



TUSC's core policy platform for the May 2024 local elections

Whoever ends up in No.10, we want fighting councillors in the town hall!

The council elections that will take place on 2nd May 2024 will not be another routine set of polls for seats in the local town hall. They will be the last round of local elections before the general election, that must be called no later than December 2024 – if the contest to decide who will end up in Number Ten Downing Street is not, as it could be, held on the same day.

Whenever the general election is actually held, the councillors that we elect in May 2024 will effectively be our communities' negotiators with the new government – for the funding we need to protect, improve and expand our vital local public services. But this will be against the backdrop of a funding crisis for councils, and clear signalling from all the establishment parties in parliament that the austerity squeeze on public spending will continue.

That's why every vote for a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) council candidate will be the clearest possible counter-signal we can give in the May local elections – whoever ends up in Number Ten, we want fighting councillors in the town hall!

Spend what's needed – and hand the bill to the new government

After an almost 60% cut in central government support for local authorities since 2010, councils are facing an unprecedented funding crisis. Since 2021 five local authorities have issued a 'section 114 notice' declaring themselves unable to balance their books – in the previous 20 years only one such notice had been made.

Estimates vary as to what the overall funding gap for all councils might be – from between £3 billion for the 2024-2025 financial year, to £6.9 billion including the year beyond. But when even the Tory-led Hampshire County Council said in an official council report in October that "the government must intervene if we and the whole local government sector are to avoid financial meltdown", it is beyond dispute that local public services face a crisis.

It is not the case, though, that the money isn't there. Labour's 2019 pledge under Jeremy Corbyn to tax share dividends and capital gains at the same rate as the income tax on wages, for example, would have raised an extra £14 to £15 billion pounds a year – more than enough to have met the council funding shortfall. But Sir Keir Starmer and the shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, putting the interests of the rich and big business first, have dropped that policy, like so many other promises.

That's why TUSC is issuing a challenge to Labour councillors and candidates in the May council elections. Councils still have borrowing powers and reserves which they can use to avoid all cuts in their 2024-2025 budgets and reserves so spent could be replenished and borrowing underwritten by an incoming Starmer-led government. But if you are not prepared to demand such

a commitment from Starmer and Reeves now, what type of negotiator for our communities would you be if you were to be elected? We need socialists in our town halls, who will always put the interests of the working class first!

What TUSC candidates will do

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an inclusive umbrella alliance, not an exclusive one, with its banner available to be used on the ballot paper by every working-class fighter prepared to stand up to the capitalist establishment politicians at election time.

Every trade unionist, anti-cuts campaigner, community or social movement activist, and socialists from any party or none who want to see an alternative to the establishment politicians, can become a TUSC candidate – free to also campaign, if they wish, for policies beyond our core policy platform below.

But as a minimum commitment for the May 2024 elections – the TUSC core policy platform for our council candidates – voters should know that any councillor elected under the TUSC banner will:

- Oppose all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- Vote for councils to use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making cuts in their 2024-2025 budgets and demand from the incoming government additional funding to make up any future shortfall.
- Refuse to co-operate with any commissioners appointed by the Tories to attempt to impose cuts on local services.
- Demand that councils as employers refuse to issue 'work notices' against strikers under the new anti-union Minimum Service Levels Act.
- Reject council tax, rent and service charge increases for working-class people to make up for cuts in central funding, support a new redistributive revenue-raising system to finance local council services, and demand central government restores the cuts in funding imposed since 2010.
- Oppose 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 their privatisation.
- Use councils' powers to immediately begin a mass building programme of eco-friendly affordable council homes to tackle the housing crisis.
- Support democratically debated local Climate Emergency plans that create new employment, reduce emissions and improve air quality and the local environment, while protecting the jobs, pay and conditions of all workers.
- Fight for united working-class struggle against racism, sexism and all forms of oppression.
- Back all workers' struggles against government policies making ordinary people pay for the crisis.