



TUSC 2021 local elections conference

Sunday 7th February, 11am-1-30pm, on Zoom

Fighting back against the Tories and Starmer's New Labour – including at the ballot box!

Agenda

11am to 11-45am: Introduction from TUSC component groups

Platform speakers from the constituent components of the TUSC steering committee – the RMT, the Socialist Party, the Resistance Movement and the Individual Members' representative – will explain their position on the broad conference theme.

11-45am to 1-00pm: Discussing the local elections core policy platform

The TUSC National Election Agent will introduce the steering committee's draft TUSC core policy platform for the May 2021 local elections, *For a working class, socialist voice in the council chambers to resist Covid austerity* (see pages 3-4).

There will then be an open discussion from the floor, including the opportunity for speakers to move the amendments received to the platform for consideration by the steering committee (see page 5).

Also available as background information is the new TUSC report, *Could councils implement the policy pledges in Labour's 2019 Manifesto?*, from the TUSC website at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/434.pdf>

1-00pm to 1-30pm: Replies and conference summary

Note: Individual members of TUSC who are not members of a constituent organisation have a place on the TUSC All-Britain steering committee selected, where there is a contest, by the individual members attending the TUSC conference. This year only one valid nomination has been received, from the long-standing independent socialist Pete McLaren, who has therefore been elected unopposed. His nomination statement is available on the TUSC website at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/17463/02-02-2021/tusc-individual-members-representative-elected-to-steering-committee>

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Draft core policy platform for the May 2021 local elections

For a working class socialist voice in the council chambers to resist Covid austerity

Tory governments have inflicted nearly eleven years of savage austerity, cuts and privatisation on working class people. The results have been laid bare by the dire situation millions of us find ourselves in as the social, economic and health effects of the Covid-19 pandemic hit our workplaces, schools, services and communities.

Against this background it is necessary to ensure that politicians from whatever party who try to pass the costs of Covid onto the working class face the possibility of a challenge at the ballot box. And the council elections in May 2021 – taking place alongside elections for the Scottish and Welsh parliaments and the Greater London Authority – will be the first opportunity since the start of the Covid crisis to do so.

Covid has revealed both the drastic situation our local public services are in – with councils massively underfunded by central government – but also some of the many things local authorities have the power to do to improve our lives. In the first lockdown, for example, councils acted against homelessness in their local areas through the Everybody In scheme. Many councils stepped in during autumn half term to continue free school meals.

But they could go so much further. Councils could ensure not just a free school meals programme for current recipients for all future holidays but organise access to decent quality food and meals for all children, elderly and vulnerable in immediate need. They could use their powers to begin a mass home-building programme to tackle the housing crisis.

Most current councillors however, including unfortunately the majority of Labour's 7,000 or so local representatives, would say they cannot use their legal authority to act without first getting funding from the government.

But that's the wrong way round. The Tories have made deep cuts to councils but they still account for over one fifth of all public spending, with responsibilities for adult social care, housing, education support, transport, recycling and rubbish collection, libraries and many other services. That's a powerful position from which to organise a fightback. Councils should first spend what's needed – and then demand the money back from the government.

The multiple U-turns made by Johnson and his chancellor, spending billions when the pressure is on them, show that if just a handful of councils used the powers they have to refuse to implement any more cuts and spend what is necessary instead, the Tories could be made to pay up.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has a policy platform for the local council elections (see 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 in fighting for what is needed to meet the Covid crisis.

They would link up with those taking action against climate change, the Black Lives Matter movement, and campaigns against attacks on women's rights and services. TUSC councillors would be at the heart of any struggle that is a step towards a society in which people can enjoy life to its fullest without the fear of unemployment, homelessness, poverty and discrimination.

Agreement with the platform below is the minimum basis on which any prospective council candidate can stand under the TUSC name in the 2021 local council elections – but it is a minimum, not a limit to the issues candidates will raise.

Every trade unionist, anti-cuts campaigner, community activist and all those who want to see an alternative to austerity politicians can become a TUSC candidate. But voters should know that any councillor elected under the TUSC banner will:

- **Oppose all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions. We reject the claim that 'some cuts' are necessary to our services or that the Covid crisis is a reason for austerity.**
- **Support all workers' struggles against government policies making ordinary people pay for the crisis.**
- **Fight for united working class struggle against racism and all forms of oppression.**
- **Reject council tax, rent and service charge increases for working class people to make up for cuts in central funding, support a redistributive revenue raising system to finance local council services, and demand central government restores the cuts in funding it has imposed.**
- **Use councils' powers to begin a mass building programme of eco-friendly affordable council homes to tackle the housing crisis.**
- **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.**
- **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.**
- **Vote for councils to refuse to implement austerity. 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 defend and improve council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demand that government funding makes up the shortfall.**



Proposed amendments received to the draft core policy platform for the May 2021 local elections

Note: The eight core policy bullet points as currently proposed are listed on page four

1. From Merseyside TUSC

Agreed at meeting on 16 January

Add the following bullet point to the existing core policies:

- **Oppose the establishment of council Executive Mayors which undemocratically concentrate powers in the hands of one individual and campaign for the abolition of existing mayors.**

2. From Andy Walker, Redbridge Trade Union Party

Add the following bullet point:

- **Demand the modernisation of councils' administration and democracy by ensuring councillors hold monthly public meetings both in person and on zoom to report on key statistics on all services either provided or monitored by councils such as housing, health, education and crime.**

3. From pensioners' justice campaigners

Add the following bullet point:

- **Support the establishment of local council hardship funds to make non-means tested payments equivalent to the £137-60 a week basic state pension to those denied their pensions by the rising state pension age.**

4. Proposal arising from correspondence on social enterprises

To slightly re-word the bullet point on social enterprises to make it clearer that TUSC opposes those which are the first steps to privatisation of existing services while not excluding support, for example, to a new community-run facility.

- **Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, or the transfer of existing council services to 'social enterprises' or 'arms-length' management organisations which are the first steps to privatisation.**