



# TUSC conference

Saturday 28th January, 11am-4-30pm,  
Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

## Agenda

11am to 1-15pm:

### **TUSC's role now and the 2017 elections**

A TUSC forum with platform speakers from the three constituent organisations: **Paul Reilly** (RMT national executive) to introduce and **Sean Hoyle** (RMT President) to reply; **Hannah Sell** (Socialist Party); and **Charlie Kimber** (SWP)

Platform speakers will have fifteen minutes for their opening contributions, speakers from the floor three minutes. The Socialist Party motion (see page three) will be formally moved in this session, with an indicative vote at the end.

### **1-15pm to 2-15pm: Lunch break**

During the break the main hall will be used for a meeting open to all Individual Member credential holders to discuss proposals to organise individual members within TUSC and, if the meeting wishes, nominate another representative onto the steering committee alongside Pete McLaren.

2-15pm to 3-00pm:

### **TUSC's role now & the 2017 elections continued**

Further floor speakers and then the three constituent organisations will reply to the discussion for seven minutes each.

3-00pm to 4-30pm:

### **TUSC's anti-council cuts campaigning tasks**

Introduced by **Clive Heemskerk** on behalf of the steering committee, followed by floor speakers

[www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)



# Conference information

## Speakers' slips

There will be time for speakers from the floor (of three minute contributions) in every session, although the agenda is very tight. So there will be a speakers' slip system, with slips available on the registration stall, to try and ensure the most balanced possible debate.

## Canteen & cafes

Student Central has a number of canteens, bars and coffee outlets that are available for use by conference delegates throughout the day. There are also a number of cafes in the vicinity.

## TUSC campaign material

In the foyer outside the conference hall there is a stall with a selection of TUSC campaigning material for sale: leaflets, posters and postcards.

Leaflet prices are: 300 for £5; 800 for £12; 1,600 for £20.

Poster prices are: 20 for £3; 80 for £5.

Postcard prices are: 150 for £5.

There are also supplies of TUSC standing order forms; the TUSC Guide for Candidates and Agents, and the TUSC 2016 Election Report.

[www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)





## **Motion for TUSC conference from the Socialist Party**

# **TUSC and the 2017 elections**

This conference re-affirms the support that the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has given to Jeremy Corbyn against Labour's Blairite right-wing, from his initial leadership election victory in September 2015 and during his re-election campaign in 2016.

We recognise that his leadership of the Labour Party has opened up the political situation compared to the first five years of TUSC's existence and that his defeat by the Labour right-wing would be a serious blow for the working class movement.

TUSC was set-up in 2010, co-founded by the late Bob Crow, to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand candidates under a common anti-austerity and socialist banner, with an agreed minimum platform of core policies. Establishing an electoral coalition of this character, involving a mix of constituent organisations and individuals, was conceived as a step towards solving the vacuum of working class political representation that had existed since the triumph of 'New Labour'.

Clearly Jeremy Corbyn's leadership victory, potentially a terminal defeat of New Labour, required TUSC to re-calibrate its electoral activity and conference supports the steps taken by the steering committee to do so. In the May 2016 local elections, for example, no TUSC candidates were even considered to be run without local TUSC groups seeking a dialogue with the sitting Labour councillor or prospective candidate on the critical issue of their preparedness to resist cuts to local council jobs and services.

Conference calls on the steering committee to continue with this approach for the 2017 elections.

We recognise that this will be more challenging in the 33 English county councils and unitary authorities with elections in May, only six of which have Labour-led administrations. That is not the case, however, in Wales – where right-wing Labour is the dominant force in local government – or Scotland, in a different political context and with councillors elected under a proportional representation system in multi-member wards. The preference vote system used in mayoral elections also makes it easier for TUSC candidacies to be supportive of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message while making sure that the Tories do not make electoral headway.

Notwithstanding the differences between the various contests taking place in May, conference calls on the steering committee to ensure that, for whichever elections candidate applications are received, TUSC's electoral interventions are part of a serious campaign against cuts to local public services and will strengthen the battle against the right wing in the Labour Party and the unions.





## **An appeal to Labour councillors Stand up to the Tories' council cuts agenda**

**Dear Councillor,**

We are writing to you as a local Labour Party councillor to try and arrange a convenient time for you to meet a delegation of trade unionists and anti-austerity activists to discuss how we can build the resistance to the continued Tory onslaught on local government.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), co-founded by the late Bob Crow, is determined that working class people should not pay for a crisis that we did not cause, and we are keen to work together with Labour representatives who take the same stance. We welcome the new political situation created by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

We believe that Jeremy has been right to insist in his two successful leadership election campaigns that 'austerity is a political choice'. This applies to cuts and privatisation policies for local public services as much as it does to policies voted on at Westminster.

As a councillor you will know how ruthlessly the Tories have slashed government support for councils providing vital local public services since 2010. Their plan to phase out revenue support grant in favour of devolved business rate revenues by 2020 is another grave threat to the future of local government.

National government policy must be changed – but the fightback has to be conducted locally too, with a determination to expose the Tories' agenda and resist it in practise.

### **No cuts budgets**

In the last couple of years TUSC has worked with councillors in Southampton, Hull, Leicester and Warrington to try and get legally compliant no cuts budgets passed at annual budget-making meetings.

Based on the use of reserves and councils' borrowing powers, they were designed in each case to buy time for the council to organise a broad public campaign to compel the government to restore its funding, and to link up with other councils in a national campaign. Unfortunately, on each occasion, the alternative budgets were rejected by the majority Labour groups.

One reason for doing so was the argument that such a course was potentially 'illegal' and that Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell had themselves urged Labour Groups to support legal budgets, in their joint letter to Labour councillors in December 2015. An instruction to councillors not to support "any proposal to set an illegal budget" was endorsed by Labour's 2016 conference.

TUSC is not opposed to actions which take the labour movement and its representatives outside the provisions of unfair and unjust laws. We believe, for example, that Jeremy and

John are right to say they would stand with trade unions that find themselves involved in ‘illegal action’ under the anti-union laws.

But we also believe that it is possible for Labour councils to produce ‘legally balanced’ budgets that avoid cuts in the short term and provide a breathing space to build a campaign. We discuss the possibilities in more detail in a TUSC briefing document, *Preparing a no cuts People’s Budget*, which is available online at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/355.pdf>, and we would very much like to explore the contents of this with you.

## **Housing and health**

There are in addition other, new battlegrounds opening up for councillors to contend with in the next period, which we would also like to discuss with you.

The Tories’ Housing and Planning Act is an existential threat to public housing provision as it has developed in the post-war period. Once again the Tories’ agenda must be exposed – and, with councils in the front line alongside housing associations, ways explored to resist it in practise.

TUSC welcomes the call made in the housing resolution agreed at Labour’s 2016 annual conference for a ‘pause’ in the implementation of the Act’s provisions. In fact, without the co-operation of councils, it is hard to see how a pay-to-stay ‘tenant tax’ or fixed-term tenancies, for example, could be imposed.

With many regulations still to be determined, there is every opportunity for a united campaign by Labour councils to defeat this legislation and we would be very keen to discuss with you what action could be taken to this end.

Councils could similarly play an important role in resisting damaging attacks on local NHS services that emerge from the ‘Sustainability and Transformation Plan’ (STP) process to find £22 billion ‘efficiency savings’ from the NHS by 2020.

A co-ordinated campaign by Labour councils using their health scrutiny powers, combined with trade union and community resistance to the inevitable cuts the STP process will entail, could throw back the Tories’ plans. Again this is something we would like to discuss.

## **Planning for action**

This is why we would like to have, initially, a face-to-face meeting with you to discuss what joint action against the Tories’ agenda is possible.

We are also approaching local government trade union branches in your council to the same end.

TUSC supporters have been centrally involved in winning backing this year for a no cuts budgets strategy in national bodies of the main local government unions, Unison, Unite, and the GMB, as well as the 2016 Wales TUC conference. We want to follow that up with concrete preparations for the 2017-18 council budgets.

One suggestion would be to organise local conferences to prepare alternative ‘People’s Budgets’ for the council budget-making meetings that will take place in early 2017. The aim would be not to ‘consult’ on where cuts should fall but to draw trade unionists and the community into a defence of local public services.

We can surely agree that democratic local government is in grave danger from the Tories’ agenda. And we hope that we can agree to discuss what can be done to save it.



## 2016 local elections policy platform

- **Build on Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity call**
- **A councillors' revolt could stop the Tory cuts!**

The May 2016 elections will be the first wide scale ballot box test for the Tory government's claim that it has a mandate for its 'eternal austerity' agenda. These elections include contests for around 2,300 local council seats in England, providing a chance to challenge austerity policies across 128 local authority areas.

The Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has rightly made the call for local councils to stand together and refuse to implement government cuts and over 450 Labour councillors endorsed his leadership challenge. But there are over 7,000 Labour councillors across Britain and the vast majority, alongside Liberal Democrat, UKIP and Green councillors too, continue to vote for cuts in the council chamber, saying there is 'nothing they can do'.

That is just not true. The National Audit Office estimates that funding for local councils will have dropped this year by 37% in real terms compared to 2010. But English councils still control budgets totalling £114 billion pounds, over one fifth of all public spending, with responsibilities for adult social care, housing, education support, transport, recycling and rubbish collection, libraries and other services. That's a powerful position from which to organise a fightback.

The previous Con-Dem government aimed to pass on responsibility for slashing local public services by 'devolving the axe' to local councils. But by giving local authorities a 'power of competence' to do "anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited", they gave councils a greater power to resist – if they would only use it.

It is a fact that if just a handful of councils used the powers they have to refuse to implement the cuts the Westminster politicians could be made to back down.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has a policy platform for local council elections (below) which could make a difference. Even one councillor in a local authority taking a stand, if they used their position in the council chamber to appeal to those outside, could give confidence to local trade unionists and community campaigners to fight. A network of rebel councillors across the country could have an even bigger impact, building on Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign in shifting the terms of the debate. A councillors' revolt could stop the Tory cuts!

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) will work with any Labour councillor who backs the call to refuse to implement the cuts. But any politician who votes for cuts cannot be allowed a free run at the ballot box, no matter what party label they wear.

The position of TUSC is clear. All councillors elected under our banner will:

- Oppose all cuts to council jobs, services, pay and conditions. We reject the claim that ‘some cuts’ are necessary to our services or that the national debt is a reason for austerity.
- Refuse to implement the Bedroom Tax or the new attacks on housing benefit. Councils should write off all housing benefit cuts-related arrears, withdraw all court proceedings and eviction orders where they have been a factor, and call on Housing Associations to do the same.
- Support all workers’ struggles against the cuts, privatisation and government policies making ordinary people pay for the crisis caused by the bankers and the bosses. Defend the national collective bargaining arrangements for council workers.
- Reject increases in council tax, rent and service charges to compensate for government cuts.
- Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, or the transfer of council services to ‘social enterprises’ or ‘arms-length’ management organisations, which are first steps to privatisation.
- Oppose racism and fascism and stand up for equality for all.
- Campaign for the immediate introduction of the TUC’s policy of a £10 an hour minimum wage for everyone, without age discrimination, including for council employees and those working for council contractors.
- Say no to academies and ‘free schools’. We stand for good, free education for all, under democratic local authority control.
- Use all the legal powers available to councils to oppose both the cuts and government policies which centrally impose the transfer of public services to private bodies. This includes using councils’ powers to refer local NHS decisions, initiate referenda and organise public commissions and consultations in campaigns to defend public services.
- Oppose council re-organisation proposals which reduce local democracy or make it easier to implement cuts. We will campaign against the imposition of directly-elected mayors.
- Vote for councils to refuse to implement the cuts. We will support councils which in the first instance use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making cuts. But we argue that the best way to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to defeat the dismantling of council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demands that government funding makes up the shortfall.
- Oppose fracking. Support action against climate change and for a future where sustainability comes before profit.

This platform is the basis on which any prospective council candidate can stand under the TUSC name in the 2016 local council elections. We encourage every trade unionist, anti-cuts campaigner, community activist and all those who want to see an alternative to austerity politicians, to become a TUSC candidate. For an application form go to <http://www.tusc.org.uk/candidate>



# How TUSC functions

## Introduction

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was set up with the initial aim of enabling trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to resist electorally the pro-austerity consensus of the establishment parties in the 2010 general election. After that election, however, a conference was held of candidates and campaign organisers which agreed to continue with TUSC for future electoral campaigns.

The position that was outlined in the TUSC founding policy statement remains. “The working class and peoples of Britain are facing a ruling class offensive against public services, incomes, living standards and trade union rights”, we wrote, and it is “an offensive which has support across all the establishment parties”.

That was why, our founding statement went on, “the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will contest elections, to show that there is a clear left-wing alternative to policies of public sector cuts, privatisation, militarism and environmental degradation”.

TUSC recognised at its foundation, and still does, that there can be “Labour and non-Labour candidates who agree with our policies, who share our socialist aspirations, and who will be supported by left and labour movement organisations participating in our coalition”.

It was also recognised in the founding statement “that there are different strategic views about the way forward for the left in Britain, whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed by the labour movement, or whether a new workers' party needs to be established”. But TUSC was and remains “united on the need for mass resistance to the ruling class offensive, and for an alternative programme of left-wing policies to help inspire and direct such resistance”.

## 1. Elections and policy:

- (i) The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition should remain registered with the Electoral Commission and maintain and develop a structure that enables it to fulfil its core task. This still is, essentially, to provide an opportunity for local groups of trade unionists, community campaigners and socialist organisations who want to stand candidates in elections to appear on the ballot paper, if they so wish, as part of a wider challenge – as TUSC candidates rather than as ‘Independents’.
- (ii) To this end, TUSC will endeavour to co-ordinate challenges in local and parliamentary elections. We will organise conferences open to local TUSC steering committees or branches, delegates from trade union branches, political organisations and independents supportive of TUSC, other local groups who are planning to stand candidates in such elections, and any other member of TUSC, and will back any efforts by TUSC members and supporters in Scotland to organise similar events to prepare for elections there.
- (iii) TUSC will also consider, on a case-by-case basis, endorsing candidates to stand under its banner at parliamentary and local council by-elections.
- (iv) The founding TUSC statement developed for the 2010 general election remains in place, with subsequent updating revisions, as a summary of TUSC’s core policies. In addition supplementary policy statements shall be developed for local elections and other future election campaigns, to be agreed at the relevant conferences, subject to the final approval of the national steering committee.

- (v) We also confirm that, as a federal ‘umbrella’ organisation, participating organisations will continue to be able to produce their own supporting material, subject to electoral law, as has been the practise successfully adopted in our election campaigns to date, which allow different organisations and local campaigns to collaborate under a common banner.

## **2. Structure and election organisation:**

- (i) TUSC shall continue to have a Steering Committee, comprised of representatives of the RMT, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, plus in a personal capacity leading trade unionists and anti-cuts councillors. Representatives of individual members shall also be elected to the steering committee by those who attend the national TUSC conference who are not otherwise members of a constituent organisation. The steering committee will operate by consensus of its component parts.
- (ii) The adherence of further organisations will be subject to the approval of the steering committee. The steering committee can also agree to expand its membership to other leading trade unionists as it decides.
- (iii) TUSC supporters in Scotland shall continue to organise autonomously, with their own Scottish TUSC Steering Committee.
- (iv) Local TUSC steering committees or branches will be established, where possible, for local government areas and parliamentary constituencies where it is planned to contest seats on whatever broadly similar basis is appropriate for each.
- (v) Local groups should also operate by consensus and with provisions made for the representative involvement of trade unionists – including for TUSC supporters groups in unions where formal affiliation is not possible – and the local branches of the TUSC constituent organisations.
- (vi) Membership of TUSC should be administered locally through TUSC groups, including the setting and collection of membership fees, but with provision for national membership at a nominal £1 fee for individuals unable to join a local group or establish one themselves.
- (vii) The participants in TUSC recognise that this structure remains only an interim arrangement and that discussions must continue to take place on the best way to organise the coalition as it develops in the future. Future conferences of TUSC shall make provisions to include debates on this issue.

## **3. Candidates:**

- (i) Candidates from organisations participating in the Steering Committee and the Scottish TUSC Steering Committee can expect to have their nomination papers for elections authorised by the coalition nominating officer as TUSC candidates if they so request. They can also stand, if they wish, under the existing registered electoral name of their organisation.
- (ii) Other prospective candidates, from local trade union organisations or other organisations, can also request to stand as TUSC candidates. All such requests shall be referred to the Steering Committee for decision.
- (iii) Prospective candidates will be asked to endorse the coalition’s founding core policy statement – and the relevant supplementary policy statement for the election they are contesting – but, with that provision, candidates will be responsible for their own campaign.
- (iv) The Steering Committee will have the final say on all coalition seats and candidates. Once approved by the Steering Committee, a candidate will be issued with a Certificate of Authorisation which shall only be withdrawn if the Steering Committee agrees by a new consensus decision to withdraw its support.
- (v) The Steering Committee will seek to raise funds for national campaigning. For local challenges, the normal expectation will be that local deposits and campaigns will be financed locally.