

UNISON

# Branch Resources Review: Supporting our Branches

Draft Proposals - January 2021

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## 1. Introduction

This paper sets out the list of proposals under consideration by the UNISON Branch Resources Review (BRR) working group of 24 lay members. These suggestions emerged following a survey of UNISON branches in early 2020. The key findings of the survey were that branches needed more time, more resources and more funding (in that order). The proposals being considered for National Delegate Conference 2021 are designed to meet these three priorities. See Table 1 below for relevance.

After the survey, the BRR then commissioned BritainThinks to conduct in-depth and independent interviews with fifteen branch officers to explore and understand the challenges branches face and what kind of support and resources would be most helpful to them.

The Review Group are very keen to hear your views on whether these proposals are the right ones.

Do the proposals address the questions posed by Motion 126 (included in the appendices section) passed in 2019? Do any of the proposals present specific challenges to members in your area, Region, your Service Group, your Self Organised Group?

Despite losing six months to the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 the review is determined to bring proposals to NDC 2021 and has been enjoying receiving feedback.

## 2. Branch Resources Review - Proposals

Table 1: List of possible proposals and relevance to Branch survey priorities

The table below is a judgement on how different proposals can assist Branches and illustrates how the review has attempted to address all three priorities.

**Key**

- T – more Time
- RS – more Regional Support
- F – more Funding

	<b>Proposals</b>	T	RS	F
1	Branch funding formula 2021			x
2	Branch Support and Organising Fund	x	x	x
3	CaseWeb System (Nationwide roll-out and easier access)	x	x	x
4	National Procurement Offer to Branches	x		x
5	Online Meetings	x		x
6	Conference Services and Timetabling	x	x	x
7	RMS Upgrade	x	x	x
8	Branch Service Portal	x	x	
9	Bargaining Support (Improving access and awareness of this resource)	x	x	
10	Online Branch Expenses Module (inside OLBA)	x	x	x
11	Code of Good Branch Practice (Update)	x	x	
12	Facility Time Strategy	x	x	x
13	Organising School		x	
14	Affiliations			x
15	BRR Implementation Group	N/A		

### 3. The affordability tests

In January 2021 the proposals in this document will need to be tested against the financial envelope of what the union can afford going forward. This will involve an assessment of what can be absorbed within existing budgets, existing resource re-allocation and what new costs are one off capital investments and what costs are recurring every year going forward. The process may result in proposals being adjusted to be more or less generous and/or staged over time.

No proposal is agreed unless all proposals are agreed as part of the final package to present to the NEC and Conference.

It is proposed that if the motion is carried that a small lay member implementation group is set up to oversee the final process to introduce the final measures.

## 4. Have your say

The Chair of the review and UNISON President, Josie Bird has presented at a variety of engagement events, including Regional Councils and Regional Committees, sharing progress information and updating activists on what is happening with the Review. When available Josie has also been keen to share insights into the types of proposals being considered by the group. These have been valuable opportunities to hear first-hand from activists their thoughts, concerns and hopes for the review. Some Regions have chosen to host BRR dedicated events and additionally the proposals have featured at a variety of Service Group Executive meetings as well as at the January NEC Committees.

This type of engagement event will continue, all the way up to National Delegate Conference, 2021. See Table 2 below for example upcoming events.

Table 2: List of some of the forthcoming engagement activities

<b>Date</b>	<b>Region</b>
26 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• South West Regional Council</li></ul>
tbc	BRR Team Webinar – consultation event open to all branches
2 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wales Regional Council</li></ul>
4 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• West Midlands Regional Council</li></ul>
6 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scotland Regional Council</li><li>• East Midlands Regional Council</li></ul>
9 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eastern Regional Council</li></ul>
13 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yorkshire &amp; Humberside Regional Council</li><li>• North West Regional Council</li></ul>
17 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greater London Regional Council</li></ul>
27 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• South East Regional Council</li></ul>

## 5. Format of the proposals

In the box below, the text on the right-hand side provides an example of one of the proposals. All of the proposals are presented in the same way, and a key has been offered below on the left with some explanatory information.

- 1 Proposal Number – the proposals have been listed strictly in alphabetical order
- 2 Proposal Title
- 3 List of UNISON Committees being formally consulted, those in bold text and marked with an “\*” might have a direct interest in the proposal discussed
- 4 Where available, information relating to the cost and organisational impact of the proposal is provided
- 5 Quotations, where available a selection of relevant quotes from the Spring 2020 BRR Survey of Branches
- 6 The main text of the proposal
- 7 The possible recommendation to NDC, this text will mirror the action proposed in the text of the final BRR motion

- 1 7.      2 **RMS Upgrade**
- 3 **Committee:** **D&O\*** | **FRMC\*** | PDCC | International | Staffing | StMC
- 4 **Financial/Organisational Impact:** Cost £2.5m capital investment plus some on-going costs
- 5
  - “WARMS is not user friendly and is often incorrect “
  - “An easier system to use than WARMS to communicate with members would be a good resource”
- 6 There have been significant issues for branches with the old membership system; it is understood that a robust, fit for purpose, membership system is needed that will meet all requirements under new GDPR regulations; one that is user friendly for both regions and branches and ends the RMS and WARMS divide. The introduction of the system known as Merlin will not be cheap but without it, UNISON could face significant fines against if GDPR is breached...
- 7 **Recommendation:**  
Roll out the upgrade of the RMS membership system to end the RMS/WARMS divide

# 7. Draft Proposals



## 1. Branch Funding Formula 2021

**Committee:** D&O\* | FRMC\* | PDCC | International | **Staffing\*** | StMC |

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** Significant. Details TBC

- *“Any new funding formula needs take into account the additional issues and fragmentation in the community sector.”*
- *“This review needs to recognise [the] difference [between] traditional single employer local government branch structures and the massively disproportionate costs in covering multiple private employers.”*

The initial proposal is to work within the current envelope of money set by the 2001 formula agreed by Conference but to redistribute the available money in a more equitable fashion. Proposals are still being formulated but include considering different options on the standard branch entitlement (currently 20% retention), including extra entitlements for representing members in multiple employers and for low reserves, changing the national standard for reserves per member. Motion 126 passed in 2019 had temporary and interim changes to the formula that meant the union spent over £2m extra in 2020 in branch support. This will be considered and where this extra money is recycled in the review, into the formula or other benefits to branches will be made clear at the end of the process.

There are, for example, different ways to make the multiple employer factor more suitable to the situation on the ground, e.g. extending upper end of scale up to 400 employers, make the scale more generous and starting eligible employers at four or three UNISON members present rather than the current five.

The review is also considering adjusting the current restrictions to extra entitlements above the standard 20% for those Branches with very high reserves. Surplus reserves have grown in some branches over the last 10 years.

The review has been using 2019 (and earlier) branch financial data for the formula modelling. 2020 due to the massive impact of the COVID 19 pandemic is not a typical year in so many ways.

The formula currently transfers a minimum of 0.5% (sometimes more) of income to the Regional Pool every year this will need to be adapted and amended for proposed new and more substantial Branch Support and Organising Fund (see next item).

### **Recommendation:**

To implement an improved funding formula for branches.

## 2. Branch Support and Organising Fund

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** Very Significant. Approx. £3.2m pa if 2% option selected.

- *“The union recruits in areas with little density as a policy. We need to represent those members but do not have reps there. We need ... help with case work along with organising and recruiting.”*
- *“We need to look after our activists/reps and branch officers please. I recommend extra support from regional/national ...maybe one day a week to help cover cases/representation, organising/recruitment and reps/activists training. thank you”*

A new Branch Support and Organising Fund which brings together the best of both the Regional Pool and Fighting Fund. The Fund, under regional lay control, would support national, regional and branch organising objectives and be transparent about funding decisions and expenditure. It would be significantly bigger than current Regional Pool (0.5%).

The Fund would strengthen organising capacity at branch and regional level as well as provide enhanced options to support basic representation and casework for members. Branches would bid for a variety of support and this would need to be as easy and transparent as possible.

### **Recommendation:**

Establish a Branch Support and Organising Fund

## 3. CaseWeb System (nationwide roll-out and more affordable)

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** to be confirmed. From zero to £700,000 pa if completely free. NEC subsidy options also being developed in January 2021.

- *“We are in need of a case management system to support Reps with representation and case work, but the case management system offered is too expensive for a small branch like ours.”*
- *“Current activists are so overwhelmed with case work there's insufficient time to recruit new activists.”*

The Review is considering how to encourage uptake of CaseWeb. Advantages to everyone joining CaseWeb include:

- One system used by the whole of UNISON – all information in one place, so can produce stats and monitor trends in casework.
- Easy to use and works on any device, with live link to membership database.
- Escalate cases to regional or national office in one click
- Very secure – access via MyUNISON with password
- Avoiding sending personal data via email or post. Compliant with General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).

**Recommendation:** Tbc – mandatory/free/Cheaper and improved access to CaseWeb system.

#### 4. National Procurement Offer to Branches

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** Small (£ tbc), but better options for branches

- *“Support and resources for employed staff, better procurement nationally rather than branches having to source locally. support over matters relating to owning and leasing property.”*

The Branch Resources Review recommends that a service is offered to branches including IT support services, fully managed branch properties, and centralised purchasing and contracts offer. This approach would give economy of scale savings, save branches time doing these things themselves, and achieve ethical and environmental standards more easily. This would include checklists and approved supplier lists.

All proposals are based on voluntary Branch participation and no compulsion.

#### **Recommendation:**

Establish a new procurement offer to help branches purchase goods and services.

#### 5. Online Meetings

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** Estimated savings of between £0.5m to £1m pa depending on final recommendations. Plus, time savings for lay activists. Regional meeting savings could be earmarked for new Branch Support and Organising Fund. All funds to be loughed back to support branches

- *“travel time to Cardiff where all meetings are held...significantly [hampers attendance} ...[and] inclusion in these meetings.”*
- *“Zoom meetings should supplement or be blended with union democratic process- particularly regionally.”*

The proposal is to investigate the reduction of the number of physical meetings. Also, learning the lessons of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic.

In response to the survey of branches, in which branches told us they need more time. Holding virtual meetings could save not only time but also money at all levels of the union.

Moreover, holding virtual meetings may also improve accessibility to under- represented parts of the membership meeting our commitment to proportionality and fair representation. Reasonable adjustments would need to be supported and access to IT equipment for low paid members.

Also, a question to be considered is what facility time are we giving back to branches and regions by running virtual meetings? Online meetings will not only meet UNISON’s environmental and climate change agenda and commitments.

All national and regional committees after the pandemic should offer hybrid on-line and physical attendance at all meetings. The group is considering a one in four a year is a complete on-line

meeting recommendation to all national and regional bodies to make sure savings are realised to help branches. National Disabled Members Committee and some other national committees prefer hybrid options for all meetings without a fixed quota due to the length of their agendas and that they can make sufficient savings throughout the year, especially smaller sub-committees.

**Recommendation:** *To support hybrid and on-line meetings at all levels of the union (details TBC) to generate funds to help branches, widening participation and meet our environmental goals*

## **6. Conference Services and Timetabling**

- *“With regards to conferences/seminars etc I personally found it very difficult to access information on [responsibilities] for booking [accommodation] and travel as every event seems different.”*
- *“with us being remote attending conferences...often means being out the office for an additional day to travel”*

All UNISON branches to be invited to use a centralised and pooled booking system for their travel, accommodation and other sundries pertaining to UNISON rulebook conferences. Plus participate in a Reasonable Adjustments pool to help share and cover the costs for disabled members attending conferences.

Additionally, this proposal includes the suggestion of clustering similar sized conferences one after the other in different times in the year to save time and money for the union. The focusing on the formal decision-making areas of conference – like motions, speeches and reports – would be maintained and no time lost for lay democracy. This could maximise the time we use at conference to strengthen our democracy. This could potentially take the annual UNISON conference schedule from 36 to 30 days in total. Savings from this option could be £250,000 pa from 2024 but would need to be carefully planned.

However, given on-going COVID 19 pandemic and the lessons to be learnt, it is recommended that a lay member group from NEC, SOGs, young members, retired members and service groups be set up to review the feasibility or not of running on-line motion-based conferences after the pandemic and also the other conference related proposals in the final report.

National Delegate Conference (NDC) should continue to be held in a physical location annually once social distancing and other pandemic related restrictions are lifted.

### **Recommendation:**

*Start to make changes and improvements to UNISON conferences (details TBC) and establish a lay member group of SOGs and service group representatives to review these measures and options for on-line conferences;*

## **7. RMS Upgrade**

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** Cost £2.5m capital investment plus some on-going costs

- *“WARMS is not user friendly and is often incorrect “*
- *“An easier system to use than WARMS to communicate with members would be a good resource”*

A robust, fit for purpose, membership system is needed that will meet all requirements under new GDPR regulations; one that is user friendly for both regions and branches and ends the RMS and WARMS divide. The introduction of the system known as Merlin will not be cheap but without it, UNISON could face significant fines against if GDPR is breached.

**Recommendation:**

Roll out the upgrade of the RMS membership system to end the RMS/WARMS divide

**8. Branch Service Portal**

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** tbc/None from NEC Budget so far

- *“The latest page on the Unison website which puts all briefing notes and guidance in one place is really useful. We need to develop national templates in some areas, such as NJC Payline negotiations.”*
- *“Branches, activists and members need accessible tailored information on the main UNISON website and exploring new digital communication, such as apps.”*
- *“We need more information on how to communicate the benefits of membership to low paid workers off site”.*

The proposal is to work collaboratively with the Communications Digital team to create a central online environment where branch officers can access all information that may be required in the process of running a branch. This will include links to available guides, forms, training course, templates, bargaining guidance, logos etc.

Prototype link: <https://branchservice.unison.org.uk/>

Whilst the long-term plan is for UNISON to continue to upgrade our website and digital presence for member and activist benefit, a short-term solution will address the urgent request for support in one place from senior branch officers and to ensure a professional and consistent approach to running a branch.

**Recommendation:**

- Set up a Branch Service Portal as a web-based hub to help run a branch.

**9. Bargaining Support (Improving access and awareness of this resource)**

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** None identified

- *“More guidance on private companies (especially when it is nationally driven, but little advice given) National strategy for SODEXO needs to be looked at”*

- *“Bargaining guides are very useful”*

The Bargaining Support Unit (BSU), based at the UNISON Centre, offer excellent advice and guidance to do with local bargaining. The review group recognise that this service would be beneficial to more branches if the BSU offer was more widely known and utilised. And advice can be accessed by contacting Bargaining Support through [bsg@unison.co.uk](mailto:bsg@unison.co.uk)

The challenge for the review group is finding ways to publicise this. This is mainly a communication challenge and then to shape the service going forward to meet branch needs for local bargaining outside the national agreements.

**Recommendation:**

Deliver and promote an enhanced Bargaining Support Service to branches

## **10. Online Branch Expenses Module (inside OLBA)**

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** to be confirmed

OLBA is UNISON’s tool for managing branch finances and is an invaluable tool for Branch Treasurers. An expenses module will be available shortly which will simplify and improve the efficient processing of expenses of Branch activists doing branch business (and within HMRC rules). This latest module update includes an on-line system for treasurers to receive on-line claims and pay expenses to lay activists by BACS transfer rather than cheque. This development will help both lay activists and Branch Treasurers. The review is aware some branches pay expenses by BACS already.

**Recommendation:**

Provide an online branch expenses system to help Treasurers.

## **11. The Code of Good Branch Practice (Update)**

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** None to NEC Budget.

The Code of Good Branch practice is a core UNISON document that has the backing of UNISON rule. Its purpose is to guide branches and branch officers on how they should meet the requirements placed upon them by UNISON’s rules, and to give guidance and advice on the many practical, constitutional, organisational and procedural issues that confront branches.

The Code of Good Branch Practice is being updated by a group of staff based at UNISON Centre and from the Regions under auspices of NEC D&O Committee. Updates recommended by the BRR group are:

- Simplifying and shortening AGM notice periods and branch election procedures
- Devising a refreshed set of model branch standing orders for on-line meetings

- Encouragement of small branches of sharing resources.

The proposal is for smaller branches (where appropriate) to share administrative functions on a voluntary basis: buildings, equipment, facilities, (part time) staff and case workers. This proposal is about thinking creatively about branches sharing resources and thus saving time and money and putting some examples in the Code to encourage further on a voluntary basis.

**Recommendation:**

- Update the Code of Good Branch Practice in three areas above.

**12. Facility Time Campaign/Strategy**

**Financial/Organisational Impact:** No financial cost identified.

- *“Workloads are so high we don't have time to do the Branch work we need over a number of employers. Main employer not happy about facility time for other employers or conferences/regional meetings.”*
- *“Lack of facility time to be actively involved in union democracy such as attending Regional council, NDC and other meetings is proving to be near of impossible.”*

The importance of facility time is well known but was also identified in the response to the branch survey as being vital for branch activists do their job. From 2010 to the 2016 Trade Union Act there have been specific attacks on public sector facility time from the Conservative Party, Tax-Payers Alliance and Westminster Government. Given the value of facility time and the positive role unions have played during the pandemic there is an opportunity to increase it after the end of the pandemic.

The full BRR working group felt that there should be a new national facility time strategy to help branches win increases at a local level but also where possible through national collective bargaining.

**Recommendation:**

Establish a refreshed facility time strategy and campaign

**13. Organising School**

**Financial Impact:** tbc (but already in existing budgets)

- *“Members and activists are sometimes put off attending training, Committees, briefings and other meetings as they are mainly held in the Regional Office. The travel time is too much when facility time is challenging. Branches rely on keen enthusiastic reliable activists to run it but, they are difficult to obtain. No resilience in Branches either. They are too often reliant on the Branch Secretary, so they collapse if that individual leaves.”*

- *“More regional/national support and training for senior officers in day to day running of branches - e.g. training on managing office staff and steward wellbeing, support from full time officers with mandated requirements, database of information and guidance such as sending delegates to conference”*

The Branch Resources Review recommends that arrangements for a national organising or leadership school organised by LAOS and led by UNISON NEC and Regions are confirmed for after the pandemic in order to grow the number of skilled and experienced reps and stewards in our branches.

**Recommendation:**

Confirm arrangements for regular Organising School events.

#### **14. Affiliations**

Financial Impact: tbc

We are affiliated to many organisations from the TUC to the Labour Research Department (LRD) to Cuba Solidarity Campaign. The NEC PDCC and International Committee oversee and review these affiliations, and nothing is renewed automatically. All require the organisation to contact UNISON every year and for a written report to go to the Committee or be approved under chairs action for renewal.

We recommend that the service providers style affiliations (such LRD, Institute of Employment Rights and Local Government Information Unit) should be better promoted as branch resources. Further that a list of campaign groups is produced that the NEC affiliates to, or financially supports, so that Branches and Regions can make informed decisions about whether they chose to affiliate or donate or not.

**Recommendation:**

Publish a list of all UNISON affiliations to help branches and regions make informed decisions

#### **15. BRR Implementation Group**

**Recommendation:**

Establish a small lay member group from both the NEC and Regions to oversee the implementation of the agreed actions of this report and motion.



# 8. Appendices

## 126.RESOURCING OUR BRANCHES - A UNISON PRIORITY

Carried as Amended: 126.2

Conference notes that UNISON's branches are of key importance in the provision of support for members and their responsibilities are ever increasing. The reduction of employers in national bargaining arrangements and the significant fragmentation of the workforce point to this trend.

Many branches now deal with hundreds of employers, receiving no consolidated facility time and no additional resource.

Conference notes that the topic of branch resourcing has been debated for many years but there is now a pressing need to ensure branches have sufficient stable and sustainable resource levels.

As demands on the whole union increase, consideration now needs to be given to how the union as a whole is funded, so that branches can be resourced in a way that better meets the union's objectives and the needs of members with particular reference to direct organisational support for branches.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to ensure:

- 1) That a review of activity and expenditure at all levels of the union – national, regional and branch-level – is conducted to enable the prioritisation of union activity and expenditure with a view to redirecting additional resource to branches. This review will ensure that all UNISON spending, including the regional pool allocation, reflects the union's agreed objectives, is based on sound financial governance and ensures the highest levels of financial probity;
- 2) This review will be lay-member led and will commence immediately following Conference and be completed within two years. The review will be conducted by a review group comprising 12 members of the National Executive Council and one representative from each region;
- 3) Until completion of the review and agreement by Conference, an amended scheme of funding will be effective from 1st January 2020, based on the following principles for increasing branch funding:
  - a) For branches with reserves at or greater than £16 per member, the current funding formula will continue to apply. No branch will receive a lower level of funding than under the current funding formula;
  - b) Branches with reserves less than £16 per member will receive an increase in the standard entitlement of total annual subscription income from 20% to 25%;
  - c) If a branch holds reserves under £16 per member, and an increase in the standard entitlement would take the branch above £16 per member in reserves, that branch will only receive that portion of the increase in the standard entitlement which would take them up to £16 per member in reserves.
- 4) That all additional percentage enhancements for branches with reserves below £16 per full member at the annual point of calculation will remain unchanged,

except for 'Number 12: Branches with Multiple Employers' which will be amended effective from January 1st 2020 as follows:

- i) The number of employers relevant for the calculation will be employers which are defined as independent legal entities which have 5 or more UNISON members;
  - ii) Additional entitlements will follow these amended bandings:
    - A) More than 5 and less than 20: 0.5%;
    - B) More than 19 and less than 35: 1.0%;
    - C) More than 34 and less than 50: 1.5%;
    - D) More than 49 and less than 100: 2.0%;
    - E) More than 99 and less than 150: 2.5%;
    - F) More than 149 and less than 200: 3.0%;
    - G) More than 199 and less than 250: 3.5%;
    - H) More than 249 and less than 300: 4.5%;
    - I) More than 299 and less than 350: 5.0%;
    - J) More than 349 and less than 400: 5.5%;
    - K) More than 399: 6.0%.
  - iii) If a branch holds reserves under £16 per member, and an increase due to their multiple employer entitlement would take the branch above £16 per member in reserves, that branch will only receive that portion of the increase which would take them up to £16 per member in reserves;
- 5) To align with the current branch funding formula, for branches with less than 501 members an absolute reserves base of £8,000 will be used instead of £16 per member;
  - 6) That the Activity-Based Budgeting system of budget 'top-ups' agreed at National Delegate Conference in 2016 will be deleted, in favour of the funding increase set out in points 3-5 above.
  - 7) That the Regional Pool, under lay member control at Regional level, can continue to provide additional funding allocations to branches in support of UNISON's organising agenda. During the period of the amended scheme of funding which will be effective from 1 January 2020 (outlined at point 3 above), the total funding allocation to the Regional Pool will be protected at the 2019 level of funding allocation to the Regional Pool.

## Executive summary of the survey results

The first findings from the UNISON branch resources review have now been released, giving a clearer picture of just what branches and activists need to be able to do their jobs as well as possible.

The review was triggered by a motion at the 2019 national delegate conference, and will examine the branch funding regime and how resources are allocated to branches. The review, which is being led by 24 lay members of the union, will present proposals to national delegate conference in 2021.

In February 2020, an online survey was issued to branch secretaries of all branches, with the questions both reflecting the existing UNISON *Code of Good Branch Practice* and emerging from discussions between the lay members.

The union had a total of 843 branches at the time of the survey and responses from 357 branches represented a response rate of over 42%. Response rates varied between regions and between service groups. The response rate was highest in Northern Ireland, closely followed by the Northern region. The local government and health service groups provided the highest response rates.

Even after a decade of austerity, branches that did respond felt that they had received the support that they needed to fulfil the main elements of the *Code of Good Branch Practice*. However, this is now felt to be under threat, with branch officers facing increased pressure, so the review is timely. Most branches scored UNISON highly in its support for key branch functions.

Branch activists were also asked what activities they would like to do more of. In order, branches replied:

- recruiting and retaining members;
- educating members and developing activists;
- supporting members with representation and casework.

There were three distinct areas where branch activists felt that they needed help. These were:

- more time – including facility time;
- more support from the region;
- more financial support.

UNISON president and chair of the review Josie Bird noted: “It can be seen that branches that have more fixed costs, such as property, have been under more financial pressure in the last decade, combined with services and members having been hit by cuts as well.”

The feedback from the survey highlighted that communications was an issue for many branches – a factor raised by branches in Cymru/Wales, Eastern, Greater London, the North West and the South East.

Participation in the wider union democracy was also an issue raised by branches in the Greater London and South East regions.

The last part of the survey was dedicated to free text answers. Comments here requested assistance with IT, training, GDPR issues, information about how the union works, free or cheaper CASEWeb system and social media training.

Other issues raised included access to local legal advice, plus accessible, tailored information for branches on the UNISON website.

Listening to branches, it's clear that what is wanted is more support and not necessarily more funding (at least in the first instance). It has provided a useful starting point for the work of the branch resources review group, which will develop firm proposals as next year's NDC approaches.

In-depth interviews with 15 branch officers from around the country took place in October, providing further guidance to the review group.

Summing up, Ms Bird said: "The overarching feedback from the survey was that motion 126 was an opportunity to not only make branch support fit for purpose but fit for the future too. We are one union and at our best when we work together."

[Full survey results available here](#)

## Branch Resources Review - Engagement activities 2020/2021

A brief snapshot of some of the engagement activities Josie and the BRR team have undertaken in recent months, along with info of where information has been published online...

November	
3	Regional Committee Meeting Scotland – BRR Report
10	Regional Committee Meeting Wales – BRR Report
12	Regional Committee Meeting Yorkshire & Humberside – BRR Report
30	Regional Committee Meeting South East – BRR Report

December	
1	Regional Committee Meeting North West – BRR Report
3	Activist Digital story
4	BRR Update Email to Regional Secretaries/ Regional Convenors
4	Regional Committee Meeting Northern – BRR Report
8	Regional Committee Meeting South West – BRR Report
18	BRR Update Email to Regional Secretaries/ Regional Convenors

January	
6	Service Group Executive – BRR Report
8	BRR Branch Q&A – West Midlands
12	BRR Branch Q&A Northern Ireland
12	BRR Q&A to the Full NEC
13	Development & Organising Committee – BRR Report
13	Policy Development & Campaigns Committee – BRR Report
14	International Committee – BRR Report
14	Services to Member Committee – BRR Report
15	BRR Q&A – Equality Liaison Committee
20	Joint Officers – BRR Report