Branch meeting minutes

Thursday 10 September 2026, 6.30pm in-person in Croydon Town Hall and by Zoom

1. **Present:** there were 9 people in the room and 6-9 over the evening on Zoom. *In the room*: Branch Secretary Pete Raven, Branch President Maggie Hughes, Branch Officers Matthew Connolly and Adam Hughes, plus 5 branch members; *on Zoom*: Branch Officers Megan Dobney and Jack Ryan, plus 4-7 branch members during the evening.

2. **Introductions:** the Branch President Maggie Hughes introduced K19 reps in the room and online.

3. **Apologies:** none

4. **Minutes of last meeting 4 June 2026:** agreed with no matters arising.

5. **Congress Delegates** Branch Secretary Peter Raven (PR) stated if interested in going contact him, and motions in by 27 November for discussion at the December Branch Meeting. PR explained what a motion is to perhaps try change something in law. PR indicated we had 2/3 motions last year. Adam had put forward a neuro disability motion which he explained Cardiff branch took the lead on as was a "composite" motion. Adam explaining composite meaning similar motions merged. Chris (not present) had raised a motion for recognition of Chinese Seafarers who were treated poorly at end of Second World War. Adam indicated new delegates are supported by Education Department and need to be available especially if moving a motion. Noted that new speakers moving a motion are warmly welcomed by delegates.
6. **Guest Speaker Nadine Houghton Southern Region Secretary** She was glad to be present remembering involvement with K19 in her early days. NH joins Southern region at time of "6 months turmoil" citing staff on strike, branch secretaries on strike and "long way" to resolve these issues. NH said membership has declined and not recruited to replace.
   NH indicated part of that recovery is "back to basics" invest time to focus on "GMB at Work" huge opportunities now new Prime Minister in place.
   NH cited new employment legislation coming in and including access to workplace for unions. NH gave example of being able to get into a Lidl and recruit. NH also explained about simplicity to get union recognition plus allowing electronic balloting.
   In response to a question NH indicated need more woman to "speak up" as majority of union is women "we are fighting the injustice to women" and "women coming through the organisation because they are leaders". NH indicated when Merton Greenwich Branch marched and about 700 mainly women shut down the Hight Street.

In response to a questions about why had Southern Region failed in recent years. NH indicated a “collapse of leadership” “people competing for power in a power vacuum”. NH indicated that GMB has historic cultural problems, old organisation, an 1899 organisation. GMB grew out of “working class men” “culture not fit for the world today”. NH indicated it is “like turning a tanker”.

To a question as what could an individual member do. NH indicated come to a Branch Meeting as they have today. Speak to Branch Secretary and Branch Chair about more involvement.

To a question about Unionline, NH indicated it was to be decided if we continue with a legal organisation supported by GMB and CWU or use panel firms. PR explained about Unionline being a not-for-profit structure, over years problems and a lot of successes.

A member asked about the absence of a Southern Region Legal Officer. PR indicated we had someone in place but did not work out. A member commented that not just about retention of members also retention of staff.

Branch Chair indicated lots of complaints from members about Unionline and that solicitors do not remember they are talking with ordinary people and need to adjust how they speak.

A member asked about the call for to be accompanying reps. NH indicated 300 responses and need to set up training and assess skills set. A member asked how NH saw that structure working with existing reps. NH believed it needed “a funding structure and working together”. NH indicated we need to work this through that if branch asked for help would be “charged back to branch”. NH cited cover falling to officers and that needs to be redirected to accompanying representatives. Member asked about accompanying reps leaving after training. NH countered with need for “mentoring and support”

Chair thanked NH for her contribution.

7. **Equalities Update** The Chair of the Equalities Committee was present and updated Branch on activities and to encourage increased involvement of members. CH gave example for Windrush being in news but the Cubans who also came just ignored.
8. **Branch Update**
    - Branch Secretary spoke about recognition for BID Foods. Then shared about and the restructure at Zophones leading to 100 redundancies. Zophones looking to move production to Vietnam as nearer China and is currently at consultation. Branch Secretary counselled do not blame the 3rd World, commented this is the company moving work to cheap labour to boost their “bonuses for managers”.
    - The Branch is losing 50 members a month, however Branch Secretary when speaking to leavers, as is required to do, the members happy with team. Membership at 7,619.
    - Branch Funds: Income £7,400 and £30k at bank however need £40k to support any required strike pay.
9. **Any Other Business**
    - Member suggested we need to reach out to young members.
    - Member asked about being a delegate at Congress as had missed start of meeting. Branch Secretary asked member to speak to him.
    - Dates of Congress – 1 to 6 June 2027 in Brighton.
10. **Date of next Branch Meeting** Thursday 3 December at 6.30 in Croydon Town Hall and online