



An appeal to the SWP and others to join a socialist challenge in May's local elections

Dear comrades,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) all-Britain steering committee to encourage any SWP member planning to stand as a candidate in this May's local elections to use one of the TUSC descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission – to help them signal their working class and socialist identity on the ballot paper while they help in a campaign to get a socialist presence in this year's national media election coverage.

We note your comment in the recent article in *Socialist Worker* (Where Next After Your Party Failure? 12 March) that many Your Party branches “that had made preparations for running candidates in May” had held back from doing so – and, if these include members of the SWP, face the prospect now of only being able to contest the elections as ‘independents’ unless they use a description held by another registered party like TUSC.

As you are aware, nearly 15% of councillors in Britain sit as ‘Independents’, dutifully carrying out the same austerity measures as the establishment parties. The case for putting a description on the ballot paper that is as clear as possible about what a candidate actually stands for – which using one of the TUSC descriptions would do – is powerful. And it is an option available to the SWP, and to all members of other socialist organisations too.

The full list of descriptions available can be seen in the TUSC entry with the Electoral Commission (at <https://search.electoralcommission.org.uk/English/Registrations/PP804>) but they include Socialist and Trade Union Candidate or Independent Trade Union and Socialist Candidate.

Using a registered description also entitles a candidate to include, if they wish, an accompanying distinguishing emblem on the ballot paper too (which includes the simple but clear Trade Unionist and Socialist emblem No1). Otherwise, standing as an ‘independent’, there can only be a blank space next to the candidate's name. But this is optional. If SWP candidates or other socialists just want to use a description without an emblem, they can. It's the candidate's choice.

Candidates control their own campaign

The same point about candidates' autonomy applies to their control over campaign materials and branding. Candidates using a TUSC description simply commit to the ‘six TUSC guarantees’ (see <https://www.tusc.org.uk/22154/03-02-2026/six-guarantees-from-our-2026-local-election-candidates/>), including opposing all cuts to council services and fighting all forms of oppression, but are free to go beyond that in promoting their own political position and party membership.

We know that the SWP and others are concerned about what they term 'electoralism' – of the pressure to 'tone down' class politics in election campaigns, which certainly standing as an independent rather than as a socialist would add to – but there will no pressure from the TUSC officers or other members of the TUSC coalition on candidates to do so. That actually has been the TUSC model of organisation which, over the years, has enabled many community groups and different socialist parties – including, until 2017, the SWP – to contest elections within its umbrella without in anyway feeling that their ability to promote their own political position has been restricted.

A national media platform for socialism

The last point we make in our appeal relates to the possibility of socialists achieving a presence in the national political debate around the May elections by standing enough candidates to reach Ofcom's 'fair media coverage' qualifying threshold.

As we explain in our latest statement on the May elections, the decision of the Your Party central executive committee to stand only a limited number of candidates under the party name but to work with other "independent socialist and community electoral initiatives" leaves open the space for an electoral challenge using an alternative registered party – TUSC – as a vehicle to reach the media threshold. If the Ofcom threshold is reached by candidates using TUSC-registered descriptions, Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana will be offered the opportunity to feature in the media output we will be entitled to.

The possibility is there for a strong visible socialist challenge in May's local elections. But only if organised socialists act now!

It is in that spirit that we make our appeal and look forward to your response.

In solidarity,

Dave Nellist

TUSC Chairperson

Clive Heemskerck

TUSC National Agent