

Appointment of Branch Membership Services Officer

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

ABOUT UNISON

UNISON is Britain's largest public service trade union. It organises employees in a wide range of public services. Local Government members constitute UNISON's largest group and within this sector UNISON is the largest trade union. UNISON's members are staff directly employed by local councils, agency staff at council workplaces and private sector employees who provide local government services. Further information is available on the national UNISON website <https://www.unison.org.uk/>

Within UNISON the key level of organisation is the branch which, typically, includes all UNISON members within a "lead employer" such as an individual local authority. For Southwark members this is the London Borough of Southwark.

UNISON IN Southwark

The Southwark Branch of UNISON is the largest union branch within the local authority covering a majority of the trade union members employed by the Council. UNISON members in Southwark carry out a wide variety of jobs from clerical and administrative staff, manual workers and care staff, to professional employees and senior managers up to and including the level of Chief Officers of Departments. All types of Council staff except teachers are represented. The Branch also covers a variety of non-Council employers including a Further Education college, local voluntary sector organisations and private firms contracted to carry out local government services within the Borough.

BRANCH ORGANISATION

The central principle of UNISON organisation is lay representation – i.e. trade union activities within Southwark are the responsibility of members in employment who are elected to trade union office by their colleagues at work and who are accountable to them. The main parts of the structure in Southwark are outlined below.

UNISON Stewards are the first points of contact for most UNISON members. They are elected by and from the workplace, usually by groups of approximately 30 members. Stewards are responsible for recruitment, providing information to members, distribution of UNISON material and initial advice and representation. Within each Council Department the Stewards collectively form the Departmental Committee. Similar arrangements apply for Stewards representing non-Council employees.

Departmental Convenors are elected from the stewards in each Department or section of the Branch and are the senior UNISON representative at this level. They are responsible for representation of members, particularly in more serious cases, for negotiation with departmental management and for liaising with the central Branch structure. They also cover workplaces where no Steward is elected.

Branch Officers are elected from the whole membership of Southwark UNISON. The Branch Officers group includes the key posts of Secretary, Chair, Treasurer, etc. This group is responsible for central negotiations with Council management and for the administration of the central Branch structure. The Branch Secretary directs the overall work of the Branch Office. Other Branch Officers deal with specific areas of activity e.g. finances (Branch Treasurer), publicity, and trade union education. The Branch Office services all these activities.

Self-Organised Groups are established to represent the interests of employees who have historically been disadvantaged. This includes black workers, women, disabled members and lesbian, gay, trans and non-binary workers. Although the groups are supported by Southwark UNISON they operate independently and have their own structures. The branch can also organise with young members (U27) and Retired Members. The Branch Equality Officers liaise with the various groups.

The Branch Committee is composed of Branch Officers, Departmental Representatives drawn from Convenors/Stewards in each Department and representatives of Self-Organised Groups. The Committee is responsible for determining the policy of the Branch and maintains an overview of Branch organisation. There are also various sub-committees and working groups. Servicing of Branch Committee meetings (which are held at approximately six-weekly intervals) is done by the Branch Office.

General Meetings of the Branch are open to all Southwark UNISON members and have the final say in determining Branch policy. Two or three such meetings are held each year and are serviced by the Branch Office.

The Regional Organiser is UNISON's full time paid official responsible for Southwark and some other UNISON branches. They are not part of the local lay structure. The Regional Organiser is in regular contact with the Branch and is occasionally works at the Branch Office e.g. to meet with members and Branch representatives.

The Branch Membership Services Officer is a part-time post responsible for servicing the members on a day-to-day basis, and reports to the Branch Membership Manager. Staffing procedures are determined by the Branch. The posts are fully funded by Southwark UNISON.

NEGOTIATING STRUCTURE

Within Southwark Council there is a structure of regular formal meetings between trade union representatives and senior managers in the central Personnel function. Where necessary there are formal meetings with the elected Councillors who are the members of the Council's Executive (Cabinet) responsible for employment matters. There is a separate joint committee which deals with health and safety. Parallel structures exist at departmental level.

In addition, there are frequent ad hoc negotiations on specific issues between Branch Officers and central management. A variety of negotiating structures also operate within non-Council organisations.

THE BRANCH OFFICE

The Branch Office is at 17-19 Bournemouth Road SE15 4UJ 5 minutes' walk from Peckham Rye railway station. Office facilities include work stations for Branch

Officers as well as for administrative/clerical staff. The main functions of the Branch Office are:

1. Administrative support for the Branch structure as outlined above
2. Front line advice to members (usually by 'phone) on employment matters, including referral on to other trade union office holders
3. Providing access for members to UNISON services including liaison with UNISON's paid staff at regional and national level
4. The central administrative functions of the Branch such as membership and financial records and elections
5. Access to Branch Office facilities for UNISON activists e.g. meeting rooms, work stations, computer equipment

Southwark UNISON is part of Southwark Council's internal network (MS Outlook) and uses MS software for word processing, finance, desktop publishing, e-mail, Internet and information services on this system. The Branch is connected to UNISON's national membership system. Other software may be used as required.

ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions queries about the job content, please contact the Branch Secretary, Sue Plain 020 7525 1450.