

Staffing Proposal

Introduction

The Unite LE1111 Housing Workers Branch is asking members to agree an increase to the branch levy on subs of £1 per month to enable the branch to hire vital additional staffing resources for around three days per week (with on-costs). The increase will not be applied to those working less than 10 hours per week, or on reduced subs rates due to being on unpaid sick leave, maternity, etc.

For six months to 5th March 2015, the branch has hired a Casework Officer on a temporary contract to deal with a short-term shortage of lay companions. While this has supported an important area of our work through a difficult period, we need a longer-term staff member to work more strategically on advancing our branch's work in the housing sector, helping individual shops to become more self-sufficient. We believe that our Branch's track record demonstrates that we have the necessary skills and strategic vision to develop an unprecedented fight back through the mobilising and organising approach. This is primarily outlined in our Annual Report, March 2015.

Background

We are a large, dynamic and campaigning branch, with multiple employers. The branch meets monthly and the branch committee also hold separate monthly meetings. Through these meetings, and through supplementary training and discussion sessions, we have been able to disseminate the mobilising and organising approach amongst reps, leading to an unprecedented number of lively and successful disputes. We have worked with Regional Officers, our Regional Secretary, our National Officer, Unite Community, and community based grass-roots campaigns to extend our reach beyond the immediate membership. Nonetheless, we have only scratched the surface of what would be possible with greater resources.

Currently we only have one person, our Assistant Branch Secretary, paid via honorarium one day per week to organise the monthly branch and branch committee meetings, although like many branch committee members, our Assistant Branch Secretary also takes on a large amount of other work, leading on communications such as the newsletters, reps emails, social media and also assisting in finance work and organising campaigns. We have one other member of the Branch Committee, who is not in full-time employment. All others are workplace representatives and lay activists.

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The Proposal

We seek to utilise the income from increasing the branch levy to recruit an Organiser. This worker would operate intensively at one or two key workplaces at any given time, working with existing workplace reps or recruiting new reps if there are none, to help build an effective team of largely self-sufficient activists who are schooled in the organising and mobilising approach. This work has already begun in Family Mosaic, Look Ahead, Metropolitan Housing Trust, Peabody, Thames Valley Housing Association, and Centrepoint. The wider Branch Committee has also supported campaigns where there have been reps groups, such as St Mungos Broadway, the HCA, One Housing Group, Look Ahead and Equinox, but where campaigns have developed that needed additional resources and support. This work is primarily undertaken by the Branch Chair, Secretary and Assistant Branch Secretary, supported by other Committee members, but has been more *ad hoc* than we would wish, due to other commitments.

Additional duties that the branch worker might be able to help with include preparation of the quarterly newsletter, maintaining the website, liaison with the press, fundraising, and finance work. The post would therefore require a person with a track record of organising, but with strong communication and administration skills.

The Branch would use the additional levy income to cover salary, employer's NIC, pension contributions, mobile phone, travel and incidental expenses. The worker might be found a workspace at Moreland Street, or may work from home with equipment provided by the Branch. The post would be externally advertised on the many free jobs websites, including those specialising in trade union work. The Branch Committee would be responsible for hiring the worker, but day-to-day line management would be provided by the Branch Secretary with back up from the Branch Chair, or other Branch Committee members with delegated responsibility as necessary.

LE1111 Branch Committee
05/04/15