



Service Group Conference 2018

Decisions

17 - 18 June 2018

Brighton Centre

1. Local Government Apprentices

Carried as Amended: 1.1, 1.2

Conference acknowledges there will be considerable growth in the number of apprentices employed in local government as a result of the apprenticeship levy, as well as the provisions of the Enterprise Act around apprenticeship targets for public sector bodies. Conference recognises the good practice that exists in some local government branches, who not only recruit apprentices into membership, but welcome and encourage their involvement in the life of the branch. A number of workshops have been developed regionally and nationally which support the apprenticeship journey, and reinforce the value of partnership working with UNISON for local authority employers.

Conference also notes the under-representation of Black workers in all sectors. Apprenticeship schemes present an opportunity for branches to address this by working with employers to develop action plans to encourage recruitment of apprentices across all relevant equalities strands.

Conference calls on the SGE to:

- 1) Gather together and promote examples of good recruitment and organising practice that exists in branches and regions, including those which monitor the number of apprentices entering and completing their apprenticeship;
- 2) Gather together and promote examples of positive and effective partnership working between UNISON and local authority employers around the apprenticeship agenda, including working together to ensure schemes encourage non gender-stereotypical apprenticeships;
- 3) Draw up a comprehensive guide to workshops that UNISON can deliver to local authority apprentices;
- 4) Draw up sustainable recruitment and development strategies to ensure that the apprentice members of today become the UNISON members of the future;
- 5) Ensure that equalities work is included and prioritised within its strategic approach and develop guidance to branches to assist in negotiating with employers on using apprenticeship schemes to promote career development and progression for BAME employees and across all equalities strands.

2. Trade Union Facilities

Carried as Amended: 2.1

Conference notes motion 16 passed at NDC conference 2016 instructed the NEC to: "Work with Labour Link to campaign to defend facility time, briefing individual elected politicians at all levels, developing model motions for councils - making it clear that attacks on facility time are particularly unacceptable from Labour councils - and pushing for debates in the UK parliament and the parliaments and assemblies of the devolved nations."

Conference also notes the protocols agreed between UNISON and the Labour party in the Labour Local Government Trade Union Principles 2017 document, including:

"Labour Councils will publicly and actively oppose the undermining of trade unions".

UNISON condemns the decisions taken by West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire and Clackmannanshire Council's to attack our movement by proposing amongst other things removal of convenor posts, cuts to facility time and our legitimate right to campaign against cuts to public services and defend our members.

Conference also notes that academisation of schools and outsourcing of local government sources have led to an increasing and significant number of local government and schools members being employed by private employers. These employers frequently make no financial contribution to facility time funding, placing that facility time at further risk.

Conferences calls on the SGE to:

- 1) Carry out a full review of facility time arrangements in local government;
- 2) Carry out a review of how schools facility time is supported by employers;
- 3) Publish the outcome of the reviews and make them available to all union activists by local government conference 2019;
- 4) Make recommendations on these findings by local government conference 2019;
- 5) Provide all possible support to any local government branch being threatened with reduction of facility time;
- 6) Supports West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire, Clackmannanshire UNISON branches and the Scottish Regions campaign to get the attacks on trade union activity reversed.

3. Organising Occupational Groups

Carried

UNISON Renfrewshire recently held a successful summit for additional support needs assistants and home care staff. The purpose of the summit was to bring together two different occupational groups affected by similar issues, in this case administration of medicines, grading and working conditions. The Scottish Trades Union Congress was also involved in the event.

Following the summit, the damning results of a questionnaire put to members on the day and subsequent press releases forced the employer to the negotiating table and a working group has been established to address the issues.

The main benefit of the summit was establishing a network of members from different occupational groups working together for a common cause. Positive outcomes included the recruitment of new stewards, members and those attending signed up to a “Do one thing” postcard committing to carry out a pre-set task. These postcards were later sent back to members reminding them of their undertaking.

Conference calls on the local government service group executive to:

- 1) Explore other opportunities for bringing together different occupational groups to work together on common issue;
- 2) Provide guidance to branches on achieving similar success adopting this model;
- 3) Ask LGSGE recruitment working group to consider this as an organising and recruitment tool and publicise its success.

5. Working for Decent Pensions

Carried as Amended: 5.1

Conference recognises that our occupational pensions are deferred wages and that it is essential that UNISON and its members are actively involved in the governance of our pension schemes and funds.

Conference congratulates those members who represent UNISON on the many of the boards of the LGPS schemes. This is a critical role and UNISON must ensure that these representatives are fully supported in their role. However, Conference recognises that more still needs to be done to encourage young members to become actively involved in the governance of schemes.

Conference welcomes the progress that UNISON has achieved in relation to the transparency of the costs of the investments of our pension funds. We note the success in the LGPS in England and Wales and in the Scottish LGPS of promoting the Transparency Codes and that most of the investment managers have agreed to adopt the code and report fully on all costs.

Conference believes that this gives the pension boards the opportunity to drive down these costs to the benefit of the funds and the fund members.

Conference notes that most investment management is done through external organisations. We believe there is merit in bringing much of this work ‘in-house’ and that there are existing examples of where this has proved to be the case.

Conference welcomes the launch of our campaign to help our members call for and engage with their LGPS pension fund to deal with climate change through the investment assets they hold. The Local Government Pension Funds – Divest from Carbon Campaign: A UNISON Guide provides details of the impact of climate change and the role that our pension funds play in contributing to the problem whilst laying out details of how branches and regions can campaign to influence pension boards to adopt a divestment strategy.

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

- 1) That we continue to campaign for representation on all LGPS boards and other bodies such as the Pools and Advisory Boards;
- 2) That all UNISON representatives on these boards are fully supported and resourced to fulfil their role, including being able to report to branches on pension board issues;
- 3) That there is a continued drive to ensure that transparency is real and that boards vigorously examine all costs in order to protect the interests of fund members;
- 4) That material is produced to take forward a campaign to increase the 'in-house' investment capability of pension boards;
- 5) That all regions take forward the Divestment from Fossil Fuels campaigns and that branches are supported to take up this issue with boards and councillors;
- 6) That more young members are encouraged to take an active part on the boards of our pension schemes.

6. Women and sickness absence

Carried

Conference notes that increasingly local government employers are penalising employees taking sick leave, and that women are disproportionately affected by the sickness absence schemes in use in local government that treat regular short periods of absence particularly severely.

There are many women-specific conditions that fall foul of those penalties, including endometriosis, menorrhagia, menopause, PMS-related migraine and others.

It is well documented that employees in local government are under huge pressure from heavy workloads, staff shortages and competing management priorities, which put additional pressure on staff to work even whilst unfit.

For the many low paid women in local government the reality of period poverty creates an additional complication, as the cost of sanitary products for women can be prohibitive, particularly for women with menstrual problems. Those women can be faced with the stark choice of potential workplace humiliation or calling in sick and suffering the penalties of the sickness absence procedure.

Conference notes the UNISON gender health and safety guide which covers these issues in detail, and provides guidance on how to negotiate workplace policies which do not penalise women unfairly for these conditions.

Conference calls upon the service group executive to:

- 1) Raise awareness of the importance of considering gender related health conditions in negotiating and representing members facing sickness absence measures;
- 2) Issue guidance to branches in this respect; and
- 3) Signpost the gender health and safety guide.

7. Dealing With the Menopause in the Workplace

Carried as Amended: 7.1

Conference notes with concern that little account is taken of factors which affect women going through the menopause in councils and schools. For some women, though by no means all, the menopause presents particular difficulties, which may include insomnia, tiredness, loss of concentration and forgetfulness, as well as the potentially lower levels of physical fitness.

Simple adjustments to the working environment can make a huge difference to women's lives during this time, for example:

- 1) Flexible working/late start times to combat issues caused by sleep disturbance;
- 2) Alterations to shift patterns where appropriate;
- 3) Flexible sickness absence procedures to cater for menopause-related sickness absence;
- 4) Improved work facilities such as cooler office temperatures and increased ventilation; access to cold water, restrooms and private space; alternative uniforms if uniforms are worn at work (cooler fabrics, layers, more supplies if frequent changes are needed etc);
- 5) Managers being mindful as to whether symptoms are affecting performance and/or attendance at work, and working closely with occupational health specialists to identify any other reasonable adjustments that may make working life easier for menopausal women.

However, employers have been slow to recognise that women of menopausal age may need special consideration. For too long it has been seen a private matter. As a result many managers will have no awareness of the issues involved. This means that many women feel that they have to hide their symptoms and will be less likely to ask for adjustments that may help them.

This must change. The menopause is an important occupational health issue in councils and schools. 78% of NJC workers are women. In Scotland, 67% of the SJC workforce are women. In the last UNISON local government survey 74% of respondents were 45 years and over.

Conference calls upon the Local Government Service Group Executive to work with the National Women's Committee to:

- a) Raise awareness of the UNISON and TUC guidance on dealing with the menopause at work;
- b) Produce and promote guidance for branches on negotiating with employers on measures to support women going through the menopause, and identifying workplace champions;
- c) Use all means possible to seek to ensure that the menopause is covered in appropriate training – such as diversity and health related training, both for managers and other staff.

8. Maternity Rights

Carried

Since the Tories have been in power, employment laws have become lax and used by employers to stifle members. Basic principles are failing to be followed resulting in many women being discriminated against. This is often the case during pregnancy and the maternity period (which includes breastfeeding). More and more frequently employers are failing to consult properly with women who are on maternity leave, are not carrying out workplace risk assessments and are treating women differently if they are of child bearing age. Redundancies among pregnant women and new mothers have risen dramatically.

Managers are generally inadequately educated in their obligations around pregnancy and maternity discrimination. There is also a real challenge of employers being under pressure to do more for less due to the swingeing cuts by central government.

According to a report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2015 around 54,000 women are losing jobs every year in Britain due to pregnancy discrimination, almost twice the amount since the initial study in 2005. In addition around 10% of mothers were found to be discouraged from attending antenatal appointments in work time. In addition the report also highlighted that:

- 1) 10% of women said they were treated worse by their employer after returning to work after having a baby;
- 2) One in five new mothers – as many as 100,000 mothers a year – experienced harassment or negative comments from colleagues, employer or manager when pregnant or returning from maternity leave;
- 3) 7% said they were put under pressure to hand in their notice;
- 4) One in 20 reported receiving a cut in pay or bonus after returning to their job;

- 5) This coupled with the changes in employment tribunal fees makes it easier for employers to take advantage of women during a vulnerable phase of their lives.

Maternity rights within the NJC Green Book are worse than that elsewhere in the public sector - in a workforce comprising 78% women! The Local Government Association refuses to negotiate improvements to terms and conditions.

Conference also notes that term-time contracts are inconsistent across different employers. There are a range of methods for calculating pay with implications for maternity rights. Conference welcomes the NJC review of term time working which will produce guidance on maternity, parental leave, shared parental leave and adoption leave.

Conference believes local government should set the highest standards on maternity rights. We need to challenge pregnancy discrimination whether it is intentional or not. What may begin as unintentional, if it goes unchallenged, will become practice and will be accepted more widely in the workforce. During pregnancy and maternity women are protected by the Equality Act, and this should be enforced.

Conference calls on the local government service group executive to:

- a) Work with the national women's committee, regions, branches, Maternity Action and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to promote UNISON guidance on challenging pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace;
- b) Work with the sector committees to seek to improve maternity and parental rights within the Green Book and other handbooks, through new claims;
- c) Campaign for increased maternity rights for women who have premature deliveries;
- d) Work with the national women's committee, learning and organising services and regions to provide pregnancy and maternity discrimination training sessions to activists;
- e) Support the work of Maternity Action and the EHRC in seeking to identify exemplary cases through which to challenge pregnancy discrimination.

9. Keeping Pay Equal

Carried

Despite longstanding UK and EU equal pay legislation, there are still women working in local government and private contractors providing local government services who are paid much less than they should be compared to men. Conference believes that changes are needed to make UK equal pay legislation more effective and that government austerity policy is undermining the impact of equal pay legislation and the role of collective bargaining in delivering income equality.

Conference applauds UNISON's landmark victory in reversing the introduction of employment tribunal fees. Equal pay claims have, and will continue to, make a real difference to the lives of many, low-paid women. So will regular equal pay audits and the effective use of job evaluation and pay and grading reviews.

Conference notes with great concern that:

- 1) Local government cuts continue to have a disproportional effect on women. It remains essential that councils and schools carry out equality impact assessments to ensure that any cuts are not discriminatory;
- 2) Many local authorities are not undertaking regular equal pay auditing to maintain single status pay and grading structures, even though this is recommended by the National Joint Council, the Scottish Joint Council and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC);
- 3) Few local government contractors have carried out job evaluation or have transparent pay and grading structures delivering equal pay;
- 4) In a cuts climate, councils are reorganising services and trying to do more for less. In many cases, they fail to revise job descriptions or to re-evaluate jobs. Members are therefore at risk of being underpaid for extra and more complex work. Pay structures are becoming less transparent.

All local government employers and contractors have a duty to comply with equal pay legislation. Women in local government should not be denied an equal wage because of a failure to properly monitor and assess pay. Conference notes the excellent guide to "Keeping Pay Equal" produced by UNISON and the other NJC unions and calls on the service group executive to continue to address the gender pay gap by:

- a) Providing training and technical advice that equips local and regional negotiators to spot and counter pay discrimination and inequality and promote equal pay and equality proofed pay structures within councils and contractors providing local government services;
- b) Working with the national executive council, the women's committee, all of the UK TUC and equality bodies to campaign for policies to strengthen equal pay legislation and greater compliance including:
 - i) Mandatory equal pay audits and equality impact assessments;
 - ii) Reinstatement of equal pay questionnaires;
 - iii) A legal requirement for equality information to be shared with employees and trade unions to promote transparency in pay policies;
 - iv) More powers for the Equality and Human Rights Commission to carry out effective monitoring and enforcement;

- v) Compliance with the law to be a condition of becoming a preferred bidder for public sector contracts and employment tribunals to be given the powers to take a failure to comply into consideration when hearing related claims of equal pay or sex discrimination;
- vi) An end to 'levelling down' of men's pay, the ability to bring collective claims and use of in-house comparators for employees in outsourced services.

Composite A (Motions 10 and 11) - "Say No" to National Assessment and Accreditation

Carried

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:

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.
- d) That investment in social work development is welcomed but should be planned in line with the views of experienced social workers;
- e) 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;
- f) 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;
- g) 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;
- h) 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:

- i) Oppose the introduction of NAAS at national and local level;
- ii) Organise a campaign amongst the local authorities UNISON branches involved in the first and second phases;
- iii) Organise forums of members directly affected seeking the support of other social work organisations.
- iv) 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;
- v) Re-state social work best practice is best monitored through supervision and local authority procedures. Local authorities understand the local needs within their population;
- vi) 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.

12. Social Work Support is a Right for Asylum Seekers

Carried

Conference notes that the clear intention of the UK government is to create a 'hostile environment' for would-be migrants to the UK in order to reduce immigration and meet commitments made to the electorate - regardless of internal or external implications and consequences, be they economic or humanitarian. Asylum seekers, to whom the UK have a duty under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees (overseen by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) are caught up in this conflict between populist driven immigration policies and international obligations. As a group that includes some of the most vulnerable and traumatised people in the world, social workers across the UK can expect to meet asylum seeking individuals and families, especially in times of war, global economic and climate crisis – all driving peoples away from their homelands on a scale not seen since the end of World War Two.

Conference condemns the long standing UK government policy of denying public assistance to a growing number of refused asylum seekers who continue to argue their right to remain in the UK – those affected by ‘NRPF’ – No Recourse to Public Funds’. Refugee and human rights organisations have also condemned such policies which stand as an indictment on our national attitude to international human rights.

Those affected by NRPF are forced to seek local authority assistance in order to meet basic needs for food and shelter. This includes families with children. Such support should be provided as a right under various pieces of social work legislation designed to enable local authorities to provide assistance to children and vulnerable individuals.

Whilst austerity policies have restricted council budgets we contend that the most vulnerable should not be made to suffer the consequences and that employer’s organisations (LGA, COSLA etc) should be insisting on appropriate levels of government funded support to meet their social services and housing obligations to asylum seekers. We commit to support them with such efforts.

We are particularly concerned at reports that, within some local authorities, a divisive and essentially racist view is taken that suggests that the needs of indigenous ‘local’ vulnerable people are more of a priority than those seeking asylum. We call upon social workers faced with such attitudes to resist them and will support those who do so with all means at the disposal of the trade union. As such, UNISON members in local authority social services are encouraged to work alongside national and local organisations supporting asylum seekers and engage in, and with, campaigning organisations such as Social Workers Without Borders (SWWB).

Conference does not believe it is the place of local government staff to provide information to government agencies concerned with immigration control. This can only serve to divert those who require assistance from those who might provide it. We urge staff to resist attempts to enforce such practices.

Conference notes the UNISON Scotland and Scottish Association of Social Work (part of BASW) publication *Refuge and Asylum in Scotland: Social work support - a human right not an administrative burden* which gives guidance to social work members on these issues.

Conference calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Produce guidance to members working in social work in England, Wales and Northern Ireland along similar lines to the UNISON Scotland guidance;
- 2) Produce further guidance on these issues aimed at other members in local government, such as in housing services and education;
- 3) Campaign to resist the use of local government members to contribute to this hostile environment that the government wish to create for asylum seekers and refugees.

13. Youth and Community Workers

Carried

Conference notes that youth and community workers do a vital job in our communities, providing real and long-lasting benefits for young people. While some public services step in when problems occur, youth services prevent so many difficulties from occurring in the first place. UNISON members in youth services help young people to lead positive lives as members of society.

UNISON's research has found that by 2016, £387m had been cut from youth services, with the loss of more than 3600 jobs and 600 youth centres, due to the Westminster government's cuts. Since then, figures from the House of Commons library show that the amount councils plan to spend on youth services dropped by 53.6% between 2010 and 2017. Local authorities have responded to Tory cuts by reducing youth service budgets, outsourcing to alternative delivery models, and merging youth services with other departments – like social work, youth offending teams, and libraries.

These mergers have meant that fewer and fewer qualified youth workers are employed, and in the last year several universities have stopped providing their youth work degree courses in response. The result is a systemic decline in youth and community work. At the same time, the government has failed to publish the youth strategy it has been promising for some time, instead relying on the National Citizen Service, which is no substitute for year-round, universal youth services provided in the communities that most need them.

Youth and community workers, whether they are employed on Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) 'Pink Book' or NJC for Local Government Services terms, have suffered years of decline in real pay, due to pay freezes and below inflation increases.

Conference believes we need a fully funded statutory publicly provided youth service provided by trained and properly paid staff, and that UNISON must continue to provide a strong focus on organising this occupational group.

Conference welcomes the Labour Party's recent commitment, when in government, to reverse the youth service cuts, carry out a root and branch review to explore innovation and service delivery, and appoint a minister for youth affairs.

Conference calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Renew its focus on recruiting student youth workers and retaining them when they qualify, including providing branches and Regions with mapping information, guidance and dedicated materials so that they can speak to youth workers when they are studying and develop relationships with them at an early point;
- 2) Continue to defend the youth work profession, promoting the importance of the link between high quality services and the JNC-endorsed degree

qualification, and learning lessons from the experience of professional registration in Cymru/Wales;

- 3) Campaign against youth service cuts, working with the Labour Party and other political parties across the four nations as appropriate, and support Regions and branches defending youth work jobs.

14. LGBT Workers and Social Care

Carried

Conference notes with alarm that the crisis in social care continues to grow. Councils have been forced to make cumulative savings in adult social care from 2010 to 2017 of £6.3 billion and the annual local government finance survey published in February 2018 indicated that 40% of council budgets for 2018/19 will see spending on adult social care further reduced, while demand for adult social care services continues to increase.

Conference acknowledges that while this impacts negatively on our members working in social care in innumerable ways, the cuts affect different groups of members in different ways, with disproportionate impact on members of disadvantaged groups. Conference further acknowledges that there is substantial evidence that many social care providers lack understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues and that local authorities in England are doing little or no work directed at LGBT equality. This clearly has implications for LGBT workers.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that LGBT workers are – and have always been - well represented amongst social care workers. However, they are often invisible. This may be an individual choice, or it may be a survival strategy. In general, workers give their best when they are able to be themselves at work. Seeking to hide a significant part of your identity at work is distracting, demotivating and energy-sapping. A workforce where LGBT workers are unable to be out at work is not likely to be one where workers can confidently meet the specific needs of LGBT service users, or even be aware that they have specific needs. This underlines the importance of negotiating robust best practice agreements on LGBT equality with employers, recognising and valuing diversity, alongside union organising and individual advice and representation.

Conference notes the findings of the most recent UNISON equality survey of our members, completed in Summer 2017. This showed that while LGBT workers are particularly likely to experience discrimination, they are unlikely to report it. The main reasons LGBT workers do not report discrimination is that they fear that neither they nor the issue will be taken seriously. This is backed up by 2017 research from the TUC 'The cost of being out at work'. This showed that young LGBT workers and those in insecure employment are least likely to be out at work, fearing the reaction of others.

Conference notes that standardised monitoring of sexual orientation is currently being rolled out for all users of local authority social care in England, aged 16 years and over. This follows the Information Standard on sexual orientation monitoring,

issued in September 2017 by NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act, which applies to all health and social care organisations. Front line staff will be key to implementation. This will sometimes mean staff asking service users their sexual orientation and filling in data for them. It is essential that staff are trained in appropriate language and appropriate setting for this; why sexual orientation information is being collected; how it will be analysed; what the information will be used for; and how it will be safeguarded.

It further notes that there was a press backlash when the announcement was made, with shock headlines claiming all service users were going to be asked if they were gay. Conference recognises that UNISON has an important role to play in counteracting scaremongering and in calling for training for all relevant staff.

Conference notes that that the outsourcing and privatisation of social care has led to deteriorating services and the widespread exploitation of workers through low pay, zero hours contracts and attacks on our members' pay, terms and conditions, while generating profits for hedge funds and shareholders. Further, local authorities have to pick up the pieces when private providers collapse or pull out. The last few years have seen increasing numbers of private home care providers closing down and/or handing contracts back to local authorities. Private equity firms own three of the largest five providers of care homes. Four Seasons, owned by private equity group Terra Firma, only staved off the threat of going into administration in December through an agreement with its largest creditor as a first step in a major restructuring.

Conference welcomes UNISON's continuing Save Care Now campaign. Evidence has clearly shown the multiple benefits to local authorities that have signed up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter, including fair pay and conditions for workers, appropriate training and improvements in the quality of services. Similar work is now underway to promote our Residential Care Charter.

Conference calls on the local government service group executive to:

- 1) Urge branches to use the UNISON LGB and trans bargaining factsheets to review employer policies and agreements with employers with a view to achieving best practice on LGBT equality;
- 2) Work with the national LGBT committee to develop guidance for branches on the sexual orientation monitoring standard, including the need for all relevant staff to be provided with appropriate training;
- 3) Promote the guidance and encourage branches to raise the implementation of the sexual orientation monitoring standard with relevant employers;
- 4) work with the national LGBT committee to promote the Ethical and Residential Care Charters, emphasising the importance for LGBT members;
- 5) Continue to campaign against the privatisation of social care and for services to be brought back in house.

15. Trans Equality is Everyone's Concern

Carried

Conference notes that despite lack of data collection by many local government employers on the experiences of trans staff, we know that they experience disproportionate levels of harassment and discrimination. A 2017 TUC report showed that 48% of trans workers had experienced bullying and harassment, compared to a third of non-trans workers. Our most recent UNISON equality survey confirmed these findings.

Conference also notes a lack of knowledge and information about trans equality among many local government employer HR departments and leads. In an August 2017 research paper on supporting trans employees in the workplace, ACAS noted that only 20% of Stonewall's Top 100 employers have trans-specific HR policies and processes.

While there has been an increase in local government branches being consulted on draft trans equality policies in the past year, many of these draft policies include mistakes in law, outdated language, ignore non-binary identities and are far from best practice.

Conference therefore welcomes UNISON's new trans equality guide and model policy, launched at LGBT conference last November, adding to our library of trans equality bargaining resources. Conference also welcomes the success of some local government branches in using the new model policy to negotiate agreements. Conference further notes that every one of us has a role in trans equality and welcomes new UNISON guidance on being a good trans ally.

Conference therefore calls on the local government service group executive to:

- 1) Promote the UNISON trans equality guide and model policy, along with UNISON's Trans workers rights factsheet, Guide for reps supporting trans members and guide to non-binary inclusion, which complement the model policy;
- 2) Ask the sector committees within the local government service group to raise trans equality with employers and employer bodies, and seek reviews of relevant equality guidance, in line with UNISON best practice;
- 3) Urge branches with employers outside NJC or other national arrangements to check any trans equality policies against the model policy and negotiate for necessary improvements;
- 4) Urge branches where employers have no trans equality policy to negotiate the adoption of UNISON's model policy;
- 5) Collate and publicise examples of where such agreements are reached;
- 6) Publicise and promote the new guide to being a good trans ally across the local government service group.

Composite B (Motions 16 and 17) - Mental health and workloads in the council workforce

Carried

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.

18. Food Standards Agency – Pay, Terms & Conditions

Carried

Conference notes that our members employed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are under extreme pressure and that recent meat and food scandals may become the norm as we negotiate our way out of the European Union and into the hands of unknown trade deals.

Conference also notes the numbers of Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHI) and their support staff are being reduced through a preference by the FSA to get industry to take on the role of producer and regulator. This is privatisation and deregulation at the same time as an erosion of collective bargaining is taking place. Our members

face stagnated wages, a loss of jobs and no career prospects along with a race to the bottom in their terms and conditions.

Conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to continue to defend our members' terms and conditions, negotiated with the FSA as an independent regulatory function by:

- 1) Continuing to robustly negotiate for higher wages for our members through collective bargaining at the FSA;
- 2) Opposing privatisation and deregulation of meat hygiene inspection to maintain the highest food standards for all;
- 3) Continuing to increase our campaigning presence;
- 4) Opposing animal welfare abuses and working with animal welfare groups to uphold the highest standards in slaughterhouses in the UK and in countries where trade deals are potentially negotiated;
- 5) Making UNISON national media and communication resources available to highlight our campaigns to demand the FSA recruit new directly employed MHIs;
- 6) Supporting our members in the private companies delivering services to the FSA including organising and recruiting new members and fighting for better pay, terms and conditions;
- 7) Linking with our members who work tirelessly and under extreme pressure in local authorities as Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers by highlighting the reduction in their numbers across local authorities in the UK as well as campaigning against the flawed "Regulating Our Future" FSA agenda which is about deregulation, not regulation;
- 8) Educating the public on the role of our members in local government, slaughterhouses and auditing of cutting plants;
- 9) Working with the devolved administrations, UK parliament and international organisations to highlight the importance of state-employed, independent meat inspectors and official veterinarians.

19. Black Workers and In-work Poverty

Carried

Conference notes that despite efforts to bring further equality into society, evidence shows that Black workers are still being held back in the work place. Inequalities in employment and income persist, and for many Black workers, this impacts upon their standard of living and increases their experience of living in poverty.

According to the Department for Works and Pension, Black people's employment has increased by 3.2 percent from 2010 to 2015 resulting in a reduction in the gap in

employment rates between Black and white people. However, most of this growth has been in precarious, insecure low-paid employment, combined with lack of progression which has not been favourable. Data collected - undertaken by the local government service group and national Black members committee - demonstrated that in some councils Black workers are under-represented within the workforce and not reflective of the wider community.

A report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission titled, 'Healing a divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy' shows that Black workers are moving into more insecure forms of employment at higher rates than white workers.

They were twice as likely (4.3 percent) to be in involuntary temporary employment in 2014 compared with white workers (2.1 percent). Black workers are more than twice as likely to be in agency work. This increased by nearly 40 percent between 2011 and 2014 for Black workers, compared with a 16 percent rise for white workers (TUC, 2015).

The report also shows that the number of Black workers in low-paid jobs increased by 12.7 percent between 2011 and 2014, compared with a 1.8 percent increase for white workers. Black workers in local government tend to be under-represented higher up the salary scales and management positions.

Other analyses show that inequalities in pay between Black and white workers continue to exist and remain largely unrelated to Black people's qualifications. While Black education attainment have improved, these gains have not translated into improved outcomes in employment.

The pay gap between white and Black workers is at its widest for those with university degrees. Analysis of TUC's official statistics shows that Black workers with degrees earn 23.1 percent less on average than white workers with degrees.

In addition Black people who leave school with GCSEs typically get paid 11.4 percent less than their white peers. The pay gap between white workers and Black workers regardless of their educational attainment, is 5.6 percent.

Alongside evidence of low relative pay, Black workers are over represented in low pay jobs. This trend has risen steadily over time and is replicated within our sectors.

Overall, Black workers received lower pay than white people. In 2013, this was at an average pay of less than £10 per hour. Hours of employment, pay rates and job security all affect poverty risk.

In the UK, part time workers are twice as likely, and the low paid three to four times as likely to be in poverty as all workers.

As evidenced by the above trends for Black workers, this implies that most Black workers have increasingly been exposed to the risk of in-work poverty and reduced standard of living despite being in work. We welcome the work undertaken by the

local government service group on in work poverty in relation to successive NJC pay claims/campaigns.

Black workers undertaking such employment find themselves disproportionately having to live in low-work intensity households (either in terms of the number of earners or hours worked) and households with low wage earners have a relatively high poverty risk.

For our union, clearly it is important that we support our members both in and outside of the workplace, and how we respond to tackling widespread inequality must remain a priority.

Conference notes that our union continues to challenge employers and sectors to ensure decent pay for all workers. However, it is clear that inequality exists in pay and opportunities resulting in lower work related incomes for Black workers and that further work is required to tackle the root of in work poverty amongst Black members.

Conference recognises that the link between Black people and in-work poverty is complex.

However, Conference calls on the local government service group executive committee to work with the national Black members' committee to:

- 1) Undertake a survey amongst Black members in relation to posts held and wages earned within the service group sectors, analysing the impact of outsourcing and use of agency labour on Black workers;
- 2) Develop an action plan based on the findings of the survey that would enable branches and regions to highlight the issue and impact of in work poverty with employers and to produce appropriate material for branches and regions to use;
- 3) Encourage branches to work with employers to seek to ensure Black workers pay and work conditions are on an equal basis with all other employees.

20. Zero Hours and Black Workers

Carried

In recent news it has reported that unemployment has hit a record low. What these statistics do not report is that a large proportion of this is because of the increase in zero hours contracts.

Employers have increasingly been turning to zero hours contracts as part of the general attack on staff terms and conditions that has accompanied the privatisation and cuts to funding across the public services.

This has particularly affected workers in the homecare sector with most privatised companies employing workers on zero hour contracts often without travel time, sick pay, training or the living wage.

We are aware that some individuals choose these contracts in order to meet with family commitments as flexible contracts around their personal lives be it taking care of children or elderly relatives are not available.

However for many other vulnerable workers, many of them Black workers, it is not a choice. A large number of zero hours contracts affect the low paid and the main features of these are Black workers (often not members so without the protection of UNISON) are disproportionately being affected.

For these workers zero hours contracts have a negative impact in a number of ways:

- 1) There is no guaranteed level of regular earnings;
- 2) The need to be available for work when required by the employer hinders the ability of staff to take up other employment;
- 3) The variability of earnings throws into doubt an individual's eligibility to claim various state benefits;
- 4) Zero hours contracts have also shown themselves to be more open to abuse than regular permanent contracts. For example, scheduling of working hours in the homecare sector that allowed no time for travel time between home visits has led to staff working considerably beyond their paid hours in some cases;
- 5) Uncertainty about hours offered each week can lead to fear among staff about complaining or raising issues concerning any aspect of the job or service.

Conference notes UNISON's excellent work on the Ethical Care Charter for homecare workers which has urged local councils to guarantee hours instead of zero hour contracts, payment of travel time, and hourly rates of at least the Living Wage.

Conference notes nineteen local authorities have currently adopted UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

Conference congratulates Black homecare workers in Haringey taking action against Haringey council and their employer for alleged failure to pay the minimum wage.

We therefore call on the local government service group executive to work with the national Black members committee and the private contractors national forum to:

- a) Undertake a survey of members to enquire how many Black workers have taken on a second job who are on zero hours contracts;
- b) Consider ways to promote the values of trade union membership and Black members self-organisation and produce a basic guide for workers on know your right;.
- c) Ensure Black members are fully aware and are at the forefront of the campaign to demand local councils adopt UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

Composite C (Motions 21 and 22) - Raising the Profile of Local Government Workers

Carried

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.

23. Henry VIII's Cruellest Cut

Carried

We voted to leave the EU. Control over our laws, it was argued, would be returned to our Houses of Parliament and all our laws would be debated by our democratically elected Members of Parliament, with our democratic rights strengthened, not weakened.

The proposed Great Repeal Bill, which will repeal The European Communities Act 1972, is intended to put EU law into UK statute. The reality is that the act when carried will not actually repeal at all it will convert EU law into UK law at the point of formal separation from the EU.

The Great Repeal Bill has been widely condemned because the Tory government has seen fit to take this opportunity to include a procedure which fundamentally undermines the right of parliament to scrutinise legislation, using a provision which dates back to Henry VIII which he introduced in the Statute of Proclamations in 1539 known as the Henry VIII Clause. This was a king who believed in the divine right of kings and not the right of parliament to scrutinise his actions or laws.

The Henry VIII Clause allows the government to appeal or amend an Act of Parliament by means of a secondary act with limited or no further parliamentary scrutiny. This has the potential to drastically undermine women's rights, and the gains we have made over decades and generations many of them originating from European legislation. In particular the following:

- 1) Equal treatment;
- 2) Equal pay;
- 3) Equal pension rights;
- 4) Maternity rights;
- 5) Carer's rights;
- 6) Women's health and safety at work;
- 7) Sexual harassment at work;
- 8) Part time and agency workers' rights.

Conference notes that all these issues have been the subject of intense and lengthy negotiations within the local government service group.

Many bitter battles have been fought with local government employers over equal pay in particular, including UNISON's recent spectacular victory in Glasgow city council.

Enhancements to the basic entitlements have been successfully negotiated in many of these areas, but now local government employers are seeking to undermine existing agreements in their attempts to cut costs in the face of government austerity measures.

European law underpins these rights. The UK's equal pay provisions were dramatically increased by the introduction of equal value and women's pension rights through equal treatment, both under European law – and negotiated under the Single Status scheme to ensure equality proofed pay for local government workers.

Likewise the enhancement to maternity and parental rights and the recognition of work life balance all came from Europe, and anti-discrimination law has been hugely impacted by European law.

EU law has been fundamental to our rights at work but also to our ability to organise and campaign as trade unionists – rights which are under threat from our employers, under pressure from the UK government.

Conference calls upon the service group executive to:

- a) Work with the NEC, Labour Link and all other appropriate bodies to defend the rights of workers in local government;
- b) Raise awareness of the impact of the proposed legislative change amongst the membership, and encourage them to lobby against the proposals;
- c) Take the necessary action to support branches in resisting any attempt to reduce existing terms and conditions within local government as a result of any future changes to UK law, and to defend enhanced conditions where they exist.

24. Local Government and Brexit

Carried as Amended: 24.1

Conference notes that when the UK leaves the European Union (EU), a large amount of EU regional aid will be lost. The Local Government Association's report 'Beyond Brexit', published in July 2017, calculated that the funding gap would be £8.4bn. This funding has been used by local areas to create jobs, deliver skills training, and invest in transport and digital infrastructure. Without this funding, local government jobs will be at risk. Conference believes that prior to Brexit taking place, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund promised by the Government must replace in full the money local areas currently receive from the EU.

Brexit could also result in the loss of a large number of regulations relating to local government services and local government workers, such as food safety, equalities, environmental and workplace regulations. Many anti-discrimination rights have been won by taking cases to the European Court of Justice, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) rights in the workplace and in the delivery of local government services. EU regulations have provided many benefits to local government workers, including helping part-time workers achieve fairer pension rights, ensuring workers are entitled to breaks, and improving health and safety.

Potential future trade deals could also make it even easier for local authorities to privatise local government services to multi-national companies. Potential trade partners with which the UK government is already in discussion include those which have not even ratified the most fundamental ILO labour rights conventions and which show clear hostility towards LGBT workplace equality.

Many local government services across the UK rely on migrant workers, from both the EU and beyond the EU. For example in 2016 Skills for Care reported that 80,000 of the 1.3 million workers in the adult social care sector were from non-UK EU countries. Brexit will mean enormous uncertainty to migrant workers in local government, including many UNISON members whose jobs and livelihoods will be at risk. If freedom of movement is restricted, local government services will be at risk of losing employees and struggling to replace them. Vacancy and turnover rates in social care are already high – in 2017 the vacancy rate for social workers in local authorities was 11% and the turnover rate was 16%.

Conferences calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Press the UK government to replace in full the money local areas currently receive through EU regional aid, making this an integral part of our Save Our Local Services (SOS) campaign against cuts and for fair funding for local government in the future. This work should include a plan to lobby politicians across the four nations, and to include UNISON members in actions aimed at raising awareness and putting the maximum pressure on government;
- 2) Explore working with sympathetic organisations in the local government sector, like the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), and APSE to push for fair funding for local government following Brexit;
- 3) Work with the Labour Party and other political parties as appropriate on this campaign;
- 4) Campaign for proper funding for social care, which takes account of the likely future need for a major increase in the workforce, if EU migrant workers have fewer rights to work in the UK;
- 5) Continue to campaign for adequately-funded, accessible and inclusive local government services for LGBT people and other disadvantaged and marginalised groups, delivered by an appropriately trained and skilled workforce, pushing back on the moves to make profit the only driver in decisions on local government services;
- 6) Work with the NEC and other service groups to defend the rights of EU citizens in the UK after Brexit;
- 7) Work with the NEC and other service groups to campaign to safeguard and improve equality and employment rights and for local government workers after Brexit.

Composite D (Motions 25 and 26) - Privatisation and bringing services back
Carried

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:

- a) 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;
- b) 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;
- c) Actively and publicly campaign against any attempts to outsource local government services to the third sector, mutuals, social enterprises and co-operatives;
- d) Work with the sector committees to investigate and campaign for full equal pay compliance following the outsourcing of local government services;
- e) 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;
- f) 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;
- g) 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;
- h) Establish a new campaign similar to “Public Works”;
- i) Commission an academic study around outsourcing in all its forms;
- j) Work with APSE to help make the case across local government for bringing services back in-house;
- k) Provide resources/materials for all four nations to run a high-profile campaign.

Composite E (Motions 28 and 29) – Housing

Carried

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.

30. Disabled Workers at the Sharp end of the Housing Crisis

Carried

Conference notes the depth and scale of the housing crisis the UK is facing, a crisis that has been gathering for decades but which has reached a crescendo with the Conservatives' ideological war on council housing.

Thousands of UNISON members delivering housing services have seen their employers change from local authorities to housing associations and arms length management organisations (ALMOs) in a fragmentation and increasing commercialisation of housing services. In recent years local authorities have begun to set up spin off housing companies that operate outside of the Housing Revenue Account and often focus on building homes for outright sale in order to develop a revenue stream to plug council finances. The pay cap has also depressed wages in the sector, with housing workers often struggling themselves to find affordable homes.

In addition to the devastating impact these changes have had on our members who rely on social housing and which was illustrated by the avoidable tragedy of the Grenfell fire, members who work in housing can see their terms and conditions reduced under these new models of housing delivery. Disabled members working in housing, often on lower pay, may have hard-won reasonable adjustments and equality provisions disappear when moving to the new employer.

With government cuts to funding for social housing and changes to rent regimes, more and more local authorities are beginning to operate like private sector developers. Disabled members are often most at risk when profit making becomes the main objective, with rigidly imposed targets and workplace stress often leading to bullying and discrimination. The tragedy of Grenfell has further increased the pressure on our disabled members doing their best to provide good quality housing services in increasingly challenging circumstances.

Conference notes the bargaining resources available to stewards representing disabled members delivering housing services, including fact sheets on reasonable adjustments, disability leave and the new "Bargaining for Mental Health Policies" guidance. Conference also notes that many branches have elected disability officers who can build up specialist knowledge.

In fragmented housing workplaces, our disabled members self-organised group (SOG) is often a lifeline for members and can encourage them to raise workplace issues and become more active in their local branch.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to fight cuts to members' terms and conditions as a result of ALMOs and the growth of local authority housing companies;

- 2) Publicise bargaining resources for supporting disabled members working in housing to regions and branches;
- 3) Encourage branches to elect disabled members officers and actively promote the disabled members SOG, its regional groups and national events, to regions and branches;
- 4) Continue to work with the NEC, the Labour Link and Defend Council Housing to develop proposals for just and viable housing policies, including a programme of investment in new socially rented accessible council properties.

31. Trading Through Austerity

Carried

Conference condemns the continued attacks on the funding of local councils, which are destroying local services, threatening community cohesion and threatening our members' jobs and income. They represent the biggest threat to locally provided services, controlled by democratically elected councils.

Whilst acknowledging that councils face difficult decisions as to what can be done, most local authorities no longer rely solely on 'in-house' operations to deliver either public services or their own internal functions. Many councils use different models such as 'shared services' between multiple local authorities, between local authorities and other public bodies; outsourcing to private or voluntary providers, and its obverse, 'insourcing'; the increasing use of Local Authority Trading Companies (LATCs) to trade for profit, providing a revenue stream for the local authority; and mutuals.

Whilst UNISON acknowledges that it is laudable for councils to look at new ways to raise revenue, there is a need for local authorities to be clear on the service model they are proposing, and its purpose.

Whilst there appears to be four key themes that are examined when councils are looking at alternative models of delivery: governance, commercialisation, leadership and talent, UNISON has a key role to ensure that any alternative models should not be at the detriment of our members' terms and conditions, or jobs. In order to ensure that our members' best interests are served, it is vital that we develop our political influence with the councillors, who will ultimately determine which avenue is pursued.

Within the Northern region there has been some really positive work to strengthen our political influence when working with local councils such as Gateshead Council. By positive joint working with APSE and UNISON national officers, the branch, region and council have been able to promote alternative in house models to maximise income generation.

Conference believes that promoting and defending the role and values of local democracy is intrinsic to promoting and defending public services. Local government itself needs to do more to highlight the damage that is being made to local services and local democracy.

To do this we need to work with councillors to ensure that motions are debated and passed at full council, that protect our members' jobs and terms and conditions, as well as delivering vital public services.

Campaigns led by UNISON to oppose the austerity policies and proposals on how councils can mitigate cuts by in-house income generation, use of reserves and management of borrowing, should be promoted more to get local councils to adopt them.

Therefore conference calls on the service group executive to develop a campaign which:

- 1) Develops ideas for policies that councils can implement to mitigate against the immediate impact of austerity;
- 2) Creates an understanding of alternatives to austerity policies which would invest in local government and sustain services to communities and generate benefits for local economies;
- 3) Continues to expose the long term harm that austerity policies are doing to council services;
- 4) Supports branches and regions in working with councils to increase income generation from in house services;
- 5) Supports regions and branches to extend and develop their political campaigning work;
- 6) Provides training for councillors that helps deliver increase income generation from in house services to protect our members' jobs and terms and conditions;
- 7) Provides support and resources to assist branches and regions in lobbying the LGA to campaign fairer and better funding for local councils.

32. Support Library and Cultural services

Carried as Amended: 32.1

Conference recognises libraries and cultural services, such as museums and public parks, have been suffering financial cuts over many years as councils struggle under the government's austerity policies. There has been a systematic attack on the terms and conditions of and undermining of the professionalism of people still employed in these services. Conference recognises the importance of these services to local communities as they contribute to the education and social cohesion of communities and give access to learning, art and leisure to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Conference applauds those branches that have resisted the closure of these services alongside their local communities and pledges to continue supporting these campaigns.

The Conference praises those councils who make a priority of cultural services. Paisley may have lost the bid for 2021 UK City of culture to Coventry, however Renfrewshire Politicians and UNISON Renfrewshire have committed to the 2021 legacy. UNISON Renfrewshire has kept up the pressure to ensure the spending commitments are actioned. Investment in a new HQ library, extension to our museum and new museum store (secret collection) are amongst some of the projects coming to fruition.

Conference condemns those councils that promote the use of volunteers to run local libraries, community halls and museums, replacing trained and professional staff.

Conference calls on the SGE to:

- 1) Lobby national politicians on the importance of these services;
- 2) Produce materials highlighting the threat to these services that branches can use in their local campaigns;
- 3) Produce a cultural charter that councils should adopt to commit to protecting these services for their communities;
- 4) Encourage branches to promote library use amongst members and the community.

Conference also calls on all branches, in all sectors, to explore how they can encourage members to use these local services and to explore how UNISON can work in partnership with our members in these services.

33. Social Care Cuts

Carried

This service group conference notes with deep concern the disastrous effects of massive funding reductions for social care services, with spending on these services being forecast to fall below 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2020.

The appalling effects of these cuts are increasingly experienced on a daily basis by UNISON members working in all areas of social care and the negative consequences on vital services for vulnerable people of all ages have frequently been highlighted in many reputable public reports and other social studies.

These serious reports and studies have also been regularly reinforced by innumerable media reports.

This service group conference calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Continue to campaign to highlight the Tory government's systematic under-funding of social care and to publicise this at every opportunity;
- 2) Step up already existing work aimed at emphasising the impact of this sustained under-funding on both vulnerable service users and what is pre-

dominantly a low paid and mainly female workforce;

- 3) Help regions and branches to oppose local closures and service reductions whilst continuing to emphasise the root cause as being under-funding by the Tory government;
- 4) Highlight these issues with the national executive council (NEC) as a priority to ensure that the issues continue to be publicised both inside UNISON by communications with members and externally through all mainstream and significant social media outlets and taken up within the TUC;
- 5) Work with other service groups as necessary in order to maximise the effectiveness of campaigns and to encourage joint working between branches as appropriate.
- 6) Reiterate the decision taken at the 2017 local government service group conference to call on the NEC to arrange a special national delegate conference on social care and to press the NEC to ensure that this should include consideration of the way in which many of these issues are increasingly impacting on the work of other service groups and need to be addressed on a cross service group basis.

34. Youth Services Essential in Northern Ireland

Carried

In Northern Ireland youth services are provided by a combination of statutory and voluntary resources. A budget of £38 million from the NI budget and administered by the education authority underpins these resources.

UNISON members working across both sectors have been involved in discussions responding to a major review of youth services.

Statutory services are being reconfigured to make way for an increasing shift in provision from the voluntary sector. In particular this has led to a retraction of services in outdoor education and learning centres. UNISON Northern Ireland has been campaigning to resist centre closures and service reduction.

Negotiations are on-going on the impact on the workforce. UNISON members are determined to protect statutory provision along with demanding greater stability for our members in the voluntary sector. The pressure of cuts to the Northern Ireland block grant, reduced funding and political instability has created difficult conditions for negotiations between employers and trade unions.

Conference calls on the service group executive to support UNISON Northern Ireland's efforts to protect and retain a viable youth service in Northern Ireland.

35. Local Government and Devolution

Carried

Conference notes the ongoing devolution agenda across the UK nations – at national, regional and local government levels.

While there are some welcome national government developments in relation to the Trade Union Act, health and social care integration and the treatment of the public service workforce in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are concerns about 'devolution' to combined authorities in England, which have largely been established without prior or ongoing consultation with trade unions, service users or community organisations. Conference welcomes the Greater Manchester Protocol between the trade unions and public bodies encompassed in DevoManc, which is an example of good practice in trade union engagement in combined authorities.

Conference believes that little thought has been given to the impact of combined authorities on local government workers, already facing massive job losses and attacks to their pay and conditions of work or future bargaining arrangements.

While differing from each other, most combined authorities tend to focus on planning, infrastructure and transport, often ignoring wider social problems and issues resulting from austerity, privatisation and the run-down in public services, housing and the voluntary sector. Intervention in the local economy is largely restricted to infrastructure, regeneration focussed on retail and support for business, rather than ways to ensure that local people, local government – and other public service workers - have a greater share in local wealth, as has been demonstrated by exciting projects in Preston and other 'Fearless Cities' across the world seeking to create forms of 'municipal socialism'.

Conference believes that national devolution within the UK must be the source of greater strength within our union, through sharing of good practice and policies across the UK nations. Devolution with local government must make a virtue of its proximity to the people it serves, the local economies it operates in and the workforce it employs.

Conference notes that UNISON's 'Devolution Protocol' made a good start at creating a learning environment around devolution within the four UK nations, but needs to be refreshed and more widely disseminated.

Conference also notes that local government in all four UK nations contains a severe democratic deficit, with just one third – or fewer – women councillors, a minority of women leaders and chief executives and most combined authorities and the Northern Powerhouse effectively run by men. This is in contrast to a local government workforce in which 76% of employees are women and the fact that women are most likely to use local government and other local public services. There are few Black, disabled or LGBT councillors either.

Conference therefore calls on the service group executive to strengthen UNISON's approach to devolution and involvement in combined authorities by working with the NEC and:

- 1) Reviewing the Devolution Protocol to ensure that UNISON captures the benefits of devolution and developing an education and engagement project to ensure its widespread 'roll out' and use;
- 2) Monitoring developments within combined authorities and keeping branches and regions informed of them;
- 3) Developing 'rules of engagement' in combined authorities, which cover trade union involvement, strong equality principles, opposition to privatisation and a new local economic strategies which seek to harness local 'wealth' for local people;
- 4) Providing guidance and support to branches and regions involved in combined authorities on trade union recognition, pay and grading issues, TUPE, continuous service and effective bargaining arrangements which seek to overcome the possible dangers of fragmentation and opting-out of the NJC, SJC or other sector-wide bargaining arrangements;
- 5) Working with other service groups to examine the impact of combined authorities across the union and develop innovative ways of supporting regions and branches across sectors to intervene in them for the benefit of UNISON members and local people;
- 6) Working with Labour Link at UK, national and regional levels and the Fawcett Society to develop strategies to overcome the democratic deficit in councils and to encourage UNISON's women members and those from other self-organised groups to become local councillors;
- 7) Promoting the service group's Ethical Care and Residential Care Charters to ensure a fair deal for all care workers where combined authorities are seeking to improve social care provision, integrate health and social care.

36. Working Together In Local Government

Carried as Amended: 36.1

Conference notes UNISON's Working Together guidelines and recognises the benefits of abiding by these guidelines. Ensuring all activists and members are aware of these guidelines gives everyone confidence to contribute and engage to their full potential which ultimately makes our union stronger.

The Working Together guidelines remind all members of the importance of respect, accessibility and inclusion. By revisiting and reaffirming the commitment of all members to these guidelines at all workshops, meetings, forums and conferences held by the local government service group every member can be assured of their value. This commitment will help our service group retain its relevance to the varying

professions in our service group and help sustain our presence, negotiation and bargaining power for future years for the benefit of our lay members.

Conference notes that there are many aspects to inclusion and our awareness of which groups of members are marginalised or excluded develops over time. One example is growing recognition across local government and the local government service group of the need to be inclusive of non-binary members – members who do not identify as solely female or male. While non-binary people are of all ages and as diverse as any other cross section of society, increasing numbers of young workers in particular are identifying outside traditional binary gender norms. It is well established in local government that the ability to be yourself at work impacts on your work performance. It also impacts on your relationships with colleagues and on your health, both mental and physical.

Conference therefore:

- 1) Calls on the service group executive to write to all local government branches encouraging them to add the Working Together guidelines as a standing item on the agenda of every branch executive committee meeting or event that it hosts which involves group work and discussions, and encouraging them to check that all attendees have read, understood and agree to follow them;
- 2) Calls on the national local government service group executive and all regional local government committees to make the Working Together guidelines a standing item on the agenda of every meeting or event that it hosts which involves group work and discussions, encouraging them to check that all attendees have read, understood and agree to follow them;
- 3) Calls on the local government service group executive to request that the national sector forums and committees also make the Working Together guidelines part of any group work or discussion-based activities and meetings;
- 4) Calls on the service group executive to review the Working Together guidelines currently in use within the local government service group; identify best practice, in liaison with the national self-organised groups and national young members forum; and ask the NEC to consider any necessary revisions, with a view to the guidelines being clear about proactive inclusion as well as the avoidance of discriminatory or offensive behaviour or language.

37. College Governors – Transparency and Accountability

Carried

Conference notes that colleges in England and Wales are required to have student and staff representation on the college's governing body. Governors are responsible for overseeing the successful running of the college including:

- 1) Approving the quality strategy;

- 2) Ensuring solvency, the effective and efficient use of resources and the college's sustainability;
- 3) Approving annual estimates of income and expenditure;
- 4) Appointing, grading, suspending, dismissing and determining the conditions of service of senior post-holders and the clerk;
- 5) Setting a framework for the pay and conditions of service for all other staff.

The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 enables colleges in England and Wales to 'go bust' by way of an insolvency regime. If a college were to become insolvent it would potentially leave governors vulnerable under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 (CDDA) as this now applies to governors of statutory corporation FE bodies. Whilst the Department for Education (DfE) is expected to provide information on the implications of the CDDA for governors, UNISON is concerned this could put staff and students off becoming college governors.

Staff and student governors are vital for holding colleges accountable for the decisions that they make and ensuring that staff concerns and priorities are understood by all governors and senior management.

Conference is concerned that some colleges propose to exclude staff and student governors to 'protect' them from becoming liable under the CDDA. This could mean that decisions about the college are not transparent and decision makers are not held accountable. UNISON does not want decisions affecting staff and learners to be made behind closed doors.

Conference notes that in Scotland there was a consultation on the issue of trade union seats on the boards of the 26 further education colleges. UNISON's position is that TU seats should replace the current staff representatives. UNISON Scotland is pressing the Cabinet Secretary to progress this issue positively as happened recently in higher education in Scotland. UNISON Scotland has achieved inclusion of Staff Governance Standard in the Code of Good Governance for Boards, compliance with which is a condition of grant from the Scottish Funding Council.

Conference calls on the local government service group executive to work with the FE sector committee to campaign for:

- a) Staff and students to have their voices heard in FE at a local college level, working with the NUS;
- b) All colleges to have elected staff and student representatives on their governing body;
- c) Trade union seats on governing bodies at colleges across the UK;

- d) Staff governors to receive appropriate training and support to carry out their role effectively;
- e) Decisions made by college governing bodies to be transparent and that staff interests are fully considered;
- f) The DfE to ensure that the guidance on the new FE insolvency regulations protects, as far as possible, staff and student governors.

38. Proper Funding for Further Education – Skills, Pay and Free Education **Carried**

Conference notes with concern that the funding crisis in post-16 education continues. This means further cuts to courses, rising class sizes and, potentially, college closures unless urgent action is taken.

Colleges are at the forefront of delivering technical and professional education and training. Therefore, fair funding for colleges is essential for every community and for employers who rely on skilled employees to be successful. Cuts to FE have a disproportionate effect on the education of the most economically or educationally disadvantaged. Funding cuts mean less individual support is available to students including careers advice, mental health and special needs support.

Spending in England on further education and sixth forms fell by 14% in real terms under the coalition government and rising costs are putting huge additional pressure on stretched budgets. Government cuts to the adult education budget since 2010 have resulted in real-term cuts of more than 40%.

With young people now required to participate in education or training until the age of 18, the 21% per pupil drop in funding at the age of 16 is damaging the educational and employment prospects of young people across England. Chronic under-funding is bad for students, social mobility and the economy.

The decision to leave the European Union requires an urgent focus on supporting both young people and adults to meet the future skills needs our economy. In the UK, colleges support over 2 million people to improve their skills, to help them get into work and earn more. Fair funding for young people and adult learners would result in more people getting technical and professional training to help build a highly skilled workforce, boost productivity and improve social mobility.

Conference is concerned to note the decrease in the number of apprentices in England and the effect that this will have on skills training as well as on college income and jobs within colleges.

Substantial and sustained increased funding in colleges would allow them to address the shocking erosion of staff pay, terms and condition. By 2017 staff pay in England had fallen in real terms by 21.5% since 2009. For the many thousands of college staff whose employers have not implemented national pay recommendations, pay has fallen by more than 25%. UNISON notes that the Association of Colleges

statement that they wish to see a well rewarded workforce, but that current funding levels mean that many colleges are not in a position to increase salaries.

Conference notes that in 2017 UNISON Scotland was a full participant, working closely with NUS Scotland, in the independent Ghadia Review of Student Finance, ministerial announcements on this are expected in Spring 2018. This is likely to lead to an increase in the value of bursaries in FE and HE, with a mixture of loans and bursaries, rather than full bursaries. The student loan scheme is, and will continue to be, different in Scotland with better terms than elsewhere in the UK.

Conference welcomes the Labour Party's commitment to a National Education Service (NES) that would make education free at the point of use, for all those who need it at any stage of their lives; making lifelong learning for all a reality.

Conference welcomes the Labour Party's manifesto commitment to abolish student tuition fees in England, restore maintenance grants in England and invest in further education there. UNISON supports the Welsh government and Northern Ireland Assembly's continued support of the education maintenance allowance (EMA) to enable fair access.

UNISON agrees with the Association of College's statement that "This is not just a funding issue, it is a moral issue and should deeply concern every one of us. Young people deserve the right investment to support their ambitions and abilities."

Conference therefore calls on the local government service group executive to work with the further education sector committee to:

- 1) Work alongside other unions, employers, the NUS and other supportive organisations to run a joint funding campaign calling for greater investment in colleges;
- 2) Brief MPs on the crisis in FE funding and invite MPs into colleges so that they can see the value that colleges bring to local students and the economy;
- 3) Campaign for the abolition of student tuition fees in further education wherever they exist;
- 4) Campaign for the restoration of the English Educational Maintenance Allowance for FE students;
- 5) Continue to campaign for full bursaries for FE students in Scotland;
- 6) Campaign to protect local, fully staffed finance, advice and pastoral services to students;
- 7) Campaign for improved funding and investment in FE colleges thereby enabling all staff to receive pay increases that not only keeps up with inflation but catches up with many years of real terms cuts.

- 8) Campaign for investment in adult and community and prison education throughout the UK to guarantee meaningful lifelong learning opportunities;
- 9) Work with Labour Link to promote the NES to ensure that education is free when needed, throughout life.

39. Organising in FE Colleges

Carried

Conference notes that whilst UNISON represents 30,000 members working in further education and sixth form colleges across the UK, our members work in a variety of roles, including: training and assessment; technical; library services; facilities; administration; specialist learning support, curriculum support; catering; IT, data; finance, procurement, we note the threat they are under.

There continues to be concerns regarding the financial sustainability and future over our FE provision, with a recent report by the (NAO) National Audit Office showing that just over a half of colleges are in deficit. Meaning the future for some of our FE college members is uncertain. Despite the threats that our members face it may be worth exploring ways to celebrate the great work our members do in FE colleges, and holding an event on an annual basis similar to the stars in our schools event.

Conference notes with concern the continued attacks on funding for FE colleges creating further divide over the fact that the Association of Colleges (AoC) only makes recommendations over pay, thereby allowing some colleges not to give any pay awards, and this has resulted in many members not receiving a pay award for over 5 years.

Nationally and locally we continue to campaign on improving pay – including introducing the living wage for the lowest paid college workers – and protecting terms and conditions but more must be done to continue to support these members, and to continue to grow our membership.

Within the Northern region there has been a very successful regional forum established for FE reps which not only provides support for our representatives. This positive work has led to increasing the profile of FE within the region both with members and non members as well as politicians. The region successfully adopted a regional FE manifesto that was launched at a regional council meeting.

Conference believes that the necessary resources should be given to branches and regions to ensure that UNISON representatives are supported to protect our members in FE and to assist in recruiting and organising within the FE sector.

Conference therefore calls on the SGE to:

- 1) Continue to support regions and branches to campaign on improving pay;
- 2) Recruit and organise within each FE college and provide a Regional FE reps network meeting to assist with this;

- 3) Develop a regional network of FE representatives to provide support for local representatives to campaign to resist cuts and oppose any potential compulsory redundancies;
- 4) Encourage branches to develop organising action plans for FE workplaces;
- 5) Work with FE colleges and local politicians to get agreement to the national FE manifesto;
- 6) Hold a Stars in our FE day on an annual basis.

40. Funding for Early Years

Carried as Amended: 40.1

This Conference believes that the current levels of funding across the UK for early education and care are insufficient to provide for the high quality of services our young children deserve.

The recent research report from UNISON Scotland on the impact of early years staff on children's outcomes found that the biggest single factor in the quality of provision for young children was the quality of the staff working with them. The report also found that the highest quality provision was found in the public sector and that this exists whether there is a teacher present or not. UNISON Scotland will use the research findings to encourage the Scottish government to deliver their early years expansion solely by the public sector.

The funding in England for the so called 30 hours of free childcare is inadequate and many providers are reporting that they are unable to offer free places without charging parents supplements. Inadequate funding also impacts on the pay and conditions of early years staff. Despite the high levels of qualifications and high levels of responsibility, many early years staff, especially those in the private sector are on the statutory minimum rates of pay and conditions of service.

Changes in funding regulations have placed restrictions on local authorities in the way that they are able to fund maintained nurseries and nursery schools. This has resulted in many of these nurseries closing or restructuring despite being consistently identified as the type of provider that has the highest quality provision.

This conference believes that it is vital to invest in early years and that a highly qualified workforce with a clear career structure for staff is a key factor in improving the quality of services to young children.

This conference calls on the SGE to campaign for:

- 1) Increased funding for early years services across the UK;
- 2) Recognition of the professional role of early years workers;
- 3) Requirements for all staff in the early years workforce to have, or be working towards a relevant level 3 qualification. Appropriate support, training and a

realistic timetable for staff will be needed to achieve this;

- 4) A right for all early years staff to access ongoing continual professional development and have access to career progression;
- 5) Fair pay for all early years staff that properly rewards their skills and qualifications;
- 6) An expanded role for the public sector in providing early education and care;
- 7) Encourage and support branches to campaign against further cuts to Early Years provision, such as the threat to five outstanding council nurseries in Salford;
- 8) Organise a national demonstration with other unions, entitled “For our Children’s Future” to highlight the threats to services and to promote positive policies, such as those outlined in the 2017 Labour Party General Election Manifesto.

41. Organising in Schools and Multi Academy Trusts

Carried as Amended: 41.1

For the last few years UNISON has organised Stars in our Schools to shine a light on the wonderful work of support staff. So often they are the unsung heroes of schools.

Teaching assistants, midday supervisors, admin workers, catering staff and cleaning staff are part of the whole education team, who make our schools the success they are.

Conference as you are aware it takes a whole team to make a school a safe and happy place for children to learn. Support staff help children learn, keep children safe and healthy, and make sure schools run smoothly. They are the caterers, the admin staff, the finance officers, the teaching assistants, the librarians, the ICT technicians, the parent support advisers and more. They are vital to the effective running of a school but their role is not given the recognition it is due.

Yet despite the vital role undertaken by our members in schools and the excellent national resources, often our school members do not get the recognition they so rightly deserve.

UNISON has opposed the conversion of maintained schools to become academies, and gives support and solidarity to local campaigns that organise to prevent such moves. Yet many are now stand alone academies or part of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). These schools that are converted from maintained schools place our members at greater risk of job insecurity and reduced terms and conditions. There has also been threats to remove trade union recognition, whilst a lot of work has been undertaken to seek trade union recognition in academies and MATs, this work needs to continue to ensure that we can continue to support and defend our members that work in them.

Conference notes with concern that whilst our members are more at risk, this is further worsened by many academies and MATs looking to outsource many services that have traditionally been provided by local authorities such as catering, cleaning and human resources. This potential places our members at risk, and further adds to concern that their terms and conditions will be eroded.

It is therefore vital that all regions and branches support our school members, and actively recruit and organise in schools to ensure that these members remain an integral part of the union. To assist in this recruitment and organisation it is key to utilise the national initiatives such as the annual stars in our schools campaign and the national professional standards for job roles within schools.

It is also vital that we work with local politicians who are willing to champion the positive role of the whole school support staff team in making schools safe and happy place for children to learn.

Communication is vital in building UNISON MAT organisation. It is important that information on national negotiations such as minutes, agendas and any MAT wide policies that are proposed are circulated to branches well in advance of national meetings to ensure democratic accountability and engagement with members.

UNISON is dedicated to campaigning for decent terms and conditions for all school support staff, and we must ensure that we protect and support our school based membership.

Conference call on the local government service group to:

- 1) Ensure that school members in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) are engaged with their UNISON MAT forum and seek to set up a MAT school forum if they don't exist;
- 2) Support branches to draw up model agreements to assist whilst undertaking negotiations in academies and MATs;
- 3) Aim to recruit a UNISON workplace rep in every school and encourage UNISON schools reps to take up training on negotiation skills and TUPE, particularly in these schools threatening to introduce local bargaining;
- 4) Work with branches and local reps to provide full support for branches and school based reps in campaigning against outsourcing/privatisation of school based services;
- 5) Support regions and branches to have a strategy to recruit and organise in all schools;
- 6) Assist branches in working with local politicians to promote the good work our members do in schools.

42. Term Time Working

Carried as Amended: 42.1

This conference believes that in many schools and local authorities, staff on term time only contracts are being treated less favourably than their full time colleagues in respect of their pay and other conditions of service.

UNISON has seen many examples of term time staff not receiving their pro-rata entitlements to benefits such as pay, annual leave entitlement, maternity leave and pay, occupational sick pay and redundancy payments.

The conference notes that a NJC Working Group has been established to look at issues relating to staff employed on term time only contracts. The working group is due to produce joint guidance on term time working issues in 2018.

This conference calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Provide additional UNISON negotiating advice to support branches negotiating local agreements on term time working;
- 2) Make training available for branches on the issues that can affect staff on term time only contracts;
- 3) Provide support to branches in cases where UNISON believes employers are discriminating against term time only employees;
- 4) Discuss advice and guidance on term-time working with other sector committees as relevant.

43. Further Education Area Reviews – Protecting Disabled Workers’ Jobs

Carried

Conference notes the continuing impact of the area review process in post-16 education which has seen a wave of mergers (and failed mergers) across the further education (FE) sector.

Further education has already lost around 30,000 experienced staff, half of whom are support staff, since 2009. The area review process has resulted in further job losses and has proved to be about reducing providers and learner choice and cutting staff and closing premises, rather than improving outcomes and the quality of students’ learning experience, with disabled students particularly at risk from cuts to student support.

Disabled workers are often the first to go in redundancy programmes as part of the drive to merge providers. Remaining FE staff face significantly increased workloads and uncertainty about their future, which can cause or exacerbate existing mental health problems.

Conference believes that the provision of good quality further education is an equality issue, with students more likely to be from a deprived background compared

with school sixth form students, and with disabled students often disproportionately represented.

Conference notes UNISON's guidance for branches dealing with area reviews and the model agreement on organisational change, with the later including using equality impact assessments, but that more needs to be done in ensuring disabled support staff in FE are not unfairly selected for redundancy and that terms and conditions and reasonable adjustments are maintained.

Conference therefore calls on the service group executive, working with the sector committee, to:

- 1) Continue to provide and review FE specific guides, model agreements and bargaining resources that can be used by stewards dealing with the impact of area reviews, including highlighting strategies for protecting disabled workers' jobs, terms and conditions and reasonable adjustments;
- 2) Continue to lobby government to return post-16 funding to sustainable levels, providing a quality further education sector that is accessible to all.

44. Protecting Education Support Workers' Terms and Conditions Post Brexit Carried

Along the 310 mile soft border on the island of Ireland a number of Northern Ireland schools attract pupils and workers from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In some circumstances the journey to and from their workplace is only a few miles.

UNISON members working in support services in these schools have NJC pay terms and conditions. They have become acutely aware of the fact that the majority of workers in Northern Ireland did not support the case for Brexit in the UK referendum.

Conference recognises the particular circumstances of these workers.

Conference calls on the service group executive to ensure future negotiations with employers on pay terms and conditions will continue to be fully applicable to these workers.

Conference also calls on the service group executive to support UNISON Northern Ireland's continuing efforts to ensure future unhindered access to their workplaces.

Motions not reached

4. Local Government Pension Scheme

Conference welcomes the publication by UNISON, with the support of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Palestinian Lawyers for Human Rights, of a revised version

of “Palestine: Is your pension fund investing in the occupation? A UNISON guide to engaging your pension fund.”

This 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, 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; and,
- 4) Report and circulate this information appropriately.

27. Stop the spread of Regional Adoption Bodies

Conference notes the 2016 Education and Adoption Act gives the Government the power to direct councils in England to move their adoption services into a regional body. Conference believes this move to regionalisation is not about the continued improvement of the adoption services. Instead it is driven by the political dogma of privatising children’s social care.

The Department for Education report ‘The potential for developing the capacity and diversity of children’s social care services in England’ indicates part of the long-term strategy of driving the private sector into children’s social care is about segmenting services, slicing them away bit by bit.

Creating a Regional Adoption Agency (RAAs) means councils lose financial control of the Adoption Service and in future are duty bound to purchase future provision, even if it becomes more expensive than it is currently. For our members it means job losses and threats to their pay and conditions. RAAs are only a threat in England, but privatisation of adoption services is a real concern across the UK.

At a time when children’s services are creaking under ever increasing caseloads, high levels of staff stress, high staff turnover, and ever-increasing numbers of agency workers, the focus should be on dealing with these challenges rather than changing a part of the service that works relatively well.

Conference applauds branch campaigns such as those in West Midlands which have scuppered plans for a Regional Adoption Agency.

Conference therefore calls on the local government service group executive to continue to vigorously oppose the privatisation of children's social work, including through the creation of trusts, and to provide materials to support branches in stopping the spread of RAAs.