

# STATIONS & REVENUE COUNCIL NEWS



## INDUSTRIAL REPS BULLETIN

### Using the “machinery of negotiation”: your Level One meeting

The “machinery” is the set of structures (committees, councils, etc.) that make up the collective bargaining agreement between London Underground and trade unions representing LU workers. The machinery gives us a mechanism for formally raising issues with our employer and negotiating on them collectively via our elected reps... you!

The local level of the machinery is the Level One committee. There is one Level One committee per *Cover Group* (not Area). The committee is made up of the RMT IR rep, the TSSA IR rep, and *one* representative of management. Others can attend with the agreement of the rest of the committee. The Level One committee is not a consultative body, or a mechanism for letting off steam, or a way to have a friendly chat with management. It is a formal negotiating body, empowered to make binding local agreements that apply across *the whole Cover Group*, not just the Area managed by the Level One chair.

In many ways the Level One committee is the most important unit of the machinery, as it is the one closest to the workplace and to rank-and-file members. This makes it vital that you, our elected local reps, are using the Level One structure as a way to organise for change.

It's vital we get the basics right. Make sure you take your prelim day at least seven days in advance of the Level One, so you can submit agenda items in advance. Failing to do this gives management a get-out-of-jail-free card for any issues or demands we raise, as they can simply

say in the meeting that they haven't had time to consider the issue and formulate a response.

Use your prelim days to discuss with members what issues are affecting them, and work out the best way to present it at Level One. Go to the meeting with a clear demand for change. If management refuses to meet the demand, you can refer the item up.

### Referrals to Level Two

We all know workers and bosses have opposed interests. So as a rep you should be expecting to disagree with management pretty routinely. Don't hold back from referring items.

It's important not to let the Level One chair put you off making referrals. It's your right as an elected rep to use the machinery. That's what it's there for; if you don't get agreement on an issue at Level One, you can refer it to “Level Two”, the Stations Functional Council.

The referral process itself is straightforward. Complete the form (speak to an RMT Functional Council rep if you don't have access to it), and make sure the Level One chair send it to Employee Relations. Notify an SFC rep when you're making the referral, and give as much detail as possible on the referral form.

### What happens next?

Referrals from Level One committees will be listed as items on the agenda of the Stations Functional Council (SFC). We'll liaise with you to work out how best to present the arguments at SFC, and to work out strategies for progressing the issue.

At all stages it's vital to keep members informed about what's happening with the issue – where it is in the machinery, what the possible outcomes are, and what we can do next.

If we don't get what we want at SFC, SFC reps can refer items once more, to Director level.

### **Industrial disputes**

Ultimately our power as workers comes from our ability to withdraw our labour and stop the job. Escalating an issue through the machinery is worthwhile because it can win some compromises along the way, and it deprives management of the opportunity to propagandistically claim we haven't negotiated in good faith. But to win real change, collective action is often necessary.

At any point in the process of raising an issue through the machinery, you can take a motion to your branch articulating the overall strategy for fighting on the issue. If you think collective action may be necessary, you can stipulate in the motion that, if an issue is not resolved via the machinery, the union should declare a dispute and prepare a ballot of the affected members. If the motion is passed by your branch, it should be sent to the RMT National Executive. Make sure SFC reps – and, most importantly of all, your members – are aware.

### **Using the machinery in practise: unstaffed stations and uncovered duties**

Reps from across LU are making clear that unstaffed stations in outlying areas and uncovered duties are becoming an increasing problem. We need to start organising against this.

Every rep should audit whether this is taking place in your area, and table an item at Level One about it. Try to gather as much data as possible to show when stations have been left unstaffed (if you work in a non-Section 12 area) or when duties have been left deliberately uncovered, either due to non-filling of vacancies or deliberate decisions not to arrange cover if someone is unavailable.

Speak to members about how the issue is affecting them, tell them you're raising it through the machinery, and encourage them to take action to campaign on it: that action might initially be something simple like attending a branch meeting or signing a petition, but these are the first steps in organising that can develop into further action if necessary.

Ask management for a commitment at Level One that they will cover all duties as per the BNS, as a minimum. If they refuse to give that commitment, refer the issue to Level Two.

Meanwhile, prepare a motion for your branch noting the scale of the issue and noting that it is being raised through the machinery. The motion should say that, if the company continues to refuse to staff stations properly, the union should declare a dispute and ballot the affected members in your area. If you need help writing the motion, speak to an SFC rep or your branch officers.

Unstaffed stations and uncovered duties may not be an issue in your area. But there will be an issue, or issues, that affect many, most, or all members, and which members feel strongly about. This basic approach, of escalating an item through the LU machinery while organising amongst members for possible collective action, can be applied to any issue.

### **SFC reps: accountable to you**

As a local rep, you are the frontline, day-to-day leadership of the union in the workplace. Your RMT Stations Functional Council reps, Regional Organiser, and National Executive Committee members are elected by you, accountable to you, and there to support you. If you need any help, support, training, or guidance on being a local rep, please get in touch. SFC reps are available to help with organising activity in your stations

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