



*Monmouthshire County Branch
Cangen Sir Fynwy*



Tuesday 7th February 2023 @ 12.30pm
Wednesday 8th February 2023 @ 10.00am
Thursday 9th February 2023 @ 5pm

Via Microsoft TEAMS

AGENDA

Apologies

Minutes of the 2022 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 8th February 2022 @ 10am
Wednesday 9th February 2022 @ 12.30pm
Thursday 10th February 2022 @ 5pm

Via Microsoft TEAMS

PRESENT

Jan Davies (Branch Secretary)
Kevan O'Dwyer (Chairperson)
Marie Bartlett (Treasurer)
Richard Garner (Health & Safety)
Sandra Rosser (Assistant Branch Secretary)
Joanne Davies (Vice Chairperson)
Sian Stockham (International Officer)
Tracy Finnis (Equalities Officer)
Laura-Jane Marchrones (Welfare Officer)

Robin Grant
Hazel Clatworthy
Deserie Mansfield

Christopher Long (Unison)
Andrew Woodman (Unison)
Karen Vaughan (Branch)

TOTAL - 41 Members of the Branch

APOLOGIES

None received

Kevan O'Dwyer opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, then handed over to Joanne Davies to Chair the rest of the meeting as he was having computer issues.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2021

These were received and approved by a show of hands.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

No matters arising.

Officer Reports

Officer reports were received, officers would make themselves available to answer individual questions should they be required.

No reports received from the sub-branches.

Honoraria

The method of calculation for honoraria was explained as a discretionary one-off payment made to elected members of the Committee and stewards in recognition of their voluntary work for the Branch, often giving up evenings and weekends to support members.

An Honoraria Committee met, comprising the Branch Vice Chairperson, a Branch Steward (not in receipt of a payment) and the Treasurer; following discussion the group agreed the proposed payments for 2021.

This table was also included as part of the Final Accounts document. Every year we have to submit the proposals to the AGM for approval and it was made clear no person in receipt of a payment is able to vote on this item.

These payments were unanimously approved by those present by a show of hands. 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.

Income and Expenditure Account

At the start of 2021 the branch did set a balanced budget, ie what our predicted income was and what the expenditure was likely to be. However, Covid has had a significant financial impact as the branch has had to operate differently. The branch funding level was £38,684.75 for the previous year, last year it was reduced quite significantly to £33,850.75 that's mainly due to the impact on the formula. Because our reserves went up last year, Unison reduce our branch funding accordingly.

On the expenditure we would normally expect to spend a significant amount on conferences and group meetings, the accounts show £186.92 is what we spent last year and the year before it was £28.80. For comparison, the previous year we spent in the region of £6,000.

This is because National and Local Government Conferences were held virtually in 2020 and 2021, therefore the branch did not incur these costs, so again in 2021 we returned a surplus of £5,980.08.

Balance Sheet

The impact of this can be seen in our *General Reserves*, the accumulated general fund at the beginning of the year was £23,411.04 that's now gone up by the surplus of £5,980.08. So, we have actually got an *Accumulated General Fund Reserve* of £29,391.12.

This means that Unison thinks we have healthy reserves, so the expectation is that we will use some of these reserves over the next few years, which we intend to do.

The *Accumulated Industrial Action Fund* of £61,779.20 has not changed for many years, we can only use this when we are conducting industrial action and there are a lot of rules around that, that's why this figure is staying static.

Budget

For information only. It gives an idea of what our expected income will be and also what our expenditure is. We have a deficit budget set for this year and that's the expectation that we will be using some of our reserve funding. Even if we use the £3,750 we probably still won't be in the position where we will be attracting additional funding from Unison because our reserves need to go down to about £20K. Although the expectation is that this will happen over the next couple of years.

That concluded the accounts 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 in the AGM pack.

The Branch Secretary addressed the meeting to give an update as things have changed slightly in the last few weeks, which means making some changes to what has been presented in the document. The Branch Secretary asked the delegation to endorse the following proposals:

- To create the role of Assistant Treasurer - Marie Bartlett is our current Treasurer and has retired from the Authority, while she's staying on for us as Branch Treasurer, we need to take some steps to do some succession planning for the future.

The AGM was asked to ratify the proposal of creating the position of Assistant Branch Treasurer - all participants accepted and approved these proposals.

- Alongside this, our Assistant Branch Secretary, Sandra Rosser, needs to take a step back from this busy role because of the demands of a new job and training, etc she needs to undertake. The proposal therefore is that Sandra Rosser (current Assistant Branch Secretary) would move into the position of Assistant Treasurer.

Anyone else who would like to be considered for this role was asked to make themselves known, as this position is open to anyone who might want to stand against Sandra for this position - no responses were received.

- This then leaves a gap for an Assistant Branch Secretary, which is a required position in terms of succession planning for the future of the branch. The proposal is that Robin Grant would step into this position.

Again, the position is open to any members, so if anyone would like to stand against Robin or might be interested in the role, they were asked to make themselves known - no responses were received.

The AGM was asked for their agreement for Sandra Rosser to become Assistant Treasurer and Robin Grant to become Assistant Branch Secretary - all participants accepted and approved these elections with a show of hands.

The rest of the officer posts listed in the agenda were 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 the 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

Pay

We had some information through from Unison national a couple of days ago informing us that whilst the Unison ballot is mainly concluded, we are still waiting on the Northern Ireland ballot, which closes on 10th February. Unison NJC are minded to wait until that ballot closes before they formally move to accept.

At this stage, it's fairly common knowledge that the vote was a 14.5% turnout which is way short of the 50% threshold we would need to take industrial action. The result from those that did vote was 70.2% voted YES to strike action against 29.8% voted NO to strike action.

Christopher Long (Area Organiser) added that of those who voted, it was very strong to reject the offer and take action. We all accept that achieving the ballot requirements created by the Tory Government, specifically to prevent us from being able to take action, is clearly anti-union legislation. Whereas we find in small scale localised disputes we are much more successful, in a large-scale ballot like this it is a challenge.

Of course, we have also had the additional challenge of running this ballot through the pandemic and all the access problems that this has created. It is disappointing that we didn't get a bigger turnout, but it is clear what members do feel about the pay offer and that there was considerable willingness to take action amongst sections of the membership, therefore we need to assess and build on this going forward.

We are urged to take some positives and some encouragement from the result even though we are in the position where it doesn't enable us to take action in pursuit of this claim.

Monmouthshire Unison Small Talk (MUST) - Sandra Rosser

As some may be aware, we are endeavouring to run regular lunchtime and evening sessions for our membership on different topics. Because of the huge rise in the cost of living and utility bills, etc, it was suggested we should look at running our next MUST session as a platform to share information on what financial help is available to members and non-members, and any cost saving ideas we can share. We will look at a date towards the end of February to hold this meeting.

Financial Assistance

We have recently updated the website www.unisoningwent.org.uk with a number of financial help links, they can be found on the front page and the Monmouthshire page of the website.

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.



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.

We continue to try and keep everyone safe while delivering very much needed local services. The feedback we've received from managers, leaders and politicians has been nothing but praise for the way in which you have continued to rise to the challenge. It is widely accepted that you, our members, have gone way over and above your work roles.

The way we lived and worked before March 23rd 2020 is a dim & distant memory, I do not believe we will ever return to that way of working. Technology has evolved to support this new remote way of working and given the budgetary pressures facing all local authorities, the savings that this offer is welcomed. This 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.

The financial picture for Monmouthshire is bleak, in the 45 years that I have worked here I have never known anything on this scale. 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 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.

We will review the decision to suspend our regular drop-in sessions as soon as the situation allows, hopefully, we will be able to get out and meet with you face to face soon. At the moment there are not enough staff in the offices to warrant it. Having said that, if there are any teams / sections that would like to meet with us, we are happy to facilitate that. Just give us a call.

In the meantime, our Assistant Treasurer, Sandra Rosser & Vice Chair, Joanne Davies set up MUST (Monmouthshire Unison Small Talk). These are short, half hour sessions, to provide a forum to talk / discuss relevant issues with your elected Unison Reps & colleagues. The Assistant Treasurer, Sandra Rosser, has continued

with Talking Therapies and I'm sure both elements will be covered in their respective reports.

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 2022 Pay award was higher than we have received in a long while but still leaves us playing catch-up after a long period of austerity & pay freezes. The pay claim for 2023 is about to be submitted. Unison will also 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.

I have also had the privilege of representing Monmouthshire Unison at Local Government Committee, Wales and, with effect from May 2022, have been elected to Chair that committee. As Chair of Local Government Wales, I also attend Joint Council Wales Executive and 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.

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.

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

PLEASE COME FORWARD - YOUR BRANCH NEEDS YOU !!

Jan Davies



Assistant Branch Secretary's Report

It has been my pleasure to accept this role taking over from my esteemed colleague **Sandra Rosser** who is a hard act to follow. Thank you, **Sandra**, and to our Branch Secretary **Jan Davies** for all your help and guidance.

2022 has been busy I had my Employment Law course following on from my Health & Safety course the previous year.

There was the Branch Development Weekend at Bryn Meadows this was a good session with our Gwent Unison colleagues. The Branch has monthly Executive meetings which have to be quorate, where we plan and discuss what is current in Monmouthshire. Every six weeks Branch Secretaries meet on Teams. These meetings are very insightful, and it is good to see Unison has many talents in Wales.

Regularly attended the Local Government Committee meetings.

The Branch has held various MUST (Monmouthshire Unison Small Talk) session meetings this year for its members, run at 2 different times on the day for 30 minutes. These are run by our Vice 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 for those who attended.

Attended my 1st Unison National Delegate Conference in Brighton with **Sandra Rosser**. **Sandra** a conference veteran was the best guide I could have hoped for, and it was a very interesting few days at the Brighton Centre! Liverpool in 2023 is the next one.

On top of attending many meetings we have 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 for reps, 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 focused 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 each and every day!

2023 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



Assistant Treasurer's Report

As an officer, this is the first year I have had as an 'outsider' to the main employer represented by the branch, which has been interesting to observe and experience. As an officer we need to be able to represent members from a great number of employers and as a branch we are seeing these numbers grow more and more - I can honestly say that now I work in a small 2 person team, to be part of the wider UNISON family gives me comfort that I have you all there in my corner!

My role as the Branch Rep for National Delegate Conference is one I take very seriously, and every year has shown that we, as a member-led Union, are forward-thinking and pro-active, moving with the times, making sure we are properly reflecting the make-up of the union membership by adequately representing the needs and requirements as they change and evolve over time.

Conference is the opportunity for us to all come together, to share best practice, to submit motions for change and alterations to things like rules and policies which need to 'move with the times'. It is a chance for debate and discussion on these submissions - not all of them get to the top of the 'snake' as it is referred to (daily list of motions for debate in order of priority as decided by the Standing Orders Committee), and many can be controversial so stimulate a great deal of speakers for and against. Ultimately, the vote is then given to the wider Conference, whether to support or reject each motion brought before us.

In 2022, I had a new 'winger', our Assistant Branch Secretary Robin Grant, to have quiet discussions with whilst listening to debates so we could make sure we were voting for what we felt is best for our membership here in Monmouthshire. The event did not pass without controversy, and I am sure the forthcoming National Executive Council elections will once again bring up some difficult conversations about how many conducted themselves at the 2022 Conference.

Front and centre of every vote we cast, is you, our members here working on the front line for the communities we serve every single day. For the first time ever we as a branch may be taking a motion for a rule change to NDC, and I hope it makes it onto the 'snake' so it can be debated and hopefully effect real change to enable more effective day to day management of branches in the future.

2023 NDC will be held in Liverpool this year in June, so do watch out on our Facebook page for regular updates on debates and speakers, particularly from any fringe events we attend to help you better understand the multi-faceted roles we have within our union.

Don't forget to dial in for our regular MUST (Monmouthshire UNISON Small Talk) half hour sessions on Microsoft TEAMS - we hold these regularly on a wide range of topics and are always keen to hear your feedback and suggestions on these.

They are open to all members across all employers within Monmouthshire, so do make time to join us if you can, either at 12:30pm or 5pm on the dates we advertise.

For any further information on these or suggestions for future topics, do contact myself or Joanne Davies via the branch.

Sandra Rosser

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Welfare Officer's Report

Coming out of Covid and still people are suffering with colds and flu's, plus the added demands on the NHS. Now with the Cost of Living crisis too which is affecting everyone.

Members are able to apply for assistance through "There for You" direct via the UNISON Website, I found that many of the cases could be resolved by using the online application forms and guidance provided by the There for You team.

Last year gave me the opportunity to attend the Welfare Officer training, as I had not done this for many years, I attended welfare training to refresh my knowledge. I was pleased that the training was very informative and noticed many changes to the process of applying for help through There for You.

This year I will be attending the Regional Council meetings alongside my colleague Richard Garner.

The New Year 2023 will bring many challenges for many of our members, the next few years are going to be difficult as we all try to cope with the increasing cost of living. But remember as a member of Unison you don't have to face these challenges alone, every year Unison offers our low-paid members help in the form of a Winter Fuel Grant and a School Uniform Grant both of which are means tested. Keep a look out for emails from us, as these funds are limited and allocated on a first come first served basis.

Laura-Jane Marchrones



Officer Nominations

At the closing date the following nominations had been received:

Branch Chairperson	Joanne Davies
Vice Chairperson	Kevan O'Dwyer
Branch Secretary	Jan Davies
Branch Treasurer	Robin Grant
Assistant Branch Treasurer	Sandra Rosser
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 (North)	Tracy Finnis
Retired Members Secretary (South)	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)

Luca Goddard

Mandy Stone

Hazel Clatworthy (Green Rep)

Marc Fennessy

Dave Padmore

Jan Robson

Brandon Jones

Anthony Moriarty

Ruth Dymond

Deri View Primary School

Chepstow School

Adult Services

Resources

The Compass Project

Monmouth PTU

Caldicot School

Cleaning Team, Raglan Depot

Refuse, Llanfoist Depot

King Henry VIII School

Capita Symonds

Carwyn Davies

Peter Deidun

Neil Little

Haberdashers Monmouth Schools

None received

Monmouthshire Housing Association

Peter Stephens (Contact only)

The above nominations have been 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



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

Website: www.unisoningwent.org.uk



Talking Therapy

Monmouthshire UNISON is now able to offer members a new Talking Therapies initiative, which is accessed by completing a simple referral form. We can then put you in touch with a counsellor who can offer online or telephone support for issues such as work-related stress, anxiety and depression.



Sessions can be accessed quickly and arranged at a time to suit you. This support is offered free to all Monmouthshire UNISON members.

If you would like to take up this opportunity, please email unisonmon@btconnect.com and a referral form will be sent to you. Once the completed form is received by the office it will be sent to the first available counsellor, who will then contact you directly to arrange mutually convenient sessions.

If you would like us to complete the form for you over the telephone, please call 01291 675502 leaving your name, number and best time to call, and we can call you back to go through this with you.





Monmouthshire UNISON Small Talk (MUST)

At one of 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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(Charity registration number: 1023552 / SC038305)

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Email: thereforyou@unison.co.uk

Website: www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou



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.

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*The range and electric consumption figures mentioned comply with the WLTP test procedure, on the basis of which new vehicles are type approved from 1 September 2018. They may vary depending on actual conditions of use and on different factors such as: vehicle load, accessories fitted (post registration), speed, thermal comfort on board the vehicle, driving style and outside temperature. The charging time depends in particular on the power of the charger on board the vehicle, the charging cable and the type and power of the charging station used. Please contact your Vauxhall Retailer for further information. Correct at time of publication.

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