

Trades Union Congress

South West Regional Council

Unit 6, Aztec Centre, Aztec West, Bristol, BS32 4TD

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Executive

Minutes

Wednesday, 26 February 2025

10.30-13.00

Zoom

In Attendance

Kerry Baigent (UNISON)

Amanda Brown (UNISON)

Simon Crew (Weston & North Som TC)

James Davies (PCS)

Alison Evans (UNISON)

Sadie Fulton (TUC SW)

Val Hampshire (FBU)

Ines Lage (TUC SW)

Jake McLean (GMB)

Liz Payne-Ahmadi (Taunton TC)

Mark Sowden (Unite)

Barry West (RMT)

Kevin Beazer (CWU)

Dave Chapple (TUCJCC)

Hannah David (PCS) in the Chair

Judith Desbonne (Bridgwater TC)

John Fones (UCU)

Levoy Getton (PCS)

Torkwase Holmes (Unite)

Gareth Lowe (Unite)

Hannah Packham (NEU)

Dave Roberts (FBU)

Eric Stone (Unite)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Hannah welcomed delegates to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Sebastian Michnowicz (ASLEF), Zarria Phillips (Bath TC), Joe Savage (Unite), Sarah Swords (WGGB) and Kay Timbrell (USDAW).

2. Minutes of Executive and matters arising - 22 January 2025

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Kerry talked about the Parliamentary reception in January and the disappointing attendance from the South West Labour MPs but thanked TUC South West for organising this event. Kerry has raised the low attendance of MP's with the Labour Regional Director. Ines explained that she had mapped the MP's who said they were attending but didn't arrive and she is chasing individual meetings with the MPs. However, Ines has decided that another event will be planned for regional secretaries

and senior officers to strategise on the best means of connecting with MPs. There a lot of new MPs who don't quite understand trade unions.

3. Minutes of Regional Council - 1 February 2025

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Gareth Lowe discussed Connor's presentation and how fantastic it was.

4. TUC South West Annual Conference 2025

a. Agenda

Ines talked through the agenda, the minor adjustments to account for the motions submitted. She also noted that the AGM is taking place during Ramadan and the adjustments made to account for those observing.

Because of the added costs of guests and speakers invited, the region does not not have enough to adequately fund additional music entertainment beyond that provided by the venue. Positively, it has developed a list of interested artists and performers who are nevertheless keen for the next AGM in 2026.

Hannah asked if we could ask Croyde Bay to remove some of the trellises for the evening to make it more inclusive.

b. Executive nominations

Ines talked about the Executive nominations which had been shared prior to the meeting. For the Black, LGBT and disabled seats, all women nominated will be automatically elected, with a vote to take place for the men. Ines expressed disappointment at only receiving one nomination for the young seat; he will be automatically elected. The committee agreed to accept late nominations to this seat, so that the Executive can better represent younger workers.

5. Motions

Ines shared the motions on the screen. She noted their length, and how some of the policy within the motions are either a stretch to TUC's current policy but to which she is aware are ongoing conversations that unions are campaigning on and may shift at Congress 2025. Ongoing conversations are being had with relevant unions but in the spirit of debate, she is happy to accept all but one.

Various questions were asked: unusual not to see sight of the motions as have always in the past; a request was put in to show the video of the terms of shipbuilding; if motions that are over 300 words could be sent back to the union; motions where the TUC policy is yet to be developed should be allowed for discussion.

Amendments to motions can also be submitted no later than 24 hours before the AGM to allow for the administration of the changes.

6. South West Trades Council AGM – 22 February

Dave Chapple gave a brief report about the Trades Council AGM which had recently taken place. It was the best yet with 49 delegates. The three speakers, Dave Roberts (FBU), Rachel Beaney (new PCS Regional Secretary) and Sharon Battershill all gave fantastic speeches.

7. Unionlearn West

Ines summarised the background to Unionlearn and the loss of national funding that supported this work in 2021. TUC continues to raise the impact of unionlearn with ministers.

In the meantime, different regions have been applying for various, short-term pots of money through their devolved authorities which has brought their own issues. The West of England Mayor expressed support in demonstrating the value of in-work skills led by unions and had set aside money for this to be available to unions. In 2022, TUC submitted an application to what was evidently a fund directed at training providers. This was oversubscribed and inevitably, training providers exclusively secured this money. Another pot of money then became available in Autumn 2024 for unions. However, upon discussion most regional unions felt it was too little in amount, and the time-frame impossible to be able to re-establish ULR networks and run effective projects. This money then became available and after much discussion with TUC colleagues and the Combined Authority, Ines explained that she has submitted an application purely to demonstrate the impact and value of unions in supporting, enabling and ensuring in-work training and skills provision. We will wait to see if TUC is successful. It is incredibly short-term but given the way devolution is heading, and the increasing likelihood that unionlearn may revert back to a regional position, it is important that TUC keep unions in the frame of conversations and possible future funding streams.

8. Employment Rights Bill

Ines shared an update on where the Employment Rights Bill is. The House of Commons Library have published the Bill's progress with its report following the Committee stage. Some 20 sessions took place with the committee deliberating and exploring each clause. There are now over 260 amendments that have been tabled, with the committee agreeing 149, with 11 new clauses and 3 new schedules that are being added to the bill. Ines shared the latest link:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3737>

The union legal officers and General Council Committee are now pouring over this report. They are looking to see how it fits in with the new deal for working people and providing reactions and commentary.

9. Heart Unions Week – 10-16 February

Sadie gave a brief update of the week's events. There were between 10 or 12 events across the South West coordinated by our trades councils, who had a wide range activities. We are also aware of some events in workplaces organised by organisers and lay activists, and unions also led their own campaigns throughout the week.

Events took place in Weston super Mare organised by the Trades Council, Dorchester with UNISON Dorset branch, Torbay Hospital, Taunton Town Centre by Taunton Trade Council, Unite Bristol. Organising, talks about the value of union membership, leafletting, street stalls and demonstrations took place.

10. Women's Committee

An update was given on the planned Reps Connect event on Saturday, 26 April in Exeter which will focus on women's health and safety issues. Ideas include: Shelly Asquith, TUC Health & Safety Officer; PPE for Women; Sexual Harassment, with speakers from Hinkley Point, migrant workers, plus a concerted drive to get more women to sign up as health and safety reps.

Amanda shared ongoing discussions to move the Women's Committee dates. There are also ongoing discussion of organising a Committee event in September. The Committee are also interested in carving out some space at annual conference and would also like some space within the Tolpuddle festival programme.

11. Pensioners Committee

As Colin Winsby, Chair of the TUC South West Pensioners Committee wasn't able to attend today and Jack Gates, Secretary wasn't able to stand in so Ines gave an update on ongoing work. Plans for the pensioners' annual conference and event in November are ongoing with possible topics on: winter fuel payments, Employment rights changes, change to state and private pensions and more.

12. Young Organisers Network

Sadie gave an update on the young organisers network which met a couple of weeks ago; they shared thoughts and ideas on how to increase better youth participation and engagement, and their desire to run some sessions at the festival again. The group also discussed their training and development, and how they can incorporate the Norwegian patrols into this. The TUC office are planning an itinerary for the whole year in conjunction with the group.

Val Hampshire, mentioned that they also struggle to get young member so in 2025 they are holding a young member school in Dorset during the run up to Tolpuddle.

13. Tackling the Far Right and anti-racism

a. Booklet

Ines explained that the booklet is ongoing but hoping to have a design ready for Annual Conference, with plans to coordinate dissemination and rep and activist engagement through events.

b. Press releases

Sadie has been working on press releases about Reform and Conservative MPs consistently voting against the Employment Right Bil, we are also highlighting it in areas where reform would be predicted to win or come very close second in constituencies.

c. SUTR conference

Sadie mentioned there is joint conference coming up, coordinated by stand up to racism and supported by the TUC which is this coming weekend.

James Davies talked about the good work the TUC is doing with Hope not Hate and asked if there will be some training for reps. Kerry mentioned that Unison are exploring the three modules which Hope Not Hate has produced and have asked if they can run this at the UNISON Get Active event and staff conference. It's very important for reps to know how to have those conversations with recognition that some of these conversation also need to be had with reps themselves.

Ines shared awareness of TUC training, which is a five-day intense course but not sure how this is being rolled out; there is a bigger piece of work that is strategically tackling the various aspect of racism in workplaces and in unions, as well as the divisive Far Right narratives in communities.

14. Social Media update

Sadie gave an update on the changing nature of social media and algorithms and how the region will set up a working group to discuss ongoing issues and emerging trends for regional comms leads and officers.

She shared the TUCSW Facebook account had been suspended, and other delegates shared similar experiences. National colleagues recently arranged a conference call with national communications leads to share their current knowledge on how certain platforms are changing and how progressive accounts are being affected and/or can operate in these new arenas. There are some left-wing activists, trade unionists and core media that are leaving, for example, X (formerly Twitter) and moved over to

bluesky, or prioritising other friendlier platforms, but it hasn't necessarily caused audiences to follow.

15. Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival 2025 – 18-20 July

Ines update the meeting about the recent union planning meeting where loads of ideas for workshops and speaking sessions were shared.

Ines mentioned the music line up is virtually complete and about the cheeky joke Sadie is planning on 31 March; ticket sales release date, introduction of youth tickets and tickets prices have all been agreed and supported by unions. Sadie also shared an idea for an Instagram giveaway, possibly taking place in May, to help us reach newer audiences.

16. Campaign, actions and reports - unions and trades councils

Hannah shared that various reports were sent in advance and these have been gratefully received.

- Unite – Gareth Lowe updated that the South West Stagecoach West offer has now been accepted by members.
- GMB - Jake updated the committee on recent campaigns: Appledore Shipyard has now been saved and UK Limited now own it (via a Spanish Wealth Fund), which means a Spanish state-owned shipbuilding manufacturing across the UK. Most wages have been secured for members so the tribunal can be withdrawn. Jake also shared that Devon County Council have notified trade unions that they intend to fire and rehire 823 staff who are in receipt of the essential car users allowance along with cutting other allowances; a lot of those staff are care workers and low paid staff. Offers have been put forward by the Council but members have rejected them. In recent days the council have said the latest offer is the only offer on the table and staff have until 23 March to accept or they will receive termination of employment on 1 July 2025. Work is now ongoing across all three unions to try and resolve this matter, or consider joined up disputes.
- FBU - Dave shared how the the Government have decided to withdraw a rural settlement grant from fire and rescue services. The grant is for shire county brigades that have enhanced travel distances. In Gloucestershire the fire service were looking to impose new terms and conditions on whole time firefighter members there. A roundtable meeting took place which was well attended with the new General Secretary and FBU president also present. There are clear commitments to oppose what appears to be purely a Chief Officer's will.

- NEU – Hannah talked about action which is underway today and again next week at Newquay, Tretheris in Cornwall and at the Voyage Learning Campus in North Somerset. The union’s national indicative ballot over pay and funding opens on the 1st March.
- Trades Councils - Dave mentioned that he had suggested he prepare a report on behalf of trades council for each Executive meeting instead of individual reports.
- Bristol Airport Consultative Committee Report - Simon Crew as the representative on this Committee updated the Executive on the latest changes at the airport. Simon feels that the airport expansion is going to be raised again in the next few months. A couple of months ago there was an extraordinary meeting of the consultative committee to discuss the master plan. Ongoing community tensions persist.

17. Any Other Business

a. TUC National Black Workers’ Conference – union observer

Three nominations for a union observer on behalf of TUC South West have been received. An online ballot took place and Sharon Foster was elected with 8 votes, Levoy 6 votes and Olanrewaju 4 votes.

No nominations were received for the TUC South West Observer to the National LGBT conference so we will re-open this again.

b. Bristol Equality Charter – seeking a TUC representative

TUC south West have been approached by the Bristol Equality Charter team to see if we would like to send a TUC South West representative. The group raises the profile of equalities within the Bristol.

Gareth Lowe offered to represent the Executive if no-one else came forward. Ines will find out the timescale and email out with more information.