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| **UNISON Local Government Service Group** **Conference 2018****Composite booklet** **To be read in conjunction with Conference Documents****17 - 18 June 2018****Brighton** |

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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**

**“Say No” to National Assessment and Accreditation**

**(Motions 10 and 11)**

The Conservative government is planning to introduce an accreditation system for children and family social workers which will undoubtedly put already stretched social workers under even more pressure to meet rising demands on services that protect Children and Young People (CYP).

Conference notes:

1. Children’s services are in financial crisis. According to report in Guardian on 8 Aug 2017 councils warn that children’s services are £600m in the red. Social workers have high workloads with increasing referrals;
2. A recent Local Government Association (12/01/18) survey found that a child or young person was referred to CYP services every 49 seconds whilst social workers struggle to cope with unprecedented caseload demands resulting in increased stress and anxiety amongst staff;
3. Branches across the regions are representing record numbers of social workers in disciplinary procedures or in ill health procedures as a direct result of workload pressures and difficulties with wellbeing resulting from stress and associated workplace problems;
4. Social work with children and families urgently needs investment. But instead of putting the services children and families need in place, the government’s response has been to recommend unnecessary tests for social workers in England at a high financial cost;
5. Social workers have overwhelmingly voiced opposition to the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) in a UNISON survey; Heather Wakefield, UNISON’s head of local government’s comments about the NAAS:“This ill thought out scheme threatens to make things worse, not better. It doesn’t accurately assess the work staff do, and could prove to be the final straw for many experienced employees, who may vote with their feet and leave;”
6. The government has already significantly reduced the roll out of NAAS following opposition from council leaders, social work managers, social workers and UNISON.

Conference believes:

1. The National Assessment and Accreditation System will have a detrimental effect on social workers who have already high case-loads and will lead to individual social workers getting blamed more frequently rather than for lack of service provision due to austerity.
2. It is a national scandal that this government awarded, in February 2018, a contract to an international consultancy firm and that the cost of this contract for social work accreditation is £3.6 million. Mott Macdonald, a construction company, will develop and roll out the scheme across the pilot authorities.
3. The previous pilot projects were all criticised by all social work organisations. The scheme up to now is shown to be unworkable. Previous pilot projects showed that there was an in built discrimination against older and ethnic minority social workers.
4. That investment in social work development is welcomed but should be planned in line with the views of experienced social workers;
5. That social work development should be part of an ongoing accreditation system that results in recognised qualifications/developmental awards rather than a potentially punitive exercise and that developmental activity should be rewarded with pay progression;
6. That the Tory government should be focusing resources to local communities and preventative services that have been viciously cut such as children’s centres. This will provide for much better outcomes for children and young people;
7. That there is a crisis in our social work system, caused by developments like these along with continued austerity. Social workers are continually faced with excessive workloads, reductions in qualified staffing, and cuts in training and professional development;
8. That social work assessment and accreditation should not be developed by private organisations such as Mott MacDonald or Deloitte rather by organisations dedicated to the profession such as BASW and the Social Work Action Network with close consultation with trade unions that represent social workers in the workplace.

Conference is concerned that £2 million has already been spent with contracts awarded to KPMG and Morning Lane, the company which was co-founded by the chief social worker. The collapse of Carillion and no evidence that private sector provides better outcomes for children means that social work accreditation should not be privatised.

Furthermore, this conference believes we should question whether there is a conflict of interest when a contract is awarded to a company the chief social worker has had involvement with.

The Association of Directors for Children’s Services had previously estimated a full national roll out of accreditation would cost £23 million.

Conference asks the local government service group executive to:

1. Oppose the introduction of NAAS at national and local level;
2. Organise a campaign amongst the local authorities UNISON branches involved in the first and second phases;
3. Organise forums of members directly affected seeking the support of other social work organisations.
4. Use all avenues to explore why is so much money going to private companies not related to social work when the money could be going to front line services;
5. Re-state social work best practice is best monitored through supervision and local authority procedures. Local authorities understand the local needs within their population;
6. Challenge the DfE to introduce targets for restricted caseloads and regular reflective supervision which social workers, judges, academics and others have identified in numerous research documents, legal judgements and serious case reviews this is evidenced as supporting social workers to assess and manage risk and effectively support children and young people. It is also crucial to the development of social workers.

**10 South Gloucestershire**

**11 Salford City Unison**

**Composite B**

**Mental health and workloads in the council workforce**

**(Motions 16 and 17)**

The Westminster government’s slash and burn response to the economic crisis, and their austerity measures have resulted in drastic financial cuts to local government. Council employers are being forced to make radical cost savings. It is no surprise that the first attacks being made are to staffing levels, and terms and conditions of employment. The years of austerity and cuts in council budgets have increased the pressures on staff with cuts in staffing levels, increasing workloads and attacks on terms and conditions of employment. Regular staffing reviews and re-structuring have created a constant level of insecurity amongst the workforce with a relentless pressure for more cuts, more redundancies and more fear for the future.

The government’s programme of cuts to benefits, jobs and services together with their wholesale attack on employment rights has caused a sharp rise in conditions such as anxiety, stress and depression. Redundancies, pay cuts, job insecurity, cuts to staffing budgets, unmanageable workloads, long working hours and higher performance targets are all taking their toll on workers’ mental health. Workers are expected to continue to deliver high standards of service whilst managing the increasing pressure on themselves. Austerity is impacting on council workers’ mental well-being.

The cuts to local government services have led to an agenda of constant organisational change resulting in increased stress levels and other detrimental effects on the health safety and wellbeing of the workforce. This has also led to a massive increase in workload for branch activists and officers and significant increase in mental health, stress and capability casework. UNISON shop stewards recognise an increasing casework of grievances, absences and capability.

Despite the fact that conditions such as depression and anxiety affect one in six workers in the UK each year, eight out of 10 employers do not have a mental health policy to help sustain good mental health in the workplace. The stigma that surrounds this issue, combined with increased insecurity at work, means many workers do not disclose that they are experiencing mental distress. This leaves them vulnerable to disciplinary action and dismissal. The crucial role our reps play supporting members with mental health problems is taking on even greater significance and they require continuing support, training and guidance.

Governments and many employers have stated that they recognise the growing problem of stress in the workplace and the impact that this is having on staff. The 2017 UK government review of workplace mental health made some key recommendations; produce and implement mental health at work plan, develop awareness among employees, promote good management through line managers, provide good working conditions and monitoring of employee mental health and wellbeing. However the austerity and cuts are relentless.

Members in Scotland are facing increased work demands due to cuts in the local government workforce across the country. The demands on councils are also increasing due to the consequence of the economic crisis just as the workforce decreases. In addition our members often come under pressure to adopt new cost-cutting working practices under the guise of “modernisation” or “service reform” which have little or nothing to do with improving services to local communities.

Conference applauds those branches that have been able to negotiate effective mental health wellbeing policies and raised awareness of the causes of stress in the workplace.

Conference agrees we must step up our efforts and continue to support our members and activists in this crucial area.

Conference therefore calls on the SGE to:

1. Produce negotiating guidance on mental well-being in the council workforce including on how to conduct stress audits and ensure that these are carried out whenever councils reduce staffing levels or increase workloads;
2. Secure more resources to help support our branch activists; including additional training and development, mental health first aid, produce campaigning materials, briefings, recruitment of new activists etc;
3. Work with employers to ensure mental health action plans are implemented across our bargaining groups and hold them to account;
4. Promote the use of effective workload management schemes;
5. Campaign and put pressure on employers to implement robust and effective workload management schemes;
6. Continue to publicise the brutal impact of austerity on local government and our members who deliver it;
7. Continue to campaign, pressurise and lobby both Westminster and the devolved governments for more funding in all our local authorities to enable them to support their workforce’s mental wellbeing whilst delivering local services.

**16 Scotland Region**

**17 South Lanarkshire UNISON**

**Composite C**

**Raising the Profile of Local Government Workers**

**(Motions 21 and 22)**

Conference notes that local government services too often suffer from a low profile, with little political or media understanding or support for the work local government employees do. There is not enough recognition for the work our members in local authorities and schools do. Often, members providing services in local government are not recognised for the essential contribution they make to the well being of society. This applies both to their everyday work and also in times of crisis, like the recent terrorist incidents and the Grenfell Tower tragedy, when many of our members come into their own and provide invaluable support to communities.

The lack of awareness or recognition of the importance of what local government workers do has made it easy for the Westminster Government to cut local government funding at a much greater rate than any other part of the public sector. By 2020, 75% of local government funding will have been cut since 2010, and there is massive uncertainty about the structure and level of local government finance in the future. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost, and real pay has fallen massively behind in recent years.

The lack of profile for local government has also meant that some authorities have been able to cut UNISON members’ conditions of service without any public awareness.

This lack of recognition means when cuts are made to services, pay, terms and conditions, the wider public are not sufficiently aware of the damage caused to local services and the negative impact on the lives of our local government members.

Conference also notes it is often difficult to find local government members who are willing, and have the confidence, to speak to the media about the impact of cuts on the services they provide and on their lives.

Homecare workers are a particular victim of the lack of profile for local government services. In Birmingham, UNISON homecare workers recently took strike action against attempts to make 40% of the workforce redundant and to introduce unworkable split shifts which would leave many workers away from their homes from 7am until 10pm. Conference applauds the stand taken by these workers.

Conference calls on the SGE to run a campaign working with branches, regions and the press and media office, along the same lines as the public service champions which raises the profile of members who provide local government services and creates a positive profile for our members and the vital, often hidden, work they do, including:

1. Building on UNISON’s Public Service Champions campaign, which is using some very positive examples of local authority services, to demonstrate the value of what our members do;
2. Working with the press and media office to provide a guide for branches and members about dealing with the media, and increasing our press and media profile through a detailed strategy devised with UNISON Press Office;
3. Working with LAOS, regions and the press and media office to develop a training programme enabling branches and members to confidently maximise the positive impact media engagement can have;
4. Developing organising and recruitment materials which demonstrate that UNISON understands the jobs that local government workers do;
5. Working with the other local government unions and sector representative bodies and think-tanks across the four nations of the UK, to explore the development of a shared vision for local government services in the future;
6. Using social media to highlight the realities of our members’ work and the contribution they bring to society;
7. Exploring the possibility of commissioning research on the “value added” provided by local government services or particular services within local government;
8. Holding one or more days of celebration ‘stars in our…’ days for particular local government occupations, highlighting those roles;
9. Pressing the House of Commons Select Committee for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and appropriate committees in the Scottish parliament, Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly, to hold inquiries relating to the local government workforce.

**21 Eastern Region**

**22 Local Government Service Group Executive**

**Composite D**

**Privatisation and bringing services back**

**(Motions 25 and 26)**

Conference notes that privatisation and outsourcing is increasingly discredited. Up and down the country, councils of different political persuasions are bringing services back in-house, to save money and to end the in-built inflexibility of private contracts where the slightest change involves extra cost. An example of this inflexibility is the waste disposal contract in the London Borough of Redbridge, where the current Amey contract is to be brought back in-house because it does not allow for food waste.

In Blackpool, the waste contract with Onyx will be brought back in-house when it runs out in 2019 because there is no flexibility to collect Christmas trees or cardboard. The council says the contract costs them £3.8m and they can deliver it better for £3.5m and pay staff the real living wage, with all the money staying in the community.

In January this year, the Smith Institute launched a new report, Out of contract: Time to move on the “love-in” with outsourcing and PFI. The report calls for an immediate “pause” in contracting out in the whole public sector, as well as a new public regulator to oversee an audit of existing contracts to be named the “Domesday Book”. The report also highlights that £100bn is contracted out but no one checks the success, failure or indeed performance of these contracts. The report states we “…have a yawning information deficit on how outsourcing and PFI impacts on employees and wider society.”

The National Audit Office has also published a report that assesses the costs of the impact of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) named, “PFI and PF2”. The key findings state:

1. There are currently over 700 existing PFI and PF2 projects, worth £60bn with little evidence indicating any financial benefit to the public;
2. If new PFI deals cease to be signed, the current and future deals will continue for a minimum of 25 years at a cost of £199bn to the Government;
3. The cost of privately financing public projects can be 40% higher than using government money;
4. PFIs are a dereliction of public value for money.

The demise of Carillion also demonstrates the particular problems caused by the huge amount of sub-contracting that goes on after local government services have been outsourced.

Private providers seek to reduce our members’ remuneration and conditions of service so as to increase their profits. In addition, the failure of so many private contracts demonstrates that privatisation makes our members’ jobs considerably less secure.

UNISON has long-since campaigned with these realisations, but has all too often ignored by decision makers.

Outsourcing has created not only a race to the bottom in our members’ pay, terms and conditions but also has shown significant failure such as G4S and Serco being fined for dishonest electronic tagging, the G4S Olympic security embarrassment and Carillion’s collapse.

There is no wonder members shudder with alarm over Virgin Care taking over entire children’s and adult services. Often these organisations attack the pay, terms and conditions and pensions of our members in pursuit of profit and the services they provide are not of the same standard as those directly delivered by the public sector.

The collapse and bail-out of Carillion has further demonstrated that privatising public services not only undermines the fairness in workers’ pay, terms and conditions but also represents a massive waste of public resources. The collapse of these companies often results in those at the top and shareholders receiving huge pay-outs at the expense of front line workers. The failure of so many private contracts in conjunction with a politically driven austerity agenda, is breaking the neo-liberal consensus of “private good, public bad” and it is time for all outsourced services, leisure trusts, arms-length organisations and management companies to be brought back into the public sector.

Therefore, conference calls on the service group executive to oversee and:

1. Support the calls by the Smith Institute for a complete review of outsourcing, the total costs of contracts, the effects on staff, service quality and the social and economic costs to our wider society. This includes the setting-up of a “Domesday Book” for all significant contracts to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of outsourcing companies across multiple contracts;
2. Continue to actively and publicly campaign for in-house provision as the default option for council services, to make existing contracts subject to Freedom of Information requirements, involvement of trade unions and the public and resist calls to mutualise services out of public ownership;
3. Actively and publicly campaign against any attempts to outsource local government services to the third sector, mutuals, social enterprises and co-operatives;
4. Work with the sector committees to investigate and campaign for full equal pay compliance following the outsourcing of local government services;
5. Engage with decision makers in local authorities and elected members by providing guidance on how to in-source services and the appropriate questions to ask at scrutiny level;
6. Work with UNISON’s press and communications teams to publicise the value, common sense and fairness of in-house service provision as opposed to outsourcing;
7. Work with Labour Link to create a charter for Labour local government council and mayoral candidates to sign stating they will campaign for an end to privatisation and outsourcing, and to change council procurement policy to default to in-house provision. In England, this work should build on the ‘Labour Local Government Trade Union Principles’ agreed by the Local Government Association for England and UNISON, Unite and the GMB;
8. Establish a new campaign similar to “Public Works”;
9. Commission an academic study around outsourcing in all its forms;
10. Work with APSE to help make the case across local government for bringing services back in-house;
11. Provide resources/materials for all four nations to run a high-profile campaign.

**25 UNISON Renfrewshire**

**26 Local Government Service Group Executive**

**Composite E**

**Housing**

**(Motions 28 and 29)**

Conference notes that cuts to investment in social rented homes and instead promoting of home-ownership options such as shared ownership, starter homes and Help to Buy. This has led to a year on year drastic decline in the social housing sector since 1979.

Housing policies have led to a 97% drop in the number of government-funded social rent homes built each year since the Conservatives took office in 2010, and failed to ensure an adequate supply of decent, secure, safe and truly affordable homes that workers and citizens on modest incomes can afford. This has had a disproportionate impact on local government workers, because local government is the lowest paid part of the public sector.

Local government workers are amongst the lowest paid part of the public sector so the lack of affordable housing has had a disproportionate effect on our members who often face a lifetime of insecurity, unsafe and expensive private lets with no hope of a secure and stable home.

UNISON members in local government have found it particularly difficult to afford to live in or near the places where they work. As a consequence, some local government employers are witnessing staff shortages, and a high turnover of staff, with implications for remaining staff whose workloads have increased due to a depleted workforce. Others are struggling to recruit and retain staff.

Government policies continue to represent a sustained attack on local government housing services. The failure to replace stock sold under the Right to Buy has seriously depleted the social housing stock, while the loss of rental income has squeezed housing budgets and income streams that could support investment in new council homes. This in turn has resulted in job losses and an erosion in the pay, terms and conditions of social housing workers.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 (England) will lead to a further depletion of council housing stock, if plans to sell off ‘higher value’ council homes to fund the extension of the Right to Buy to housing associations are enforced. This will reduce future rental income streams and hamper the ability of councils to invest in new and existing homes. With a reduced stock and reduced rental income, the jobs of maintenance and other housing workers are likely to be put at risk. Inevitably, increased workloads, more stress and cuts to overall pay and conditions are the likely consequences for workers.

Welfare cuts are exacerbating the housing affordability crisis, as increasing numbers of people are struggling to meet housing costs due to widening gaps between the benefit received and rent charged, exposing them to the risk of rent arrears, poverty, evictions and even homelessness. Regeneration schemes are also causing fear in the community, as they often lead to the loss of council homes and the social cleansing of ‘the working poor’ out of inner cities into the outskirts, away from family networks and local connections.

These trends have caused massive workplace stress and risks at work for UNISON members in housing, as they deal with vulnerable members of the public who have immense housing difficulties. The shrinking of local authority housing workforces and welfare changes, including the bedroom tax, have made the jobs of those who remain extremely challenging. The Grenfell Tower tragedy and its broader implications placed even more pressure and stress on local government members in Kensington and Chelsea and beyond. In many local authorities, stress is now the top reason housing workers are signed off sick.

Conference condemns the government’s complete failure to commit funding for “essential fire safety works” in tower blocks following the avoidable Grenfell Tower fire tragedy which exposes its abject failure to invest in new and existing council homes, and the consequences of the privatisation of key housing jobs. The tragedy is an indictment of failed housing policies, privatisation, outsourcing, a chronic lack of investment in council housing and the denigration of council housing. The outsourcing of building regulations and fire safety inspections of high-rise buildings have resulted in many such buildings being unsafe for human habitation, and requiring costly essential remedial safety works to put things right. The government has a duty to provide funding for fire safety improvement works, as without financial support the cost will fall on councils’ rental incomes and could result in further cut backs in jobs and services.

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, many councils and other providers’ reaction was rightly immediate, but front line housing workers, with little to no staffing resources being made available, undertook the work of inspection, monitoring and follow up works. The result was increase stress, and a massive increase in workloads. This has not abated, and is not likely to in the near future.

More and more housing associations are now removing themselves from the “social sector” and involving themselves only in the home-ownership options as property developers. Conference is concerned that the commercialisation of housing associations, many of which were set up as a result of transfers of stock from councils, and are now classified as Private Registered Providers, has led to the steady erosion of their ethical and social purpose and an increased threat to the jobs, pay and conditions of local government workers who are outsourced. Some housing associations refuse to recognise local government unions or engage with them after transfer. Experience has shown that when local authority employed housing workers are transferred to housing associations or the private sector, their jobs become less secure and there is downward pressure on pay and conditions.

Conference believes that local authority landlords as democratic and accountable bodies, unlike housing associations, provide a vital part of the provision of affordable housing in the UK to households on low to middle incomes and should be adequately funded and protected for current and future generations.

Conference calls on the local government service group executive to work with the NEC and the community service group executive to:

1. Continue to make the case for a well funded, well resourced council housing service to ensure that there are sufficient homes that are accessible to workers on modest incomes;
2. Undertake research across the union to find out the implications of housing costs and affordability on local government housing workers who have been hit hard by the housing crisis, and use the evidence to campaign for improvements in housing policy;
3. Campaign for staffing levels which enable housing workers to do their jobs effectively and safely, and campaign against the privatisation of housing jobs;
4. Campaign for housing workers to be treated with dignity and respect, and call on councils to make it a condition of their partnership arrangements with housing associations that they recognise unions and that they sign up to UNISON’s Violence at Work Charter to prevent abuse of housing workers;
5. Continue to campaign to increase the supply of council housing and lifetime tenancies on true social rents provided by housing associations, and recognise the fact that local government workers have been hit hard by the housing crisis;
6. Campaign for government funding for necessary fire safety and improvement works in council housing to make them safe for human habitation;
7. Continue to campaign for a restoration of direct public investment in public housing to enable “a new generation of council house building” and for councils to identify and prioritise brown-field land for the development of new council homes;
8. Continue to campaign for councils in England to be given the financial freedom to retain 100% of Right to Buy sale receipts to enable them to use the funds to invest in new council housing;
9. Campaign, in England, for a review of council housing finance and for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing caps to be abolished and replaced with a new HRA settlement which enables councils to access the finances required for them to build homes and get the existing stock up to the decent homes standard;
10. Campaign to end the Right to Buy across the whole of the UK in line with Scotland and Wales, where there is more emphasis on protecting affordable housing provision;
11. Campaign, alongside Axe the Housing Act/Homes for All Campaign Group, comprising housing campaigners, unions, tenant and resident groups, for a repeal of measures in the Housing and Planning Act to protect existing council homes in England;
12. Campaign for the protection of existing council housing, and call for truly independent compulsory tenant ballots on housing issues, including stock transfers, regeneration and demolition schemes before they go ahead, to ensure that decisions are made for the benefit of local communities.

**28 Local Government Service Group Executive**

**29 Camden UNISON**