f) The ruling of the Chairperson upon all questions of order and matters arising in debate shall be final, and not open to discussion unless challenged as defined in Standing Order 7.

(g) A motion or amendment that has been moved and seconded may be withdrawn by the mover and seconder with the consent of the meeting, which shall be signified without debate. Should permission be refused, the debate may continue. Any motion or amendment that has not been moved and seconded may be withdrawn by the mover and seconder without the consent of the meeting.

(h) Any member may formally second a motion or amendment, reserving his or her right to speak later in the debate.

(i) Motions; "That the question be put on a particular item;" "Move to next business" or to "Close debate," may be moved and seconded only by members who have not previously spoken at any time during the debate. There can be no debate on such motions.

(j) In general debate where no specific motion is being considered the Chairperson shall use her \ his discretion to manage the flow of such debate, but, it should be the aim of the Chairperson to confine individual contributions to three minutes maximum. Multiple contributions should be exceptional and the Chairperson should seek the agreement of the meeting to allow any such multiple contributions, and confine such multiple contributions to a maximum of two.

3. Voting

When required Tellers shall be appointed at meetings. The method of voting shall normally be a show of hands but e.g. those on audio dial in shall declare their vote via loud-speaking telephone. (See Standing Orders 8 & 9 on Quorums. If a count is challenged the Chairperson may order a re-count. The Chairperson shall not vote unless the votes for and against be equally divided, in which case he/she shall exercise a casting vote.

4. Decisions

Every decision at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the members who vote on such questions and whatever decision is reached shall be binding on all members.

5. Suspension of Standing Orders

In the event of any matter of urgency, the Chairperson may accept a motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders. The member moving such suspension must clearly state the nature and urgency of his business, and the number or numbers of Standing Order affected. No suspension of Standing Orders may last more than 30 minutes unless by the vote of the meeting, an extension be allowed. No suspension or extension of Standing Orders shall take place except by majority of at least two-thirds of the members present.

6. Secretary's Report

It shall be permissible under the Standing Orders for any member of the Branch to raise on the Secretary's report any question not dealt with in that report, providing that such question relates to any matter germane to the work of the Branch in the interim period between general branch meetings.

7. Chairperson's Decision's

The Chairperson's decision on the construction, application and governance of NI Telecom Branch Standing Orders, and on any question of order not provided for by them, shall be final, unless challenged in the appropriate way, and the motion "that the Chairperson do leave the Chair" must be supported by at least two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

8. Committee Meeting Quorum

The Quorum for Northern Ireland Telecom Branch Committee Meetings will be twelve members. Attendance at meetings can be physical presence, audio call connectivity or video call (e.g. Conference Call or IP Video audio link.)

9. Branch Meeting Quorum

The Quorum for Northern Ireland Telecom Branch Meetings will be fifteen members. Attendance at meetings can be physical presence, audio call connectivity or video call (e.g. Conference Call or IP Video audio link.)

10. The Quorum for section committee members will be six.

The normal maximum duration of Branch Meetings and Branch Committee Meetings shall be 150 minutes (two and a half hours.)

APPENDIX A - BRANCH OFFICER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Branch Chair

- The Branch Chair has an overall responsibility for all constitutional matters within the branch.
- In conjunction with the Branch Secretary, convene and attend all meetings of the Branch and Branch Committee in line with the Branch Constitution.
- Be responsible for the conduct of all branch and branch committee meetings – including the annual general meeting.
- Ensure that the proper procedures are in place for any branch ballots.
- Have overall responsibility for branch finances and the production of an annual branch financial plan.
- Ensure that Branch finances and resources are utilised and accounted for in line with the rules of the union
- Ensure that the branch observes the union's rules and the local branch constitution.
- In conjunction with the Branch Secretary, provide leadership and support to the branch committee and any other committee within the branch structure.

Branch Secretary

- Be responsible for developing an efficient and effective union branch.
- Manage the delegation of work to other branch officers whilst providing support and guidance.
- Ensure, where possible, an equal distribution of duties.
- Organise and arrange training and development for Branch Officers and representatives as appropriate
- Guide the branch's development through the preparation and implementation of a branch organisation and development plan
- Ensure representation of members within the branch in accordance with national policy
- Ensure that case work and applications for services forwarded to the Branch are properly completed and authorised within the required timescales
- Arrange for branch records and membership data to be recorded and stored appropriately

- Communicate with the union's regional and head offices on behalf of the Branch.
- Ensure that members receive the benefits, rights and services to which they are entitled.
- Ensure, in conjunction with the branch Chair that the branch observes the union's rules, supports CWU campaigns and works towards achieving CWU's objectives.
- Support, guide and develop workplace representatives, branch officers and members through corporate and local negotiations, grievance and disciplinary procedures, disputes and reorganisations.
- Ensure consistency and adherence to CWU policy in all Branch communications, press releases, web and paper publications.
- Represent members individually and collectively in complex cases, and develop systems and processes for managing and undertaking branch casework effectively ensuring that all members are provided with an appropriate level of representation.
- Provide leadership and support to the Branch Committee other committees within the Branch structure.
- Campaign and promote the CWU on behalf of members, acting as spokesperson for the Branch at local and general meetings and when in contact with other levels of the union and external organisations including local and national media.
- Promote, safeguard and facilitate participation by all members in the union's democracy, with special regard to groups who are underrepresented in the union's structures and membership.

- Attend all meetings of the Regional Committee and other Regional meetings as required wherever possible, and to report back to the Branch Committee.
- In conjunction with the Branch Chair, convene and attend all meetings of the Branch and Branch Committee in line with the Branch Constitution, and provide a report on all issues affecting the branch
- Manage all affiliations and external relations in line with CWU and Branch policy

Branch Treasurer/Financial Secretary

- *To keep separate accounts for each fund of the Branch.*
- *To control the collection of subscriptions and levies.*
- *To receive all monies collected on behalf of the Branch.*
- *To remit to the Senior Deputy General Secretary any monies due to Union Headquarters by National Rule or by a decision of a Conference.*
- *To deposit all funds in a Unity Trust Bank or as otherwise determined by CWU Headquarters.*
- *To pay all proper claims on the Branch as they become due.*
- *To present an audited balance sheet at the Branch Annual General Meeting for each account held by the Branch.*
- *To exhibit to the members a copy of the balance sheets and audited accounts not less than 7 days prior to the Annual General Meeting.*
- *To have cash, bank statements and account books available at each Branch Committee Meeting.*
- *To retain all financial vouchers for at least two years from the date of the annual audit.*
- *To keep all statements of accounts and balance sheets for a period of seven years.*
- *To ensure that the Branch accounts are submitted to CWU Headquarters by the advertised date.*
- *To attend the monthly finance committee meetings, where they exist and to provide all relevant documentation to the committee.*

Branch Equality Officer

- *To ensure the Branch promotes the Equal Opportunities statements and policies agreed from time to time by the Union at Annual Conference and within the Branch.*
- *To establish a liaison with properly constituted local groups within the geographical area.*
- *To advise other Union Officers on any Equal Opportunities issue arising in negotiations and representations.*
- *To prepare reports to the Branch covering Equal Opportunities work and on issues the Officer wishes to bring to the attention of the Branch.*
- *To prepare an Annual Report for presentation to the membership.*

Political Officer

- *Is responsible for promoting and developing the Branch Political agenda and strategy.*
- *To provide an Annual Report to be submitted to the Branch.*
- *To provide information and advise Branch members of political issues and activities of interest to them.*
- *To assist in any political training and education of the Branch membership.*
- *To co-ordinate any CWU political campaign throughout the Branch membership.*

Youth Officer

- *The primary role of Branch Youth Officers is to represent members in the Branch under the age of 30.*
- *Branch Youth Officers also have a leading role in helping to organise and recruit such members.*
- *Promote issues affecting young people.*
- *Report to Branch and Regional Youth Committees on relevant issue.*
- *Escalate any issues as appropriate to senior Branch/Regional Officers.*
- *Act as a point of contact between members and the Branch.*
- *Act as a point of contact between Head Office and the Branch on issues concerning young members.*
- *Provide information to young members (which the Branch Youth Officer may themselves receive from CWU National or Regional level).*

Women's Officer

- *Women Officers should have a leading role in any recruitment or organisational campaigns where potential female workers are being targeted.*
- *Some of the areas that a women's officer will have responsibility for will include:*
 - *Promoting issues affecting Women*
 - *Reporting to their branch/region on relevant issues*
 - *Escalating relevant issues where necessary*
 - *Acting as a point of contact between members and the branch*
 - *Acting as a liaison between CWU HQ and the branch on issues concerning female members.*

- *To provide information to female members (to which the women's officer may themselves receive from CWU national or regional level)*
- *To attend Regional Women's Committees and the CWU Women's Conference and feed in where appropriate.*

BAME Officer

- Promoting issues affecting BAME workers to the branch committee
- Reporting to their branch/region on relevant issues
- Escalating relevant issues where necessary. This should involve collaborative work with the Equality Officer and if necessary, the appropriate IR reps
- Acting as a general point of contact where necessary
- Providing information to BAME members (liaise with the branch on this accordingly)
- Attending Regional Equality Committee meetings, CWU Black Workers Conference, TUC or ICTU Black Workers Conference (latter as a visitor if individual is not elected to attend via right through CWU elections)
- Involvement and support of CWU campaigns against the Far Right, Promoting rights of migrant workers etc
- Compilation of motions to CWU Black Workers Conference. Individuals should be versed in protocol applied for submission of motions

Health, Safety and Environment Co-ordinator

- *Shall act as the central branch liaison point for all matters related to health, safety and the environment and shall be responsible for the recruitment, training and organisation of safety representatives and their designated functions across the branch area.*
- *Shall provide safety related figures and statistics at committee and branch meetings and investigate and answer such queries as may be raised by officers and members of the branch.*
- *Shall attend such additional meetings as may be convened regionally or nationally, requiring branch attendance or arrange for suitable deputation in his/her absence.*

Postal Officer

- The Postal Section Secretary is responsible for promoting and developing the Branch within Postal Businesses.
- Shall liaise and co-ordinate with the branch secretary and make reports to the branch as appropriate.
- Shall organise and convene section meetings.