



Branch Secretary Handbook



Contents

Introduction	3
Being a Branch secretary	4
What is the branch secretary’s role?.....	4
What are your key tasks? (2-3 Hours/Month)	4
Where do I go to for help and advice?.....	9
Appendices:	10
A. LIEC officers email addresses:	10
B. Model branch rules.....	11
C. Model branch standing orders.....	13
D. Model Invites to Branch Meetings	18
E. Labour International Rules 2021.....	20
F. Labour Party Rulebook 2020	20

Ctrl/Click on the headings to screen down to the section you want

Introduction

Branch secretaries play a very important role in all Labour Party constituencies (CLP's), but they are especially important in Labour International (LI) because our members are so widely geographically dispersed. Your branch may cover a town, a whole city, region, country and in some cases whole continents.

The Branch secretary is the members' main contact with the Labour International CLP and the party and is the effective base of campaigning and election work. S/he is the glue that keeps the branch together. As part of the branch executive the secretary helps to build and maintain an organisation that people want to belong to and one which campaigns effectively and wins elections.

Branch secretaries are vital to the health of LI. Overall your role is to contact new members and encourage them to be active, to communicate on behalf of fellow branch officers with the membership and to ensure the smooth running of the party in liaison with the Labour International Executive Committee (LIEC).

A strong and dynamic Branch Secretary can ensure an outward-looking and vibrant local branch. The secretary needs to be a strong team worker, a good communicator, an enabler, show initiative and be able to juggle many responsibilities.

This sounds like a tall order, but there are comrades who can support you in this role.

This handbook is to help you carry out your role as Branch Secretary. You will find examples of model rules and standing orders, and copies of the Labour International and Labour Party Rules.

Being a Branch secretary

What is the branch secretary's role?

The Branch Secretary works with the Branch Chair and the LIEC officers to plan a whole year of activity in your local area, making sure that your branch is doing as much campaigning as possible. You will head up the communications strategy in your branch and work with the Chair to make meetings fair, interesting and inclusive.

What are your key tasks? (2-3 Hours/Month)

1. Help to make the branch transparent and accessible to all:

- ❖ **Welcome new members**, ensuring your branch is open and friendly, well organised and an open and fair place where members feel involved and have a stake in the direction of the branch. Think about appointing branch captains or buddies who can help with member engagement work and to welcome new members in your branch
- ❖ Together with the branch executive officers, **ensure that branch meetings are accessible**. For LI this may mean holding meetings at venues that are easy to reach for all, and at times when most members can attend. This will usually mean holding meetings in the evening or at weekends. It may mean moving the venue around. This is especially important for members with mobility issues or are carers.
- ❖ **Use videoconferencing** to ensure that members with mobility issues or are carers can attend meetings regularly. The venue for branch meetings will need to include internet access. In LI we use Zoom videoconferencing. To book a time for a zoom meeting, contact the LI membership secretary and s/he will provide you with a Zoom link that you send out to your members with the calling notice. Here is a short video on how to join a zoom meeting:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/vFhAEoCF7jg?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1&fbclid=IwAR3tfbZlbcOyf5IV1VpTv3nGOAkRGjLK6Vg0w4PhlcuXIK_oJdn-83RKKFg

- ❖ Support the branch to be **an active, campaigning local movement** where your members are encouraged to get involved as much as possible. This includes encouraging them to suggest

agenda items for meetings.

- ❖ Develop a **strong and consistent communication strategy**, making sure that all your members are well informed on party activity.
- ❖ Ensure that your branch has a **set of rules and standing orders** that are approved by the LIEC.
- ❖ Contribute to the effective day-to-day working of the branch.



❖ **Manage the election of delegates**, ensuring gender quota and ensures in-year vacancies are filled. The Labour party requires that women must make up 50% of any members elected as delegates to GC and also on branch executive committees.



2. Help organise and run branch meetings:

The monthly branch meeting is a great opportunity to **meet fellow Labour Party members** in your immediate community, to **share ideas, discuss policy, explore current issues** and, of-course, to **socialise and make friends** with like-minded people in your neighbourhood. The monthly branch meeting is an excellent first step to getting involved and making the most of your Labour Party membership.

Branch Meeting agenda

1. Members present (list names)
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising
4. Correspondence
5. Branch secretary's report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Reports of LIEC and GC meetings and matters arising
8. Branch activities
9. Items for discussion (*insert e.g. announcements, speakers, motions, political education, motions etc*)
10. Any Other Business
11. Date and venue of next meeting.

- ❖ **Draw up branch meeting agendas** together with the branch chairs and communicate the details of these (including motions) to members in good time according to your branch rules (a calling notice at 14 days and then a further notice with the agenda and any proposed motions at least 7 days before).
- ❖ Try to arrange **political discussions** at branch meetings as well as dealing with administration issues.
- ❖ **Take minutes of the meeting** and makes sure that all members are sent a copy with the next calling notice. Try to make branch meeting minutes interesting and readable for members who couldn't attend. This may include giving a flavour of any discussions at the meeting.

3. Arrange an Open Branch Meeting

- ❖ You might want to arrange an **open branch meeting** where you invite members from other branches to attend. These would normally be concerning policy issues or campaigns that you think would interest members across LI. It might include speakers from campaigns inside or outside the Labour Party. These can be publicised across LI for all members. Contact the LI Communications Officer to arrange publicity for this: communications@labourinternational.net .
Votes on motions cannot be taken at open branch meetings.

4. Arrange a yearly branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) once a year.

Annual General Meeting agenda	
1.	Members present (list names)
2.	Apologies
3.	Election of branch officers
4.	Minutes of last AGM Matters
5.	Arising
6.	5. Officer reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secretary ▪ Treasurer ▪ Chair/vice chair
7.	Rule changes and standing orders amendments
8.	Emergency motions
9.	AOB

5. Keep members active, involved and up to date:

A rich variety of activities throughout the year will make sure that everybody gets the most out of their membership.



All officers of the branch should provide opportunities for others to become involved and ensure events and campaign activities are organised to involve people in the local community wherever possible. This is often difficult to achieve for LI members due to language differences and/or the geographical spread of LI members. However, there may be local groups that you could work with.

You should aim to have a range of different campaigning activities, working with comrades across LI to plan joint social events, coffee mornings and policy discussions, as well as separate branch events and campaigning.

You should try to bring guest speakers along to events as well.

- ❖ Try to **give each branch meeting a clear purpose** e.g. to plan or develop a local campaign, discuss party policy or invite speakers from local socialist parties and organisations.
- ❖ Ensure that all **meetings are interesting and engaging** – keep any process items to a minimum and until the end.
- ❖ Work with the LIEC secretary and membership secretary to ensure **all branch members are aware of LIEC business and events.**
- ❖ Make sure that your members and the **LIEC are kept informed of branch activities** via branch meeting minutes and other communications.
- ❖ **Attend the LIEC and General Committee (GC) meetings** and report back to your members. LIEC and GC meeting times are emailed out by the LIEC and are also a regular item in the LI newsletter. Double check that the GC delegates and members are aware of the times and dates of GC meetings.
- ❖ Encourage membership participation in **campaigns and activities.**
- ❖ Contribute to the **branch secretaries Facebook group.** It is there to help you. It can be found here;

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/618540975284831/>

- ❖ Your key **sources of information** will be the LIEC meeting and minutes, the LI newsletter and mailings from the LIEC
- ❖ Inform the LI vice-chair (membership) or your regional coordinator of any member issues such as deaths, moves and change of contact details.
- ❖ **Inform members who are in arrears** and help them rectify that.
- ❖ Work to recruit new members.

6. Follow through on branch business

- ❖ Ensure that decisions at branch meetings are followed through – letters replied to, LIEC are informed.
- ❖ **Deal with any correspondence** as promptly as possible and make sure that important items receive attention and a reply.
- ❖ **Arrange the election of delegates to the General Committee meetings** (GC). The branch is entitled to 1 delegate per 40 members or part thereof. You must keep GC
- ❖ Make sure that the **branch development plan** is drawn up and that progress is made on it.
- ❖ **Make sure that you use your Zoho email address** (which the communications officer will set up for you) for official LI communications. If your Zoho email account isn't linked to your personal email address then check in regularly to Zoho to check for messages from the LIEC about calling notices for meetings, and Check with Membership to ensure you're on the Branch Secretaries distribution lists for LI.

<https://www.zoho.com/mail/>

- ❖ Check the **Labour International website** for news and information <https://www.labourinternational.net/>
- ❖ Check out the **Labour Party website** here:
<https://labour.org.uk/>
- ❖ Consider setting up a **branch Facebook group**, where you can post important news, branch and GC meeting information, and have informal discussions.

Where do I go to for help and advice?

The LI membership secretary and regional coordinators can help you with any queries or difficulties you may have. They work as a team to develop and support the party in our regions – Europe/Africa, The Americas and Australasia/Middle East/Asia. See below for email addresses under Appendix A.

The membership secretary email address is:

Membership@labourinternational.net

And finally....

- ❖ Make sure that Branch complies with the Party's rules and procedures are followed on recruitment, selections, discipline, conduct of meetings etc, and informs the LIEC of any issues relating to that – see the LI Rules 2021 Appendix D.

<https://www.labourinternational.net/>

- ❖ The Labour Party 2020 Rulebook can be found here:

<https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/rulebook-2020.pdf>

Appendices:

A. LIEC officers email addresses:

Chair: chairs@labourinternational.net

Secretary: secretary@LabourInternational.net

Secretariat (LI secretary/Chair/vice-chairs/Asst secretary):
li_secretariat@labourinternational.net

Assistant secretary: assistant-secretary@labourinternational.net

Membership: membership@labourinternational.net

LI branch coordinators:

Europe/Africa/Middle East: europafrica@labourinternational.net

Asia/Australasia/Pacific: asiaaustralasia@labourinternational.net

Americas: americas@labourinternational.net

Treasurer: treasurer@labourinternational.net

Assistant secretary: assistant-secretary@labourinternational.net

Policy and Campaigns: policy-campaigns@labourinternational.net

Political education: politicaleducation@labourinternational.net

Communications and Social Media: communications@labourinternational.net

Trade Union liaison Officer: tulo@labourinternational.net

Disabilities and carers officer: disabilities@labourinternational.net

BAME Officer: bame@labourinternational.net

Women's officer: women@labourinternational.net

Youth Officer: youth@labourinternational.net

LGBT+ Officer: lgbt-plus@labourinternational.net

See below for model rules and standing orders

B. Model branch rules



(Name of Branch)

Rules

Clause 1 Name

Labour International (*Insert Name of Branch*)

Clause 2 Objects

1. The objects of this branch shall be provide an opportunity for members to participate in the activities of the party within its area with the approval of the Executive Committee of the CLP, and in line with its agreed development action plan, to play their part in the policy making processes to work together to run effective election and issue based campaigns, to maximise the party's engagement with organisations and individuals in the branch area and join with them in working for social justice. Work to meet these objectives shall always have priority in this branch plans and meetings.
2. This branch shall cover such area agreed by the CLP

Clause 3 Membership

Membership of this Branch shall consist of members who live full or part time, (but part time members should transfer their membership to LI in (*Name of Branch*))

Clause 4 Officers and Executive Committee, and other position

1. The officers of this branch shall be chair, vice chair, Secretary and Treasurer/ Asst Secretary & a minimum of 50% woman should apply).
2. This branch executive shall consist of the following officers (*titles of officer roles*).
3. Other positions shall consist of two auditors, and any other position the branch agrees.
4. Election for these posts shall be held at the annual general meeting.

Clause 5 Meetings.

1. The Annual General meeting of this branch shall be held in (Month of meeting) each year. In the event of the annual meeting not being held in that month for any reason it shall be held as soon thereafter as possible.
2. A months' notice of the annual general meeting shall be given to all individual members in this branch.
3. This branch shall raise and hold funds to support activities within the objects of this branch. The financial year of this branch begin on the 1st January and end on the 31st December. (Maximum Donation amounts from members should be set at the AGM)
4. Where the CLP requires delegates to be appointed to the General Meeting of the CLP they shall be elected at the annual meeting.
5. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of this branch executive or at the written request of two members.

Clause 6 Groups

This Branch will support all groups covered by this Branch and advise all new members of the group contact.

Clause 7 Miscellaneous

1. This branch shall not enter into affiliation or give support financially or otherwise to any other political party or organisation, without authority of the CLP.
2. Should this branch be dissolved or cease to exist for any reasons, its assets shall be transferred to the CLP
3. This branch shall adopt standing orders and may make changes on the above rules and standing orders at only the Annual General Meeting, and such changes should be agreed by the CLP.

C. Model branch standing orders



(Name of Branch)

Model Branch Standing Orders

Standing orders for (Name of branch)

Clause 1. Annual General Meetings

- i. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Labour International (Name of Branch) Branch will be held in January.
- ii. A calling notice for the Annual General Meeting at least I month prior to the meeting.
- iii. A notice detailing the business of the annual meeting shall be sent to all eligible members at least 7 days prior to the meeting.

Clause 2 Meetings

- i. Meetings shall be held on the following regular basis: on (*Date of meetings*).
- ii. At least four meetings a year will be held face-to-face, with dates, times and location decided at the AGM.
- iii. Formal notice of all meetings shall be sent out by the Secretary four weeks before the date, and the agenda sent out one week before.
- iv. A record of attendance at meetings shall be kept by the Secretary
- v. In addition to members of the branch, this branch encourages the attendance of (a) members of the Labour Party from branches in the UK, and (b) supporters of the Labour Party. Neither of these groups will have any right to bring motions, or to vote on any motions or other matters

Clause 3 Meeting times

- i. Meetings shall commence at (Time of meeting). Business meetings shall not be held if a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the appointed time, and an executive meeting will take place instead. – meetings will finish at (Finishing time of meeting) unless agreed by two members present that the meeting should be extended.

Clause 4 Quorum

- i. The quorum for business meetings of the Labour International shall be 5% of branch members OR (XXXXX number of members) members, whichever is the lower. If no number of members is specified, then the quorum shall be 5% of branch membership.
- ii. The proceedings and resolutions of any quorate meeting shall not be held to be invalid simply through the accidental failure to give notice of the meeting to, or the non-receipt of such notice by, any person entitled to vote.

Clause 5 Chair

- i. The elected branch chair shall preside at all meetings, except where otherwise provided for in the rules of the Branch.
- ii. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall preside, and in the absence of both the Secretary or other officer shall call on those present to elect a member to take the chair of the meeting. Should the office holder arrive once a member has been elected to preside in his or her place then he or she may claim, if they wish, the right to preside at the meeting once the current item of business has been disposed of.
- iii. At the Annual Meeting the Chair shall preside until a successor is elected. The election of the new Chair shall be taken as the first item on the agenda. The new Chair shall take over the conduct of the meeting forthwith and proceed to the election of other officers and further business.

Clause 6 Party business

- i. The prime function of branch meetings is to provide members with the

opportunity to participate in Party activities through social contact, political debate and policy discussion; to establish objectives for the Party in the area of campaigning, the development of Party organisation and the promotion of links with sympathetic individuals and bodies within the wider community.

- ii. Plans for campaigning on local issues, the development of community engagement and the strengthening of both links and communication with individual members, affiliates, supporters and community groups should be central to all business.
- iii. The agenda of all Party meetings should give due priority to the Party business highlighted above, the endorsement and introduction of new members and/or delegates, the discussion of resolutions, Party policy items and other matters of interest to Party members including the receipt of reports from public representatives.
- iv. Nominations for delegates and representatives to other bodies should be sought as widely as possible from among Party members. Wherever practicable, any vacancies to be filled shall be advertised to all members as they arise and any Party member who has indicated willingness to accept nomination shall be considered for any post, unless otherwise stated in the rules.
- v. Party business shall in general have precedence at all business meetings of the Branch. As far as possible the officers and/or the Executive Committee should deal with routine items of correspondence, finance and reports from other Party bodies or functional officers, provided that the general meeting shall have the opportunity to question, amend and/or ratify any recommendations put to them.

Clause 7 Notice of motion

- i. Motions for the general meeting of the Branch shall be accepted only from members entitled to attend and vote in the meeting and must be received by the Secretary in writing not less than seven days prior to the meeting for which they are intended.
- ii. Motions for discussion shall be made available to those entitled to attend with the notice and agenda of the relevant meeting, except for emergency motions, which must be sent in writing to the secretary as soon as the nature of the emergency allows and before the commencement of the meeting. Emergency business may be accepted by the majority of the meeting on the recommendation of

the Chair who shall interpret the term 'emergency' in a bona fide manner.

Clause 8 Discussion of motion

- i. No motion shall be discussed at a meeting until it has been moved and seconded. Where a motion has been submitted it must be moved by an eligible member from the Branch.
- ii. Speakers shall address the Chair and shall speak only once on any motion except by permission of the Chair.
- iii. The mover of a motion or an amendment will have a right of reply at the close of the discussion but must not introduce new matter for debate. Such a reply shall close the discussion. No speaker shall be allowed more than ten minutes, unless agreed by the meeting to be 'furtherheard' for a specified period.
- iv. Amendments to any motion may be moved and seconded from the floor of the meeting but must be provided in writing. Amendments shall be taken in order with one amendment being disposed of before another is moved. If an amendment is carried the amended resolution becomes a motion to which further amendments may be moved.

Clause 9. Voting on motions

- i. Voting shall be by show of hands except where the constitution of the Party provides for a ballot vote or where the Branch decides otherwise. In the event of there being an equality of votes on any matter decided by a show of hands, the Chair may give a casting vote providing that he or she has not used an ordinary vote. If the Chair does not wish to give a casting vote the motion is not carried.

Clause 10 Ballot votes

- i. The election of officers and/or representatives of the Branch, including GC delegates shall be done by online ballot or by show of hands, whichever the branch executive decides is appropriate. Any quotas for women laid down in the Party constitution which apply to the Branch shall be incorporated in the arrangements for the online vote

- ii. In the event of a tie in the online vote the Chair shall not have a casting vote. Where appropriate, the ballot shall be retaken and in the event of a continual tie lots may be drawn. In a preferential ballot the tie shall be broken by establishing which candidate had the highest number of first preference votes or took the earliest lead on transfers.

Clause 11. Chair's ruling

- i. Any breach of or question to the rules or the Standing Orders may be raised by a member raising a point of order. The Chair's ruling on any point arising from the rules or Standing Orders is final unless challenged by not less than four members; such a challenge shall be put to the meeting without discussion and shall only be carried with the support of two-thirds of the eligible members present.

Clause 12. Miscellaneous

- i. Party meetings and events shall be conducted in a friendly and orderly manner and organised in such a way as to maximise participation from members. No members shall be precluded from attendance because they cannot gain access to the meeting place for any reason. Harassment or intimidation of any member is unacceptable as is any form of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability or race.
- ii. Any member acting in an unruly or disruptive manner, in contravention of the standing orders, may be removed from the meeting by action of the Chair. The Chair shall put such a motion to the meeting which, to be carried, shall require the support of two-thirds of those present and voting.
- iii. This Branch accepts the principle of minimum quotas for women at all levels of representation within the Party and will take steps to ensure that 50% of any delegation shall be women. Where only one delegate is appointed it should be a woman at least every other year
- iv. The general provisions of the constitution and rules of the Party shall apply to this Branch. No changes shall be made to the rules and Standing Orders of this Branch except at an Annual General Meeting or a special meeting called for this purpose and carried with the support of two-thirds of the members present. All amendments will need to be approved by the CLP.

D. Model Invites to Branch Meetings

There are two types of invites to branch meetings:

- A calling notice
- The final invite

It is also a good idea to send a reminder on the day of the meeting. These are the two email invites. The first one is the calling notice, the second one is the final notice.

❖ The calling notice:

Dear Labour Party member,

You are cordially invited to join us via Zoom videoconferencing for our next Branch Meeting, which will be held on (***Insert time and date***). The link to join this meeting is below. If you wish to add anything to the agenda, then could you please let me know by (***Insert date***).

(***insert name***) is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom

meeting. Topic: (***Insert name of branch and type***

of meeting)

Join Zoom Meeting (***zoom will generate link here***) Meeting ID: (***zoom will generate ID here***)

One tap mobile

+34917873431,,7143372136# Spain (***this is an e.g. Zoom will generate the numbers for you***)

+34843685025,,7143372136# Spain Dial

by your location

+34 917 873 431 Spain

+34 84 368 5025 Spain

+34 91 787 0058 Spain

Meeting ID: (***zoom will the ID link will be here***)

Find your local number: (***zoom will generate them here***)

❖ **The final invite:**

Dear Labour Party member,

You are cordially invited to join us via Zoom videoconferencing for our next Branch Meeting. which will be held on (**insert date and time.**) The link to join this meeting is here, and in the invite below. (*zoom link will be here*)

I have attached the minutes from the meeting on (**Insert dates of last meeting(s)**). The meeting agenda and motions texts are attached.

If you need any help with using zoom, or how to set it up then click on this link below, which shows you step by step, on how to join.

https://www.youtube.com/embed/vFhAEoCF7jg?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

(**Insert name of branch**) is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting. Topic:

Time:

Join Zoom Meeting (*zoom will generate the link*)

Meeting ID: (*zoom will generate the ID link*) One tap mobile

+34917873431,,7143372136# Spain (*this is an e.g. Zoom will generate the numbers for you*)

+34843685025,,7143372136# Spain Dial

by your location

+34 917 873 431 Spain

+34 84 368 5025 Spain

+34 91 787 0058 Spain

Meeting ID: (*zoom will generate the ID link*)

Find your local number: (*zoom will generate the numbers*)

E. Labour International Rules 2021

<https://www.labourinternational.net/>

F. Labour Party Rulebook 2020

<https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/rulebook-2020.pdf>

and on the LI website:

<https://www.labourinternational.net/>