

MINUTES / NOTES

For reference

[Branch Rules & Standing Orders PDF LINK](#)

[Equity Council Agendas](#)

[Equity Council Minutes](#)

BRANCH MEETING AGENDA

Time / Agenda ITEM	NOTES / audio transcription timestamp
6.30 pm - Committee Meeting	
7.30 pm - Committee Meeting ends	
Arrive DOORS OPEN	Meet and catch up with your fellow members
7.45 pm	Welcome from the Chair & Apologies, Introducing your Committee and their Roles
7.50 pm	Report from Regional Organiser Ian Bayes (Midlands Meeting, Equity Conference Reps, Equity Committee Elections) https://www.equity.org.uk/about-us/how-were-run/equity-elections/committee-elections-2023
8.00 pm - Over to You	(chaired general discussion with possible break out groups)
8.20 pm - Over to You	(chaired general discussion with possible break out groups)
8.40 pm - Report back from breakout groups	Branch priority planning, guest speaker and workshop requests.
8.55 pm - AOB	(Any Other Business) date of the next meeting and confirmation of the speaker.
9.00 pm - Bar & Banter	
9.30 pm - Good Night	See you in May

Branch Meeting

1	<p>Attending</p> <p>Committee Siobhan Cannon-Brownlie (via Zoom) Elizabeth Clough Gillan Geddes Kim Guilespe Caron-Jane Lyon Tim Ralphs Andy Storm</p> <p>Regional Organiser - Ian Bayes</p> <p>Guest Area Councillor - Toni Daley Campbell</p> <p>Members (V - Venue or Z - Zoom)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ben MacPerson (V)● Dvanka (V) (confirm name spelling)● George MacArthur-Conroy (V)● Catherine Harmer (Z)● Frank Simms (Z)● Billy Maxwell (Z)● Steve John-Lewis (Z)	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Eleanor Mattley Michael Wood Sheila Constance John Brenan</p>
2	<p>Introducing the Committee</p> <p>Chair - Kim Guilespe Vice Chair - Elizabeth Clough Secretary - Caron Jane Lyon Deputy Secretary - Gillan Geddes Treasurer - Tim Ralphs Variety Officer - Andy Storm Campaigns - Siobhan Cannon-Brownlie</p> <p>Following the formal introduction of the committee and their roles Kim outlined the meetings agenda</p> <p>Social Media presence Equity Conference 2023 Speaker ideas</p> <p>Kim as Chair set out the expectation for everyone that everyone would and should if they wish get to talk including those participating via the zoom call.</p>	
3	<p>Report from the Regional organiser - Ian Bayes</p>	

3.1

The Midlands Annual Regional Meeting took place on March 24th. Caron Jane Lyon and Elizabeth Clough attended from the East Midlands Branch. The meeting was well attended with the majority of members from the West Midlands region. (20 in the room with 7 on zoom)

The meeting was chaired by North West Councillor, Vicky Brazier in the absence of the Midlands Region Councillor Tonia Daley Campbell who had professional work commitments.

Tonia along with the Birmingham Branch are hosting a meeting on 12th June to form a regional Drag Artists Network. This would be an extension to the existing Drag Artists Network which is part of the Variety specialisms attended to by the head office staff.

<https://www.equity.org.uk/get-involved/networks/drag-network>

Ian introduced to the branch other active networks. The Comedians, Street Performers, Storytellers and Circus. Ian looks after the Street performers network.

<https://www.equity.org.uk/get-involved/networks>

There are 11 networks listed currently on the Equity website

- LGBT+ Network
- Drag Network
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Network
- Class Network
- Storytellers Network
- Comedians' Network
- Models' Network
- Puppeteers' Network
- Non-UK-Born Artists' Network
- Green New Deal Network
- Immersive Network

You can participate in networks and the branch. Branch meetings may not be of interest but a network focusing or relating to your professional specialism might. Please contact the secretary (Caron Jane Lyon) for a direct introduction to a network if you would prefer to connect that way. Or if you think a network group here in the East Midland might be advantageous for you and follow members please let Caron know.

3.2

Regional Councillor is drawing up a campaign to increase, engage and explore TV and Film Studio provision in Birmingham and the West Midlands. Ian explains that there is a lack of studios in the Midlands. The consequence of this is that production comes to the midlands using locations but not casting local talent. Using the Midlands locations for shooting has a narrow scheduled window in relation to the production. If there were studios to complement the location the production would spend longer in the region. The campaign and work surrounding it is looking to position the Midlands to become a full production hub. That would bring work into the Midlands for actors and production staff.

3.3

Ian reported on EquityUK's Honorary Treasurer and Audio Councillor, David John ([Linkedin](#) | [IMDB](#)) who reported at the regional meeting about the union's current priorities to:

- improve pay and conditions in the West End. ([the 17% campaign](#))

- make sure that secondary payments and employment laws continue for our members working in soaps.
- continue the campaign to get members working in audio a collective agreement

Ian reported on EquityUK's Head of Finance and Operations, Beccy Reese who reported at the regional meeting about overseeing the recent refurbishment of GuildHouse. As an asset owned by the union, keeping it in good order makes sense. Ian expressed how improved the place is as a work environment. Beccy has also been overseeing the now relaunched website. <https://www.equity.org.uk/> . A member in attendance voice confirmation that the new site has better navigation.

Ian reported there are active discussions of opening a Midlands office in Birmingham in the next 2 years. Currently Ian works from home in Northamptonshire and has a desk in head office but this is not ideal for his work in the Midlands.

3.4

Ian reported on his own report to the regional meeting. Part of his job is recovering money for members from contractual disputes. He also recovers money through the county court or the threat of county court action for cancellation of non-payment of gig work. In 2022 recovering £37,780 for members. Since taking the Midlands Officer position in 2016 he reported that he has recovered £245,780 and 27 pence! Nearly a quarter of a million pounds.

Ian explained he visits companies operating in the regions mentioning The Spark Arts for Children's annual SparkArt Festival and the Leicester Comedy Festival. With the General Secretary there had been work with the Commonwealth Games Committee for the 2022 Games which were held in Birmingham. This was to ensure members performing and working on the opening ceremony were paid professional rates.

In semi jest Ian demonstrated through anecdote the possibility of connections in the region recounting having introduced Artist Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, Carlos Acosta to Tony Iommi, guitarist and founding member of Black Sabbath noting the current development of Black Sabbath's opera co-production with Birmingham Royal Ballet opening in September which is already sold out!

3.5

Ian had also met with Steven Knight, Peaky Blinders creator who gave a tour of the new Digbeth Lock Studios site and shared his vision for the future of producing work in Birmingham.

Guardian article 21st Mar 2023

- Peaky Blinders creator launches construction of new film and TV studio

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2023/mar/21/peaky-blinders-construction-digbeth-loc-studios-this-town-ub40-birmingham>

...new Digbeth Loc Studios, which will include production offices, designed to put the city on the media map, creating over 700 jobs, adding £30m to the local economy and to house Knight's new ska music BBC drama 'This Town' as well the Peaky Blinders film.

Ian is also responsible for the Equity presence at the Keeping it Live showcase for Variety artists. A showcase opportunity for bookings attended by promoters from holiday parks, holiday camps, cruise ships, etc.

3.6	<p>This year's showcases are 6th & 7th June and 7th & 8th November 2023 https://www.keepingitliveuk.com/this-years-shows Variety Officer, Andy Storm, familiar with this annual convention expressed a frustration that this is as much about the Bookers and Agents hospitality as it is about acts getting work.</p> <p>Ian also attends the Childrens' Entertainers convention, Kidology https://kidologyuk.co.uk/ The next Kidology Convention Monday 18th September 2023 9.00am – 6.00pm</p>
3.7	<p>Reporting on the Street Performers Network and PSPs (Public Safety protection) orders in Birmingham city centre threatening to confiscate equipment used for amplification for vocals and voice PA (public address) used by musicians for example. The reason is city living is returning to commercial areas of the city with the closure of department stores and building conversions into flats. Residents are making complaints about noise.</p> <p>Motions to Conference debated and voted on at the Midlands Meeting.</p>
3.8	<p>The Birmingham Branch motion received the most votes and is MOTION 4 in the conference's agenda. Despite our East Midlands Branch motion not being selected it is similar to MOTION 8 proposed by the North East England Branch*. Both Midlands' region motions are referenced below and motion * is included below also.</p> <p>Motions for the notes...</p> <p>MOTION A: Birmingham and West Midlands Branch</p> <p>Equity's Safe Spaces campaign was a landmark strategy for root and branch reform of the industry in order to eradicate sexual harassment as a feature of women members' working lives. Whilst Equity has enjoyed some relative success in achieving its goal, there remains further work to be done on the Safe Spaces agenda. As such Conference requests that Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) reviews and refreshes the Safe Spaces strategy and campaign; 2) ensures that the new strategy and campaign incorporates all forms of harassment and abusive behaviour including but not limited to racism, antisemitism and homophobia; 3) ensures that the new strategy and campaign includes a focus on Equity's internal activities, including branch meetings, committee meetings, etc. <p>MOTION B: East Midlands Branch</p> <p>Conference calls on Council to investigate and implement a system for members who are not based in London or in locations where marches and protests take place to enable them to virtually participate in such events. This would involve creating a list of members who wish to actively show their support for the causes being promoted and the actions being taken, and for this list to be carried on the march.</p> <p>This motion is important because it allows members who are not able to attend protests and marches to still show their support and solidarity with their fellow members and the</p>

causes being promoted. It also allows members to put their name to the actions being taken, which can be an important form of activism.

This motion asks Council to investigate and implement a system for virtual participation. This could include creating a digital list of members who wish to participate and ensuring that this list is made available to the relevant branches and organisers of the marches and protests. Council should also consider how to promote this system to members and ensure that it is easy to use and accessible.

*** REFERENCE MOTION 8: North East England Branch**

Equity's role as a campaigning trade union means that it is developing and encouraging activists to attend and participate in public protest and related activities more than ever before. Such action has included participating in lobbying of MPs in the Westminster Parliament, attending TUC demonstrations, and participating in the Durham Miners Gala for the first time.

These are all welcome developments, but there need to be practical steps taken to encourage local activists to participate. The insecure nature of our members' work means that too often it is unaffordable for many to give up work or take the time out to travel to events, particularly when they are in London.

Whilst one-off arrangements have been made to support activist participation, it is important that all members, including those in geographically distant locations, are properly supported to participate. Branch funds and support are limited and are meant to cover a range of activities for the wider membership.

Conference calls on Council to investigate practical and financial ways to support members to fully participate in campaigning activities without the need to drain the limited resources of their local branches.

Questions from members about what the Birmingham studios might be used for. The distinction was clarified that these would be TV & Film sound stage / production studios and not rehearsal / performing studios. Acknowledgement was made about TV/Film production having left the region but that for a brief period returned with example given about later seasons of BBC series The Hustle filmed in Birmingham but little has happened to class as a return.

3.9
(3.5
cont)

There was an enquiry about any news on a possible studio in Derby's Chester Green. There was a questioned connection to Guy Richie. This was confirmed by Ian as Marv Studios. The vision is to develop a disused factory into a dual purpose film studio and academy for stunt performers and martial artists. It is Ian's understanding that Derby Council have given the go ahead but full funding still needs to be secured following an investor pulling out.

Article Derbyshire LIVE 10 Nov 2022

(later article has not been found at the time of making these notes)

<https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/derby-news/film-studio-stunt-academy-could-7803066>
Film studio and stunt academy could open in days in old Aida Bliss factory in Derby.

	<p>“...Derby City Council gave planning permission to allow the derelict site in Chester Green to be transformed into a new film studio for a temporary period of nine months, with a view to making it permanent. The company behind the plans is Marv Studios, best known for blockbuster hit films such as Rocketman, Stardust, Layer Cake and the Kingsman franchise.</p> <p>The firm wants to invest £13 million into the building in the long term and will also use the site as a stunt training academy with it set to become “Europe’s first stunt training and testing centre”, with a further vision to create a National Centre of Excellence in gymnastics, trampolining, parkour and martial arts.”</p>
4	<p>General Discussion chaired by Kim Guilespe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Representatives to Conference ● Guest Speakers and Workshop Ideas ● Going forward ● Dates and Timetable for the coming months <p>Kim reiterated that the current committee is an Interim committee. Branch committee elections are to take place in November and then every 2 years in November thereafter.</p> <p>Notes: While writing up these notes rules, referred <i>Branch Committee Term</i> 35. <i>Committee elections shall take place every two years. The Committee term shall run from and to the end of the Branch AGM at which the election results are declared.</i></p> <p><i>Branch AGM</i> 80. <i>Branches shall hold an annual general meeting (AGM) in October or November each year.</i> 81. <i>The business of the AGM shall include:</i> (a) <i>adoption of the branch annual report and annual statement of accounts; and</i> (b) <i>in an election year, declaring the Committee election results.</i></p>
4a	<p>Social Media</p> <p>Caron Lyon set up a discussion asking members to consider social media both personally and professionally. She was interested in understanding how members of the branch used social media and how they wanted to be exposed via social media in branch activity. She also asked about internal communication via digital social platforms.</p> <p>How do we communicate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● as a branch between members and the committee ● with in the branch ● to the East Midlands membership ● to the Midlands and Equity as a whole ● to the industry and non member peers <p>Caron suggested we focus on the 1019 member to whom our invites and updates are circulated via Equity’s Action Network platform. It is worth noting that the Birmingham and West Midlands Branch has a list of 927 Members. Equity members listed in the Midlands in total stands at 4,000 potentially with a coordinated comms strategy with Birmingham. This should be</p>

a priority to engage before opening out communications to grow the branch from general social media outreach.

How do we feel about Twitter?

What should it be used for if we have it? (Announcements for example, is it actively monitored, does it just have bio and contact reference, used for following wider Equity branch activity and Equity feeds)

Do we want a Facebook presence either a closed/private group or public page or both?

Do we want a day to day messaging channel using WhatsApp or Messenger?

Facebook groups have new conversation chat or we could send a simple SMS text to communicate with the Secretary.

In addition there are forum or bulletin/discussion board platforms with discussion making tools and social networking features. This is going to be an ongoing conversation.

Social Media was returned to following item 5.

Kim Guilespe pointed to the usefulness of polling within Loomio could have for us in the future.

Caron Lyon outlined the Pros and Cons of establishing an independently owned Loomio presence which we'd be responsible for member authentication as being in benefit against an Equity provided group where members would be authenticated. Having branch control is likely to be most flexible managed by the committee. Despite Equity having adopted Loomio prior to the rule changes and branch reform it is unclear if Equity is continuing to support existing Loomio groups.

Would we want an opt-in invitation or a mass invitation with thought joining completing the account sign up for Loomio. Mentioned earlier were the 1019 members assigned to the East Midlands Branch.

Tonia Daley Campbel confirmed Birmingham are using Loomio and had received communication from HeadOffice that Equity will not be continuing their Loomio subscription.

Caron Lyon is looking into this with Honorary Treasure David John following a conversation at the Midlands Area Meeting as she was aware of a substantial discount given to Equity for their account and it would be beneficial to take on that discount for the branch network if possible. Tonia echoed this in her response to secure the platform for the region's branches. Caron is investigating the future of the Equity hosted Branch Chairs and Secs groups continuation and if the Communication office were still using the platform for campaigning groups.

Where Equity looks after GDPR the responsibility is not placed on the committee.

Regarding the use of Loomio voting on questions raised at meetings Andy Storm posed the question "If people are able to vote on stuff within the branch (loomio) over the course of a week, what's the point of people zooming in or turning up to branch meetings?" Kim Guilespe acknowledged that the previous successful application of Loomio with the Online Branch was in the absence of their being a branch meeting to attend which was a facet of the online branch not needing to have a time locked meeting for the purposes of decision making. Andy asked to illustrate the dilemma of hybrid vs purely passive digital only participation. Enabling both with

	<p>care and their implications for meeting presence was to be a consideration. Final decision making is set out within the branch rules and standing orders.</p> <p>See rules 71-76 Branch Meeting Motions. There is no instruction about branch collective decision making or debate procedure outside the assumption of a Venue/Zoom time specified meeting conditions. Where regular meetings prohibit participation over time the Loomio decision making facility over a set period of time may benefit members where a broader engagement in topics is the objective. An idea to explore accommodating proxy voting at time locked meetings was mentioned as an alternative avenue by the chair. This would be a area to examine in a wider conversation with the union.</p> <p>A further plus point for Loomio is its distinction from mainstream public social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. For News and Promotions the Branch having these platforms would serve a different purpose. This would be for the committee to determine following this discussion.</p> <p>Tim Ralphs summarised - How do we as a branch, keep in touch with each other? And then there's how do we as a branch represent ourselves?</p> <p>The selected tools and management should be discussed including the Campaigns Officer Siobhan Cannon-Brownlie (Siobhan has left at this point in the meeting) Tim's distinctions it was agreed needed reflection.</p>
5	<p>Midlands Councillor - Tonia Daley-Campbel via Zoom Tonia has a regular project that runs every first Wednesday of every month in Birmingham so began with her apologies for not being able to be with at the venue.</p> <p>Points raised for our attention Midlands Regional Meeting Upcoming Committee Elections</p> <p>Caron introduced Tonia as an equity member who has been elected, unlike Ian Bayes who is a paid member of staff assigned to the region, Tanya isn't paid. She's a working member resident in the Midlands. Tonia is our voice in, Head Office. Ian is doing all the official stuff and is paid, Tonya is the person that we voted for to represent us in the Midlands (East & West) on the Equity Council.</p> <p>Tonia went on to share that it is her first time on Council and it had been 'enlightening'. So much has happened with the rules especially and she encouraged members to consider standing as a strong Midlands Presence would be valuable.</p> <p>She announced that the 2024 Conference is now being planned and it will be held in our region. It will take place in Birmingham.</p> <p>The next council meeting was to take place the following Tuesday (11th) and she will report on that next time.</p> <p>Tonia has been working with the North West Councillor to set up a further Midlands Branch Black Country and Staffordshire would be its name.</p>

5.1	<p>Members were asked if there is anything we would like Tonia to ask at the next meeting of Council.</p> <p>Siobhan Cannon-Brownlie raised the issue of access and COVID precautions for the annual conference. She asked if there would be an online or hybrid version, but also queried if there would be information on filtration and air systems within the selected venue. Would there be any mask recommendations, testing beforehand, things that have completely gone out the window, but are essential for safety of big events.</p> <p>Siobhan identified herself as needing these in management of her own condition.</p> <p>Tonia will look into this</p>
5.2	<p>Ben McPherson raised the issue of getting more casting opportunities in the East Midlands. It was felt there is little to no casting taking anecdotal evidence from immediate networks and the majority of opportunities requires travelling to London. There is an urgency for Acting and Directing. It seemed there was some work for Stagemanagers and Backstage Staff through BECTU.</p> <p>Tonia reference the Cast it Here campaign https://www.equity.org.uk/campaigns/cast-it-here</p> <p>Toni was in total agreement. A second mention was made to Stephen Knight see Item 3.5 referencing Ian's meeting regarding Digbeth Lock Studios. There seems a possibility that Stephen could be approached and invited to speak at a future branch meeting. Tonia gave general emphatic reassurance that she was prioritising getting work opportunities highlighted for members across the whole of the Midlands.</p> <p>Tonia will report back on her progress.</p>
5.3	<p>Frank Simms followed on with feedback around the scale of productions and opportunities for theatre actors specifically asking about general casting calls for larger production houses. Small companies develop close networks that make it hard to get seen, (averaging 30 people) while there was a sense of needing to understand who the GateKeepers were for larger scale opportunities (no size figure given). Frank acknowledges that work was being cast but it's hard to find out when. This is resulting in a small and closed group of performers getting cast. 14 people being the anecdotal reference. An increase in the production of Musicals in the region was raised by Frank. Is there a possibility to stage open auditions for MT (Musical Theatre) performers in the region.</p> <p><i>Notes while typing up notes - Article in Arts Professional</i> <i>Birmingham Hippodrome have announce the creation of a the first Musical Theatre department</i> https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/birmingham-hippodrome-create-house-musical-theatre <i>"The theatre will develop original musical theatre in a new department also offering skills development and employment opportunities."</i></p> <p>Quote Frank from the transcript - "run a general open musical theatre call in the Midlands, because it's really hard as a in person from an MT background to actually stay drilled in MT in</p>

	<p>the way that you are in London, because they're so used to being around that militant environment that is MT, that they're just in that mindset.”</p> <p>Running MT auditions at Leicester Curve for example - Quote continues “there are people connected to The Curve community that probably believe they are good enough to be in that show. But unless they put into that situation what the London cattle calls are like for musical theatre, they don't they can't experience it. They don't know whether you're actually on it enough. Where do you need to go to get to class and really brush up on the discipline because we're not around it day in day out in London based performers.”</p> <p>Frank has received a recall resulting from an audition in Birmingham that was taking the second round to London. That he said was rare.</p> <p>Tonia took on board Frank's comments and insight recalling the Zoom meeting for the region during Lockdowns taking to Coventry Belgrade and Leicester Curve.</p> <p>With the new Branch structure established perhaps this or a similar series of Zoom calls can be scheduled? Tonia will follow up on items for action discussed in those previous calls.</p> <p>The insights from Frank regarding ‘being on your A game’ were deep and real truths. Not being in London needs work in the communities to stay fit and disciplined to be able to take on opportunities. The core community in the capital have an advantage. There is an acknowledged balance of scale where plays have smaller casting (auditioning 10*) and Musicals are far larger (auditioning 100*).</p> <p>*anecdotal scales reference by the speaker</p> <p>Tonia suggested considering the use of branch funds to run workshops for East Midlands members that are linked to the venues and companies in the region. They may include casting and Musical Theatre focused workshops. This serves the purpose of expanding their pool of local artists, local equity members, within the region.</p> <p>Final Caron Lyon asked if there was anything Tonia would like from the East Midlands Branch. Tonia iterated the items raised by Siobhan Cannon-Brownlie (above 5.1), Ben McPherson (5.2) and Frank Simms (5.3) were exactly what she could act and report on.</p> <p>Keeping these items on future branch agendas would help move the region forward. Tonia suggests that speakers invited to Midland branches would be timetables for members across the region to attend. Tonia also asked if a general Midlands newsletter would be preferable rather than a East Midlands only focus. It was welcomed that just one newsletter with East and West news would be of interest.</p>
6	<p>Selecting representatives to Conference https://www.equity.org.uk/about-us/how-were-run/equity-conference (Timetable and Agenda available to view)</p> <p>Taking place in London from May 20th to 22nd.</p>

	<p>Caron explained what could be expected by representatives choosing to attend and represent the branch. This year there is a new format. It's an opportunity to spend time and debate with members across the union and the professions from Branches, Industrial and Equalities Committees, as well as staff and council.</p> <p>The East Midlands Branch can send 3 representatives from the regional membership. It is not restricted to the committee only. 3 members from the committee were selected.</p> <p>Kim Guilespe Elizabeth Clough Gillian Geddes</p> <p>Tim Ralphs proposed "that we dispatch Elizabeth Gillian and Kim to be our representatives at the conference in May". Caron Lyon seconded. The vote in the room and on Zoom was unanimous.</p> <p>As a bonus, Caron Lyon is attending as a representative on behalf of the Stagemanagement Committee.</p>
7	<p>Venue and Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 10th May at Nonsuch Studios</p> <p>This is not the established pattern of the 1st Wednesday. With the bank holidays it was agreed to move the May meeting to the 10th. The venue is provisionally booked for May, June and July. It is for the committee to review where meetings should take place moving forward.</p>
8	<p>Inaugural speaker provisionally scheduled for May was Robert Wilkinson from Red Talent Management http://www.redtalentmanagement.com/about-us/ is an Agent well known to Equity in the region and also an Equity member.</p> <p>Andy Storm expressed the advantage of delaying the first guest speaker to the June meeting enabling the committee to meet once more to establish external comms channels and look at social media. Following agreement it was decided to ask Rob to speak at the provision June 7th Meeting. Frank Simms supported this pointing to the benefit it could have attracting members who have not joined the founding meetings.</p>

NOTES END