

**UNISON Local Government Service Group  
Conference 2019**

# **Composite booklet**

**To be read in conjunction with Conference Documents**

**16 - 17 June 2019  
Liverpool**

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## **Composite Motions - Advice for Delegates**

Composite motions are designed to bring together motions and amendments that contain similar subject matter, so that the debate on a particular issue can be more focused and repetition can be avoided. It is the responsibility of the Standing Orders Committee to facilitate the smooth-running of conference and the composite motions have been drawn up in this spirit.

The submitting bodies involved in an agreed composite motion must liaise with one another to decide which delegate is going to formally move the motion.

Submitting bodies involved in a composite motion will be given priority speaking rights in the debate.

# Composite A

## Campaigning on Pay

### (Motions 2 and 3)

Conference recognises the efforts made by the sector committees and branches in pursuing the union's 'Pay Up Now!' campaign and notes the success in breaking the UK government's 1% pay cap.

Conference notes the success of the Scottish local government committee and branch's pay campaign over 2017 and 2018 which resulted in record levels of recruitment, member engagement and improved offers resulting in a 3 year deal from April 2018 of 3.5%, 3% and 3% along with the consolidation of the Living Wage in all councils and a commitment to parity with other local government bargaining groups.

The Scottish campaign, in addition to the traditional bargaining, negotiating and consultation methods, developed an organising strategy to engage far more members than ever before. This included:

- 1) A demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament in conjunction with Health and other sectors;
- 2) An online survey of members' views on what action they were prepared to take in support of the pay claim, with over 9,000 members responding;
- 3) Developing campaign themes to highlight our case for fair pay, parity with teachers and the need to catch up with the lost value of our pay;
- 4) A campaign amongst school based members around the 'One Team' campaign with thousands of members sending postcards to the Scottish cabinet secretary for education;
- 5) Extending that campaign amongst all other local government members with thousands of them sending postcards to the president of CoSLA calling for parity across the local government bargaining groups;
- 6) A constant social media campaign, production of short videos to explain the pay offers to members and encouraging them to vote in the consultative ballots and take part in the campaign;
- 7) Phone-banking, emailing and texting members to encourage participation in the digital ballot on the initially improved offer which resulted in an overwhelming rejection with a record number of members taking part;

- 8) Political lobbying of the finance minister throughout the year and at key stages of Scottish budget preparation;
- 9) A Christmas card campaign to the Scottish finance secretary;
- 10) An 'end of year' video highlighting the year-long campaign that members had been engaged in and the fact that this had led to a further improved offer from the employer;
- 11) A final consultative ballot on the final improved offer which resulted in an overwhelming acceptance and a hugely increased turnout (the highest of any national ballot the union has run).

Conference welcomes the increased engagement of members in the Scottish local government pay campaign with a 68% increase in the number participating in digital consultation ballots in the past 2 years. Digital balloting has proven to be a very useful tool to increase participation of members.

At the same time the Scottish pay campaign strategy included a number of co-ordinated activities where branches and stewards took actions to promote member engagement and participation that involved them in mobilising their colleagues and lobbying their employers and the Scottish government before conducting any consultation ballot.

This strategy meant that members were central to a campaign that did not simply rely on our negotiators skills or the limited threat of industrial action after negotiations were exhausted.

Conference believes that pay campaigns which focus on clear aims, engage members throughout, are imaginative, use all digital communication tools alongside traditional communication methods, creating opportunities for branches and members to participate in campaigning and organising around the pay campaign are more likely to build a stronger union and achieve better outcomes.

Conference recognises that we should aim to develop our organisational ability to a point where members are prepared and capable of taking strike action. However, we also recognise that anti-union legislation makes industrial action on a large scale difficult to achieve and before we call for industrial action we should assess the "strike readiness" of members through engaging members in activity around issues and campaigns, strengthening organisational capability and confidence.

Conference notes that a number of sectors settled on multi-year deals. However, that should not mean that pay is not an immediate campaign issue or that there are not other bargaining issue that we can organise around. And that we must keep up the campaigning on the issue of decent pay and catching up with the lost value of wages.

Conference recognises that the reward for our members' labour is not just in their pay packet but includes terms and conditions such as holidays, flexible working, access to family friendly supports, career development, etc. These issues are areas where we should seek to negotiate and campaign for improvements.

Conference believes that there are lessons to be learned from the Scottish pay campaign and other campaigns within the local government service group and therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- a) Review with sector committees how we assess the “strike readiness” in each sector with a view to developing organisation strategies to increase this and pay campaigns that are appropriate to these assessments;
- b) Review the various pay campaigns ran across the service group, detailing good examples of increasing member engagement and building support and report to conference, sector committees and branches on the lessons on what campaign, member engagement and communication strategies and initiatives were successful with proposals on how to build on these for future campaigns;
- c) Encourage the development of bargaining strategies that look to improve the other elements of our members’ terms and conditions and where possible co-ordinate campaigns across sectors in pursuit of these;
- d) Commit to building concerted pay campaigns to achieve significant improvements in pay in coming years.

**2 South Lanarkshire Branch**

**3 Scottish Joint Council Committee**

# Composite B

## Local Government Pension Scheme

(Motions 6 and 7, Amendments 6.1 and 7.1)

Conference welcomes UNISON's plan to publish, with the support of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and Palestinian Lawyers for Human Rights, a revised version of "Palestine: Is your pension fund investing in the occupation? A UNISON guide to engaging your pension fund."

Conference notes, however, these plans have been on hold since May 2018 when the Court of Appeal overturned an earlier High Court judgment and ruled that the government may reinstate regulations intended to stop local government pension funds deciding not to invest in companies complicit in Israel's breaches of international law and of Palestinian rights regardless of the wishes of their members.

The current position is that, in December 2018, PSC won permission to take the case to the Supreme Court, it has agreed to do so, and the case is likely to be heard later this year. Conference welcomes this development since it believes that Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) members have as much right as anybody else to heed the Palestinian call and to demand their money be invested ethically.

The UNISON guide is aimed, principally, at UNISON members and others in the Local Government Pension Scheme. It explains how to argue for our pension funds to engage with the companies they invest in to demand they end their involvement in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the violation of Palestinian human rights and it sets out the steps we should take to ensure our pensions are not invested in companies involved with the occupation.

Conference instructs the Service Group Executive, subject to the outcome of the judicial review, and any further guidance or regulations issued by the government, at an appropriate time, with due regard to the legal position, and seeking the support of other Service Group Executives and of the National Executive Council as need be, to:

- 1) Circulate the guide widely;
- 2) Develop training and support to enable members to act, in an effective and sustained way, on its recommendations;
- 3) Collect from regions and branches, information about approaches to pension funds and the results of doing so;

4) Report and circulate this information appropriately.

**6 City of Wolverhampton Branch**

**6.1 Local Government Service Group Executive**

**7 Islington Branch**

**7.1 Local Government Service Group Executive**



# Composite C

## Funding Cuts and Saving Local Government Services

(Motions 19, 20 and 24, Amendment 19.1)

Conference notes another year of cuts in council budgets as the Tory austerity policies continue despite the chancellor's claim that austerity was over. Conference also notes that devolved governments and local councils have largely, with only some mitigation, passed on these cuts in the shape of reductions in council jobs, outsourcing services, closure of council facilities and reductions in services.

Local government workers and the communities they serve have both paid for and borne the brunt of austerity since the crisis in the banking system in 2008. Local government funding has been cut at a greater rate than any other part of the public sector since 2010, with the National Audit Office identifying in June 2018 that councils had experienced a 49.1% real-term reduction in government funding between 2010-11 and 2017-18.

Conference notes the decision to increase business rate multipliers by CPI instead of RPI from April 2018 with the potential long term impact on local government finance amounting to a cumulative loss of £78bn over 20 years according to estimates made to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

- 1) Councils in the north of England have been hard hit and the new English fair funding formula is squeezing the public health grant too. The predicted impact shows councils would lose up to 38% of current funding and this clearly makes the sustainability of essential services and a long-term prevention model unsustainable. UNISON has been working with local authorities to highlight the impact of local government funding cuts in the region.
- 2) That UNISON's report 'Central Government's Hand in the Local Government Till' states that the Westminster government's retained central share of business rates raised by local councils is expected to be over £10bn by 2019/20;
- 3) That the Local Government Association (LGA) and UNISON both argue that this money should be used to meet the financial pressures faced by local authorities in England;

These cuts are causing widespread misery throughout all our communities and the local government workforce, as evidenced by UNISON's report 'Councils at Breaking Point'. The national UNISON survey last year of 21,000 council workers from across the UK illustrated that services are collapsing, vulnerable people are not being

supported and that some council workers have had to resort to using food banks. The north of England is no exception.

In Scotland, while there is a certain level of financial protection for priority services other services are bearing the financial brunt. The UK Government has made clear its intention to reduce central funding to local government but with no significant alternative revenue resources to replace it.

There needs to be a switch in the balance of tax and spending by increasing income from taxation at both national and local levels and requiring an overhaul of tax systems to force those who can, to pay more, while lifting the burden on those least able to pay.

Increased central funding of local government budgets needs to be sustained by a shift in national public spending levels and priorities, assisted by significant changes towards a progressive income tax and corporation tax system and the implementation of new initiatives, such as the Robin Hood Tax on stock market transactions.

Council tax, must be completely overhauled or replaced by a progressive local property tax system that will allow councils to sustainably raise sufficient local revenue to fund local priorities, and in addition to other local initiatives such as Tourism Tax on hotel bookings.

Conference believes that, local government settlements are not adequate for current needs.

Public pressure, aided by UNISON's cuts campaigning work, has resulted in some limited additional largely ring-fenced resources being made available by the chancellor at Westminster, and has significantly raised the public profile of the need for more funding for local councils.

Every available resource must continue to be used to campaign, take action and work with political parties and communities to defend all essential services before they disappear.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- a) Continue to raise support amongst the general public by putting across the damaging human consequences of the cuts to services alongside demonstrating the value of all local government services;
- b) Develop more effective alliances with a range of outside organisations, such as the various local government associations, service user groups and political parties, to help secure equitable funding for local government;
- c) Lobby the appropriate committees in parliament, Scottish parliament, Welsh assembly and Northern Ireland assembly, to re-evaluate spending priorities and increase funding to ensure the needs of local government services are met;
- d) Continue to campaign for recognition from all levels of government within the UK of the vital importance of local government services and the urgent need

for their funding to be restored to at least pre-crisis levels, and to demand an increase in council funding from central and devolved governments, as the main focus of the SGE in 2019;

- e) Work with politicians at all levels, including councillors, metro mayors, MPs, AMs, MSPs to get them to take effective action to end the cuts to local government services;
- f) Carry out a targeted piece of work across UNISON regions to highlight the damaging impact of council funding cuts to services in the constituencies of all MPs, but in particular high profile Westminster government ministers and request additional funding ahead of the comprehensive spending review;
- g) Campaign to ensure the Fair Funding Review in England results in positive meaningful change for the allocation of local government funding;
- h) Continue to call for unallocated business rates to be given back to local government by Westminster;
- i) Continue to work with regions and branches to raise awareness of council income generation and the expansion of trading to offset the loss of income from central government grants;
- j) Develop guidance on income generation, the expansion of trading, and develop a strategy to utilise social value, build relationships with and promote a constructive dialogue with national and regional employer groupings, councillors and senior local government officers and also work with UNISON's Labour Link and campaign fund to promote this initiative;
- k) Campaign for additional tax raising powers for local government to fund local services;
- l) Call for a review of the current council tax system to make it more progressive or to replace it with a different system that is fairer and raises more money for local services.
- m) Develop a clear position and strategy on different mixes of central taxation and funding and local taxation that will deliver increased, progressive and sustainable funding of local government services into the future;
- n) Put UNISON at the forefront of campaigning to achieve those changes, in terms of promoting, supporting and shaping any change in policy regarding greater funding of public services, and in particular, local government;
- o) Support and involve all regions and branches and help them to recruit, organise and involve members in the campaign.

<b>19</b>	<b>South Lanarkshire Branch</b>
<b>19.1</b>	<b>Scotland Region</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Welsh Joint Education Committee</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>Northern Region</b>

## **Composite D**

### **House Building and the Housing Development Workforce**

**(Motions 34 and 35, Amendments 34.1 and 35.1)**

Conference notes that in October 2018, the UK government finally lifted the borrowing cap on local authority Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA), removing the artificial limits on how much councils can borrow to fund new-build council homes.

It has been roughly 50 years since the UK managed to build the hundreds of thousands of new homes needed each year. At the time, local authorities were instrumental in delivering many of them. Calls to scrap this borrowing cap have been made for many years by UNISON and was a 2016 Labour Party pledge.

While some councils have managed to build in small numbers, most councils haven't built new homes in decades. But even with the borrowing powers to deliver housing on a large scale, the challenge councils now face is how to rebuild their capacity to build. Meanwhile, there are still numerous counter-productive policies in place which need reform, including Help to Buy, Right to Buy and Universal Credit.

Conference further notes that the last time councils delivered half of all new homes in the country, half of all architects worked for the public sector. Today, it is less than 1 per cent. This is just one example of how the borrowing cap (and the subsidy system that preceded it) has, over the course of decades, caused a huge drain in housing development skills and knowledge away from local authorities and into the private sector. The housing development skills-gap carries across various departments in local authorities, including planning, finance, legal, asset and property services.

There is therefore a risk that it will be the private (not public) sector who capitalise on the borrowing cap being lifted, with councils forced to outsource housing development rather than deliver it in-house. Conference believes that housing should be provided in-house, by directly employed staff. Privatisation and outsourcing of housing services leads to lower pay and worse conditions, so that companies can maximise profits. This is unacceptable.

Despite the borrowing cap being lifted in England in 2018, the cap currently remains in Wales. Eleven of the twenty-two local authorities in Wales own housing stock. Following discussions with Welsh government and the WLGA on the distribution of

the settlement figure and the borrowing cap, all eleven local authorities exited the HRA subsidy system and became self-financing in 2015.

Conference acknowledges that Welsh local authorities are currently discussing with Welsh government the most appropriate method to bring existing voluntary arrangements to an end which will remove the HRA borrowing caps in Wales. However, only half of councils in Wales will be able to increase their borrowing to fund new homes. This is because many councils have transferred their housing stock to a housing association. But even when discussions on borrowing powers to deliver housing on a large scale are finalised, the challenge councils will face is how to rebuild their capacity to build. This is despite the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire being abolished in Wales in 2018/19.

However, Welsh councils have demonstrated their ability to deliver major construction projects, as the 21st Century schools programme has delivered newly constructed schools the length and breadth of Wales, this political will now needs to be expressed in a major council house building programme. This is an opportunity for Wales to set an example for the rest of the UK by demonstrating that mass council housing building is an essential part of dealing with our current housing and homelessness crisis.

Conference is clear that unless councils have the ability to rebuild their depleted housing development workforce, there is a genuine risk they will be scapegoated by central government for having 'failed' to capitalise on the lifting of the borrowing cap. Councils have long been an easy target for central government to blame for the lack of housing delivery.

Conference therefore calls on the local government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Pre-emptively challenge any criticism from central government on local authorities for failing to deliver new homes even after the cap has been lifted by:
  - a) Producing materials (articles, blogs, etc.) that highlight this council house issue, in England and the devolved nations, and raise awareness in the wider housing debate nationally
  - b) Give a voice to our members working in local government housing services via interviews etc., letting them explain the challenges around council housing development in their own words
- 2) Work with and provide support to the Wales local government committee and Wales Labour Link to campaign for Welsh government and Welsh councils to commit to utilise the opportunities presented by the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap and the removal of the right to buy (in Wales) and deliver a mass council housing building programme in Wales

- 3) Campaign for the employment and up skilling of in-house housing development workforces, by lobbying councils and UK and devolved governments for the use of apprenticeships and better development for existing staff
- 4) Promote the vital work UNISON members in local government housing do
- 5) Use UNISON's local government housing forum and biennial housing seminar to encourage debate and sharing of ideas around this topic; letting members who are housing professionals share their experiences with one another and propose and develop solutions
- 6) Work with Defend Council Housing, Homes For All and Axe the Housing Act to publicise the need and campaign for increased building of council homes.

**34 Cymru / Wales Region**

**34.1 Camden Branch**

**35 Local Government Service Group Executive**

**35.1 Camden Branch**

## **Composite E**

### **Schools Funding and School Support Staff**

#### **(Motions 39 and 40 and Amendment 39.1)**

Conference acknowledges adequate funding for schools is essential for the education of our children and that appropriate levels of staffing are vital in achieving this.

Many of our low paid local government members work within schools settings, often over worked and under-appreciated. UNISON school support staff make our schools the success that they are. They play a vital role and often don't get the recognition that they deserve. Budgetary pressures on schools mean support staffs in schools are often the first victims of cuts to school funding, facing redundancy on a more frequent basis than ever before.

Conference applauds the 'Stars in our Schools' initiative, which acknowledges the important contribution support staff make to the education of our children. We acknowledge that in order to keep 'Stars In Our Schools' a successful event, we need to ensure we have members helping branches to promote the event. UNISON has many retired members wishing to play an active role in the union and we should encourage them to help branches promote this important annual event.

We note the Labour Party policy on education and their commitment to fairer funding, proper investment, accountability, inclusion and its commitment to ending the public sector pay gap as outlined in the Labour Party manifesto.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Actively recruit and organise in schools;
- 2) Continue to encourage branches to promote Stars in our Schools;
- 3) Raise the profile of this initiative in the local and national press;
- 4) Support and encourage our retired members to play an active role in promoting and taking part in the 'Stars In Our Schools' initiative;
- 5) Increase efforts to campaign for adequate and appropriate levels of funding for schools;
- 6) Continue to support and defend schools members in campaigning against school funding cuts;
- 7) Work with local politicians to promote the good work our members do in school;

8) Support joint initiatives with teaching trade unions who support UNISON's policy on education.

**39. Eastern Region**

**39.1 Bolton Metro**

**40. Manchester Branch**