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***Monmouthshire County Branch***

***Cangen Sir Fynwy***

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**Tuesday 6th February 2024 @ 10:00am**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

**Wednesday 7th February 2024 @ 12:30pm**

**Via TEAMS and in person in the Conference Room, County Hall, Usk**

**Thursday 8th February 2024 @ 5pm**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

**AGENDA**

Apologies

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Officer Reports

Honoraria

Approval of the Accounts

Election of Branch Officers and Stewards

Motions

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022**

**Tuesday 7th February 2023 @ 12.30pm**

**Wednesday 8th February 2023 @ 10.00am**

**Thursday 9th February 2023 @ 5pm**

**Via Microsoft TEAMS**

**PRESENT** Jan Davies (Branch Secretary)

Robin Grant (Assistant Branch Secretary)

Marie Bartlett (Treasurer)

Richard Garner (Health & Safety)

Sandra Rosser (Assistant Branch Secretary)

Joanne Davies (Vice Chairperson)

Sian Stockham (International Officer)

Hazel Clatworthy (Green Rep)

Kevan O’Dwyer (Chairperson)

Laura-Jane Marchrones (Welfare Officer)

Tracy Finnis (Retired Members Officer)

Marc Fennessy (Steward)

Jan Robson (Steward)

David Padmore (Steward)

Andrew Woodman (Unison)

Karen Vaughan (Branch Admin)

TOTAL - 39 Members of the Branch

**APOLOGIES** Bella Vaughan

Vice Chair, Joanne Davies opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and a special welcome to any new members who have joined during the last 12 months and Andrew Woodman representing Unison Regionally.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022**

These were received and approved by a show of hands.

**Matters Arising from the Minutes**

No matters arising.

**Officer Reports**

Officer reports were received in the pack, this is a report and an update on what has been happening in the past 12 months. The meeting was given an opportunity to raise any questions rising from these reports of the available officers. Nothing was raised.

No reports received from the sub-branches.

**Honoraria**

The Vice Chair handed over to Marie Bartlett, Branch Treasurer to go through the branch final accounts.

The honoraria table was displayed on screen.

Every year the AGM receives a request to approve the Branch Honoraria for the previous year, these discretionary payments are awarded to elected branch committee members in recognition of the work they do on behalf of members. This often involves work outside of normal hours including time spent away from home representing the branch at various committees and conferences.

The table showed the recommended payments made by the Independent Honoraria Committee. No honoraria can be paid unless it is approved by the branch and no person that may receive a payment can vote on this matter.

Marie requested the meeting approve these payments by a show of hands.

The payments were unanimously approved by those present.

No potential recipient took part in the vote.

**Approval of the Accounts**

The Treasurer then presented the Annual Statement of Accounts to the meeting, Robin shared these on the screen, these were also included in the Final Accounts document.

General Fund Income and Expenditure Account

The Treasurer highlighted the following:

Firstly, the branch funding we received is based on a percentage of branch members subscriptions. Back in 2019 the branch actually received 25% of that funding from Unison nationally, by 2022 this figure had reduced to 20%. This is mainly due to the increase in our reserves during 2020 and 2021 as we couldn’t spend our full budget because of the Covid-19 restrictions.

The formula that HQ uses ensures that branches do not build up unnecessarily large reserves by penalising branches once they reach a particular threshold, hence our income was only £32,359.20 per annum. Whilst back to pre-Covid years our income was around £38K level, so this accounts for the differences.

Secondly very early in 2022 the arrangement where we share the office manager’s post with Blaenau Gwent Unison came to an end when they served notice that they wanted to end the service level agreement

Secondly, The Treasurer drew our attention to ‘Other Income’ – in 2021 we had £11,710.23 but in 2022 this is showing nothing, Very early in 2022 the arrangement where we share the Office Manager’s post with Blaenau Gwent Unison Branch came to an end when they served notice that they wanted to end the Service Level Agreement. We terminated the agreement with immediate effect, but this obviously meant that we did not receive the £11,700 that we’d budgeted for. Moving onto the expenditure you can see the link with that.

So obviously as a direct result of the termination of the SLA with Blaenau Gwent, the branch could no longer afford to fund the hours of the Office Managers post that previously supported Blaenau Gwent. Discussions were held and as a result, the hours were reduced to 20, with compensation payment made for the loss of hours as a redundancy payment, which was made in November 2022.

This is the reason the ‘Staff Salary’ seems higher than normal as it includes this redundance payment.

The bulk of the other costs are very similar to what were predicted, obviously the only major difference really is conference and group meetings where we’ve spent just under £6K and that’s basically the level that we were spending pre-Covid. It is a National requirement that we attend conference, but if we chose not to attend, then we would incur a financial penalty, so it defeats the object if we don’t go.

Then we return to the bottom line which says ‘Surplus for the year’ which is a surplus for 2021 but is a net deficit for 2022 of £15,045.32. It’s a significant amount for our branch and one that we’ve never previous experienced, but this has been as expected and has been regularly reported at Branch Executive meetings and to our Cymru/Wales Regional office and their officers have been fully involved in discussions around the redundancy payment.

Primarily it’s as a result of the SLA termination and the need to reduce the working hours of the office manager and the subsequent redundancy payment.

Balance Sheet

This provides details of the funds the branch holds and any outstanding commitments which are shown as creditors. The Treasurer drew our attention to the ‘Accumulated Funds’ section at the bottom – these are our reserves. We have two reserves, the General Fund of £15,892.63 and the Industrial Action Fund of £61,779.20.

The general fund is the one that we have access to at any point in time, but you can see that we started the year with a very healthy reserve of £30,937.95, the deficits have actually reduced that figure to £15,892.63. Whilst this is a significant deficit for us, it has reduced the general reserve fund down to a level that it was pre-Covid, so we are getting back to where we are expected to be.

The industrial action fund remains at £61,779.00, this reserve has not been utilised for a long time and can only be used to support industrial action under strict rules and guidelines, that’s why this figure hasn’t changed.

Budget

With the reduction in general reserves, this changes the funding formulae, and we hope to see an increase in income to pre-2020 levels. This has enabled us to set a balanced budget for 2023 which is set out in the table.

That concluded the accounts for 2022 and the Treasurer asked if anyone had any questions, there being none, the participants were asked to formally accept the accounts by a show of hands.

All participants accepted and approved the accounts.

**Election of Branch Officers and Stewards**

There was a list of the nominations for officer positions and stewards in the AGM pack which Robin shared on screen.

All the nominations listed were received by the deadline, so those listed are deemed elected unopposed and for approval at this meeting.

The meeting was asked to approve these by a show of hands to elect the officers and stewards presented - all participants accepted and approved these elections.

The AGM granted the Branch Committee the ability to fill any vacant posts and approve new officer and steward nominations throughout the year.

**Motions**

None received.

**Any other business**

* Proposed changes to the Branch Constitution
  + 1. in relation to a rule change at the last National Delegates Conference regarding the holding of the AGM’s remotely. While our constitution allows us to hold branch meetings virtually, it doesn’t specifically mention AGMs, the rule change at conference does allow for it but just for absolute clarification we propose adding a few extra words to our constitution to read ‘this includes Annual General Meetings.’

A show of hands was asked for and received unanimously.

* + 1. we request that the following also be written into the branch constitution -‘that for any branch executive to be deemed quorate there must be at least four members of the executive committee present’.

It was raised that usually a quorate figure would be an odd number to make voting easier, everyone agreed that we would change it to five.

A show of hands was asked for and received unanimously.

The vice chair then opened the meeting to the floor and asked if anyone had anything else they wanted to raise.

* The Branch Secretary took the opportunity to let members know that the NEC elections are taking place and voting papers will be sent to members shortly. This is a postal vote, and she urged everyone to use their vote. We will issue reminders closer to the time. Although the branch cannot tell them how to vote, we are able to let them know how the branch has voted.
* The question from the floor - flexi has been discussed at manager’s Q&A meetings recently and there has been a fuss made about trusting and being told ‘we are all adults’. Most of the responses from managers is that they like the flexi sheets and the staff like them too. Jan Davies, Branch Secretary is aware of the issue, although she doesn’t think there is an appetite to do away with flexi. She also feels it will allow managers at a lower level to say staff weren’t working their hours. At least if it’s being recorded and signed off by a manager regularly there can’t be any arguments.

Managers should also be using this to keep an eye on what hours people are working as there are some that build up huge credits, this should be being address from a wellbeing perspective. This also gives staff the opportunity to raise the issue if they can’t do their job within the hours they are employed.

There are a number of reasons why flexi sheets should be maintained, and we would certainly be resisting any move to do away with them completely. Other managers feel the same, this issue appears to be with one section only. Officially we have not been approached for any change to the flexi scheme.

The vice chair raised the following:

* Monmouthshire UNISON Small Talk (MUST) – we meet regularly via TEAMS and focus on different subjects and is a chance for members to come along and get some extra information, share views, and meet members of the branch. If anyone would like to request a topic for us to cover, please get in touch with the branch.

The next meeting is arranged for 15th February 2023 at 12noon and 5pm via TEAMS, the same session run twice to give everyone an opportunity to attend. We’re picking up on the success we had last year with the Money Matters session, this one will pick up on some of the themes that were discussed there, including how local communities are responding to the cost-of-living crisis and how to get involved, as well as looking at ways in which to make your money go further.

We have some key colleagues from Monmouthshire County Council, Lisa Knight-Davies and Ryan Coleman coming along to update us on local activities and Christians Against Poverty will be running a small taster session on a course where they look at how you can make your money work better for you.

These meetings are also being opened up to all MCC staff not just Unison members. The invitations have already been sent out.

This will also be set up on a big screen in Abergavenny details are on the bottom of the invitation.

Finally, the Vice Chair congratulated a couple of members of the branch executive who have recently received awards:

* + - Hazel Clatworthy, Green Rep was recently named on the Future Generations Changemakers 100 list.
    - Sian Stockham, Equalities & International Relations Officer, who was awarded an OBE in the New Year’s Honours list for her political and public service work.

The Vice Chair asked if there were any questions, there being none, she thanked everyone for attending and wished them well before closing the meeting.

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**Branch Chairperson’s Report**

As we come to the end of 2023 it’s hard not to feel concerned about all that has taken place in our world over the last 12 months, and what is still to come as we weather the storms of economic, political, and environmental uncertainty. But when I think about our Branch, there is a lot to feel optimistic about and thankful for.

We’ve welcomed significant numbers of new members this year from a range of service areas, but in particular from our school and care sectors. We’re delighted that you have chosen to join Unison and send a warm welcome to you all.

Our newest Branch Stewards have had real impact, both in recruiting new members and providing insight into their areas of work and personal experiences. We’re so pleased to have you on the team.

I also want to send a heartfelt thank you to you all - our Members, Stewards and Branch Executive Team- for the time, energy, and commitment you have given over the last year. Together we have responded to a number of challenges, made our voices heard, and provided much needed support and guidance to others.

On a personal level, I have been very grateful for opportunities to meet and spend more time with Members and Branch colleagues. Our Monmouthshire Small Talk Sessions have continued in 2023, and it’s been great to hear your thoughts and input on subjects such as Money Matters, Green Week and the Pay Consultation.

Our annual ‘Stars in our Schools’ celebration took place in November, and it was a pleasure to get to travel to my local schools and say thank you to our members who we don’t get to see in person as often as we’d like. And back in June I was lucky enough to attend my first National Delegate Conference in Liverpool. It was a fantastic experience and provided me with deeper insight into Unison than I’ve ever had before.

I heard about our national and international campaigns supporting workers’ rights and equality around the world. I met representatives of our special interest and self-organised groups who are doing amazing work raising awareness and understanding of challenges faced by their members. And I saw the power of democracy in action as the debates - often heated but always thought provoking - and votes took place on the conference floor. Add to that the opportunity to learn from Branch and Regional colleagues who also attended (plus my first visit the Cavern Club) and you’ve got an experience I won’t forget! If you ever get the opportunity to go, I will whole-heartedly recommend it.

My hope is that we can carry this feeling of positivity, proactivity, and unity into the new year because we’re going to need it.

The current financial situation in our authority is tougher than many of us will have ever experienced before. We will all be impacted by this in one way or another, so we need to look after ourselves and others, particularly as the cost-of-living crisis goes on. As a Branch we will continue to work constructively with our employers and represent you as effectively as we can. If there are proposed changes to your service areas, please contact us to let us know as we’re keen to make sure we are fully informed.

Within our Branch, there’s a strong current of feeling that even when we might not be directly affected ourselves as an individual, we’ll stand up on behalf of those that are.

**So, here’s our Call to Action for 2024 – keep in touch, keep talking, keep questioning, keep voting when the opportunity arises and stay active as a member because it really can make a difference!**

Look out for our upcoming Branch survey where you can share your thoughts on what we’re doing and how we communicate with you. Join us for one of our future MUST sessions if you’re able to. And if you think you’d like to get more involved with our work please don’t hesitate to contact the office or talk to your workplace rep.

We’re stronger together.

**Joanne Davies**

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**Branch Secretary’s Report**

It’s the start of another new year and yet another challenging one for UNISON members, the services they provide, and for the union.

The financial picture for Monmouthshire is bleak, I know I said this last year, and I hoped I wouldn’t be saying it again, but, in the 46 years that I have worked here I have never known anything on this scale, and it doesn’t look as if things will improve anytime soon.

Feedback we receive from managers, leaders & politicians has been nothing but praise for the way in which you have continued to rise to the challenges we face with an ever-decreasing budget. However, the budget position does mean that there will be some significant and long term changes to the way we work, both in the public and private sector. If you have any concerns about what this means for you, please get in touch.

Efficiency savings, restructures, collaborations, shared services and various pilot schemes are now deemed an essential element to maintain MCC’s financial future.

With such a difficult financial position, the Authority is, yet again, looking at different ways of working to achieve the necessary savings. We appreciate that this situation will be extremely unsettling for all staff, if you require any additional help, support or advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The Leadership Team has assured us that they will keep Unison informed and want to work with us to ensure the best possible outcomes for staff. If there are proposed changes to your sections / departments or to yourselves, as individuals, please contact us. As Unison members you are entitled to our support.

If there are any teams / sections that would like to meet with us, either individually or on a group basis, we are happy to facilitate that. Just give us a call.

In the meantime our Assistant Treasurer, Sandra Rosser & Chair, Joanne Davies will continue to host regular MUST (Monmouthshire Unison Small Talk) sessions. These are short, half hour / hour sessions, to provide a forum to talk / discuss relevant issues with your elected Unison Reps and colleagues.

All things considered I believe the Monmouthshire branch has been very creative in the ways that we are now able to help and provide support to our members. If you feel that there are other ways that we can help / support our membership please, do not hesitate to contact me to discuss.

The 2023 Pay claim was finally settled in November but still leaves us playing catch-up after a long period of austerity & pay freezes. The pay claim for 2024 is about to be submitted.

Unison will continue to campaign for worker’s rights to be maintained or protected. We need to ensure that all health and safety and employment protection rights are at the heart of any future employment legislation.

Our membership figures are increasing, but more needs to be done to ensure that those who work for Monmouthshire, and are not members, join up! This is not a time to be fighting alone, with all the changes on the horizon there has never been a more important time to be a Unison member.

I have also had the privilege of representing Monmouthshire Unison at Local Government Committee Wales, I have been re-elected as Chair from May 2023. As Chair of Local Government Wales I also attend Joint Council Wales, Joint Council Wales Executive & the Local Government Service Group Executive. I also attend South East Wales Joint Consultative Committee. Keep an eye on the Monmouthshire Unison website for regular updates.

We are still desperately short of stewards. If anyone is interested please contact me. There is plenty of training available and I would be happy to provide any advice / guidance / support you may need.

**PLEASE COME FORWARD – YOUR BRANCH NEEDS YOU !!**

**Jan Davies**

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**Assistant Branch Secretary’s Report**

* Firstly, I’d like to thank our Branch Secretary **Jan Davies** for all your help and guidance, your years of experience are second to none.
* Secondly to our Office Manager **Karen Vaughan** who is always on hand even though 2023 has been difficult for her, thanks Karen.
* To our members thank you for being in our Union, we are nothing without you our members.

Members are our **voice and ears** on the ground if you have any news or concerns let us know we are here to support you.

There will be many challenges ahead in our Local Authority with the budget and savings it needs to make which will of course be uncertain times for staff and teams.

***2023:***

* There was the *Branch Development Weekend* at Bryn Meadows this was a good session with our Gwent Unison colleagues. The Sight Loss Awareness presentation and training was excellent and informative.
* The Branch holds monthly Executive meetings which have to be quorate, where we plan and discuss what is current in Monmouthshire and Cymru Wales.

* Attended every six weeks Branch Secretaries meetings on Teams. Very insightful and it is good to see Unison has many talents in the Regions.
* Regularly attended the Local Government Committee meetings.
* The Branch has had various MUST (Monmouthshire Unison Small Talk) session meetings this year for its members, run at 2 different times on the day for 30 minutes via Teams.

These are run by our Chair **Joanne Davies** and **Sandra Rosser**, and it is a way to engage with members on various issues. A big thank you to **Jo** and **Sandra** and to those who attended.

Various sessions like pay and cost of living crisis were well attended and a big thank you to all the speakers.

If you have any suggestions for a MUST session topic let us know.

* Attended my 1st Unison Local Government Conference in Liverpool and my 2nd National Delegate Conference straight afterwards.

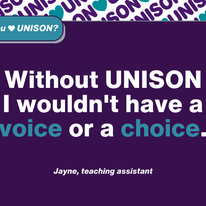
The Branch had a new attendee at NDC which was our Branch Chair **Joanne Davies** and as usual our Conference guru **Sandra Rosser** was on hand to show **Jo** the ropes.

Very interesting week lots of motions and speakers and not as controversial as last year in Brighton.

* On top of attending many meetings the Branch has covered a massive amount of case work which can take up a great deal of time for individual cases.
* We are always trying to recruit new members in Monmouthshire.
* As well as new members we have recruited a few new stewards which is very pleasing and look forward to them becoming accredited and working with our current members to resolve issues.
* For those of you who would consider becoming a Rep please contact us and we can discuss what the role involves. There is training available, and you will always have support from the Branch leads.
* The demands put on us are often high with member meetings, consultations with the employer and keeping on top of individual case work. The team is highly focussed and work in a proactive way to ensure all meetings and members concerns are covered. We always aim to contact members as soon as possible and **Karen Vaughan** in the office is the main point of contact, although members do contact us directly too. Many thanks **Karen** for all you do!
* Providing a voice to those in need, battling through HR procedure and employment legislation to bring about a fair outcome and marshalling influence for those who have been overlooked is what we are here for every day!
* 2024 will see us this Union fighting for services and jobs across the country, Unison is the Union standing and speaking up for public services and I am proud not only to be in a trade union but in **Unison**!

**Robin Grant**

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**Assistant Treasurer’s Report**

Here we are again!

The National Delegates Conference in 2023 was held in Liverpool, and although my former partner in crime at these events, Kevan O’Dwyer, had now retired from this role, I was delighted to have Joanne Davies join me on the floor for some of the hotly contended debates. We also had Robin Grant as “Sharer” so that he and Joanne could swap out throughout conference, so we had our quota of two delegates representing members on the floor throughout conference.

It was an honour to hear Dr Neville Lawrence speak about how the union has been there to support his family in the 30 years since his son Stephen was murdered. Such an incredible human being, it was humbling to hear him speak and see him receive his Honorary Membership.

It’s a busy week with lots to get through not just in the conference hall but also with fringe events throughout. It’s awe-inspiring to be able to interact with members from across the UK who are heading up campaigns in all areas of local government. It’s a chance for us to sit round the table and share experiences, learn from each other, and most of all, remind ourselves that we are one family. I hope the regular Facebook posts throughout conference help you to get a flavour of what goes on and how decisions at the conference will affect how we move forward as an organisation.

I’ve had the honour of assisting our newest steward in taking his first steps representing members, it can be daunting when you first get your wings! I’ve been reminded of the importance of our camaraderie, and I am incredibly proud of how well he is doing! Please do get in touch if you want to know what is involved with becoming an activist or steward – we’re all here to support each other on this journey.

It’s also brought home how important it is that we talk to each other, and our MUST sessions (Monmouthshire Unison Small Talk) remain an important part of how we as a branch communicate with you, our members, across the vast geographical area we cover. We want to be able to give you the opportunity to know what’s going on, and how it affects you, and we will continue to make sure that we communicate with you wherever you are, so please do let us know if you have any ideas or topics that you would like us to have at a MUST session.

Have a great 2024 – The Year of the Young Member for UNISON!!

**Sandra Rosser**



**Health & Safety Officer’s Report**

The last year has seen a lot of changes ongoing across Monmouthshire within the realms of Health and Safety, moving from the interim arrangements put in place, whilst the main officer role was vacant, to a more regular corporate working group, a workplan of updating the main Monmouthshire polices, which have become very outdated, and a relatively new corporate Health and safety officer, Kate Thompson, driving many of these updates now firmly settled within the Role.

We also said goodbye to one of our Health and safety Reps, Kevan, who retired from Monmouthshire, his work in the depots has been amazing over the years, and he will be sorely missed.

Finally, as usual, don’t become another figure in the health and safety report: laptops users, please make sure you take regular breaks, that your workstation is set up correctly and has the right equipment, especially if working for more than a couple of hours in one place. If you don’t have the above or would like further information, initially discuss this with your manager, failing that, contact me or the UNISON office where we can put you on the right track.

**Richard Garner**

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**Young Member’s Report**

Hi! I’m Brandon, and I have recently become a new Steward for Monmouthshire UNISON. I am classed as a ‘Young Member’ as I am under 30, which is great knowing 2024 is the Year of the Young Member!

I joined UNISON in 2021, and through issues that I had to navigate in the various roles I have, I was encouraged to become a Steward. I undertook my training in June 2023, going once a week to Swansea to join other new stewards from across Wales, which I found beneficial joining in discussions and working groups to better understand the role of the Steward.

Once I had completed this training, I then started shadowing a more ‘senior’ steward, attending meetings with members in need of support. Through this one-to-one mentoring I have been able to grow in confidence, ask questions about the processes, and gain a better understanding of how we as Stewards can support you, our members. I still have a long way to go, but having someone who believes in you really helps me in knowing I can become an asset to the branch.

Everyone is very welcoming, there is always someone on the end of a phone or email if you need to ask a question, and I ask a lot! I’m still learning and I look forward to continuing my journey as a Young Member and Steward over the next year.

**Brandon Jones** 😊



**Officer Nominations**

**At the closing date the following nominations were received:**

Branch Chairperson Joanne Davies

Branch Secretary Jan Davies

Assistant Branch Secretary Sandra Rosser

Branch Treasurer Robin Grant

Branch Auditor Sian Hayward

Branch Auditor Diane Flynn

Health & Safety Officer Richard Garner

Equalities Co-ordinator Sian Stockham

Welfare Officer Laura-Jane Marchrones

Young Members Officer Vacant

Education Co-ordinator Undertaken by Branch Admin

International Relations Officer Sian Stockham

Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator Undertaken by Branch Admin

Communications Officer Undertaken by Branch Admin

Membership Officer Undertaken by Branch Admin

Retired Members Secretary Marie Bartlett

Labour Link Officer Sian Stockham

**The above-named Officers are nominated unopposed and are**

**deemed elected, subject to AGM approval.**

**Steward Nominations**

**Monmouthshire County Council**

Jill Phillips (Contact only) Deri View Primary School

Luca Goddard Chepstow School

Mandy Stone Adult Services

Hazel Clatworthy (Green Rep) Resources

Marc Fennessy The Compass Project

Dave Padmore Monmouth PTU

Jan Robson Caldicot School

Brandon Jones Cleaning Team, Raglan Depot

Anthony Moriarty Refuse, Llanfoist Depot

**Capita Symonds**

Peter Deidun

**Haberdashers Monmouth Schools**

None received

**Monmouthshire Housing Association**

Peter Stephens (Contact only)

The above nominations were received and are therefore elected.

**The Branch reserves the right to fill any vacant posts and approve**

**new officers and steward nominations throughout the year**

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We still have vacancies for Stewards across all workplaces so any nominations or volunteers would be very welcome. Full training will be offered to anyone volunteering.

Officers of the union take the lead on specific areas of activity and work in close liaison with our Stewards and Workplace Contacts to ensure that we deliver effectively for our members.

Specific training is available for many of these positions so don’t feel that you will be on your own if you stand or persuade a colleague to stand. There is only one qualification for officers, they need to be a member of the union; having an interest or experience of the specific areas of activity would of course be welcomed.

Stewards are the backbone of UNISON; they act as a link between members and the union in our workplaces. All new stewards have the right to paid time off for training which UNISON provides. New stewards also have the backup of more experienced officers should the need arise.

Workplace contacts act as a contact between the branch office and the workplace to make sure all information gets to members in that workplace. Members then also have a person to go to who is a link to the branch. Workplace contacts don’t pick up issues, rather they are a conduit between their own workplace and the branch.

Your workplace will be a much stronger place should you nominate someone to act on your behalf, either as a steward or a workplace contact.

If you are interested, please contact Karen in the UNISON Office:

**UNISON Office, 18 Maryport Street, Usk NP15 1AE**

**Tel: 01291 675502**

**Email:** [unisonmon@btconnect.com](mailto:unisonmon@btconnect.com)

**Website:** [**www.unisoningwent.org.uk**](http://www.unisoningwent.org.uk)

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**Monmouthshire UNISON Small Talk (MUST)**

At one our monthly meetings last year our executive discussed virtual organising. An idea was put forward by our then Assistant Branch Secretary, Sandra Rosser, of virtual meeting rooms.

With more and more people working from home, the conversations that would normally take place in the shared spaces in MCC buildings don’t happen and can leave our members feeling isolated and alone.

This idea quickly evolved and Sandra, who has since moved to the position of Assistant Branch Treasurer, and Joanne Davies, Vice Chairperson have successfully put together some very interesting and informative MUST sessions throughout the year, each one covering a different topic such as:

* Health & Safety - Richard Garner, Health & Safety Rep
* Money Matters (providing information about what help, and advice is available to individuals and where to access it) - Jude Langdon of MCC
* UNISON’s Green Week – Hazel Clatworthy, Green Rep

We keep these meetings short and succinct and hold them twice on the same day allowing people the opportunity to join us for either meeting at 12.30pm or 5pm.

We have some ideas for future meetings, but if you have anything you or your colleagues would like the branch to cover please get in touch and let us know.

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Monmouthshire County UNISON, UNISON Office, The Maryport Centre, 18 Maryport Street, Usk NP15 1AE

Telephone: 01291 675502

Email: [unisonmon@btconnect.com](mailto:unisonmon@btconnect.com)

**THE ADDED VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP**

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contact UNISON Direct on **0800 0857 857**

Alternatively contact your branch office on

**01291 675502** for a brochure.

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**UNISON WELFARE**

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(Charity registration number: 1023552 / SCO38305)

UNISON’s registered charity provides a unique confidential service just for UNISON members and their families. They offer:

* debt service
* advice and support
* financial assistance
* wellbeing breaks

Telephone: 020 7121 5620

Email: [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk)

Website: [www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou)

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Also keep an eye open for There For You grants for School Uniforms in July and the Winter Fuel grant in January every year. Please be aware these funds are limited so get your application in early.

*To be eligible to apply for financial assistance, you must have been a member of UNISON for at least four weeks and up to date with your subscriptions. Also, that the financial difficulties that led you to apply occurred after you joined. Partners or dependents can also apply.*

A beach with grass and water

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[A close-up of a business card

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**Legal Services**

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### UNISON provides high-quality legal services to members and their families across a wide range of issues. We work with our specialist legal services provider, Thompsons Solicitors, to provide access to high-quality employment, personal injury, and criminal law advice. Thompsons are committed to the trade union movement as a whole and we work closely to monitor their work in line with our agreed standards of service.

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https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/legal-services/

**Need help?**

### As a member of UNISON get help by:

[Contacting your branch](http://branches.unison.org.uk/)

[Using our online enquiry form](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/online-enquiries/)

Calling the UNISONdirect call centre on **0800 0 857 857**

UNISONdirect's hours are:

Monday to Friday 6am to Midnight and Saturday 9am to 4pm.

**Know someone who’s not a member?**

Pass on the joining details below:

[Join now](http://www.unison.org.uk/join/)

OR

Scan the QR code below:

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https://join.unison.org.uk/

**Join the conversation and keep up to date with all the latest Unison news.**

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**Find us by searching Unison Monmouthshire on Facebook and Twitter**

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[**www.unisoningwent.org.uk**](http://www.unisoningwent.org.uk)

Logo, company name

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**Monmouthshire County UNISON**

**UNISON Office**

**18 Maryport Street**

**Usk NP15 1AE**

**01291 675502**

[**unisonmon@btconnect.com**](mailto:unisonmon@btconnect.com)

Text

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