



**Service Group Conference 2019**

**Preliminary Agenda**

**16 - 17 June 2019**

**ACC Liverpool**

## **ACC Liverpool**

**16 Jun 2019 - 17 Jun 2019**

---

### **Prioritisation Process**

The standing orders committee has agreed a prioritisation process similar to that used at national delegate conference. The service group executive, national sector committees, national private contractors' forum, national self-organised groups, national young members' forum and regional local government service groups, in consultation with branches will now be asked to prioritise motions by 12:00 noon, Thursday 18 April 2019. The standing orders committee will consider the results at its next meeting.

The deadline for submitting amendments to motions is also 12:00 noon on Thursday 18 April 2019.

---

### **Pay**

---

#### **1. Regional pay bargaining**

Conference notes that the new NJC pay spine is not only being adopted by councils who had moved away from the NJC, but also by multi academy trusts who are increasingly coming onto NJC conditions. Both recognise the benefits of the new NJC pay spine in providing stability by future proofing them against future National Living Wage increases. Conference believes the pay spine review has maintained the purpose of the NJC and is increasing its footprint in councils and academies.

The drivers to regional and local pay remain. Further local government cuts coming down the line could intensify pressure on councils to make savings by moving off NJC conditions. This will threaten the viability of the NJC itself.

Conference believes that if the NJC is replaced with either regional or local pay bargaining this may result in the further erosion of pay, terms and conditions for thousands of local government and school workers.

Conference recognises that achieving a high density of trade union membership is vital in maintaining national bargaining.

Conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to promote the benefits of maintaining the NJC;
- 2) Explore and report back on the pros and cons of regional pay bargaining;
- 3) Continue to promote the need for recruitment to increase member density within core employers.

***NJC Local Government Committee***

---

## **2. Pay campaigns**

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

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

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

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

- 1) Gather together the experiences from different pay campaigns and draw up a report on what worked well, detailing good examples of increasing member engagement and building support;
- 2) Launch a concerted pay campaign over the next year that builds upon these lessons and lays the basis for successful campaigns in 2020 and beyond.

***South Lanarkshire UNISON***

---

## **3. Campaigning on pay**

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

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

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

- 1) A demonstration outside the Scottish parliament in conjunction with health and other sectors;

- 2) An online survey of members' views on what action they were prepared to take in support of the pay claim, with over 9,000 members responding;
- 3) Developing campaign themes to highlight our case for fair pay, parity with teachers and the need to catch up with the lost value of our pay;
- 4) A campaign amongst school based members around the 'One Team' campaign with thousands of members sending postcards to the Scottish cabinet secretary for education;
- 5) Extending that campaign amongst all other local government members with thousands of them sending postcards to the president of CoSLA calling for parity across the local government bargaining groups;
- 6) A constant social media campaign, production of short videos to explain the pay offers to members and encouraging them to vote in the consultative ballots and take part in the campaign;
- 7) Phone-banking, emailing and texting members to encourage participation in the digital ballot on the initially improved offer which resulted in an overwhelming rejection with a record number of members taking part;
- 8) Political lobbying of the finance minister throughout the year and at key stages of Scottish budget preparation;
- 9) A Christmas card campaign to the Scottish finance secretary;
- 10) An 'end of year' video highlighting the year-long campaign that members had been engaged in and the fact that this had led to a further improved offer from the employer;
- 11) A final consultative ballot on the final improved offer which resulted in an overwhelming acceptance and a hugely increased turnout (the highest of any national ballot the union has run).

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

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

Conference notes that a number of sectors settled on multi-year deals. However, that should not mean that pay is not an immediate campaign issue or that there are not other bargaining issues that we can organise around. And that we must keep up

the campaigning on the issue of decent pay and catching up with the lost value of wages.

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

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

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

***Scottish Joint Council Committee***

---

#### **4. Food Standards Agency – pay, terms and conditions**

Conference notes that our members' employed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) have not had a decent pay rise since the coalition and the Conservative governments took office. Civil servants are under extreme pressure due to Brexit but are told there is no money for them.

Conference also notes that government cuts and austerity have decimated the functions of environmental health services covering food safety. UNISON's 2019 report into the cuts to environmental health revealed that there had been a 52.92% reduction per head of population in the budget for environmental health between 2009 and 2018 in England and Wales alone. During the same period, there was a 17.58% reduction in food safety inspections. Currently, poultry meat inspection and our members who work as poultry meat inspectors are under threat from being removed from the new inspection regime post-Brexit.

Conference further notes that the FSA's Regulating Our Future proposals are nothing more than an attempt to shift responsibility on the private sector to devalue the role of regulation in the human food chain. UNISON's recent survey of environmental health members in November 2018 asked them whether they agreed with Regulating Our Future. Only 3% of professional environmental health officers agreed.

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;
- 3) Opposing Regulating Our Future and support our members working as environmental health and trading standards officers by initiating joint campaigns to protect the role of meat hygiene inspectors and environmental health officers as well as defending their terms and conditions;
- 4) Educating the public on the part of 'farm to fork' regulation by launching a campaign calling on the FSA and government to recognise the role of all local government and civil service employees in protecting the public from unsafe and diseased meat, as well as safeguarding animal welfare;
- 5) Enabling the production of a joint magazine-type newsletter aimed at members working in the Food Standards Agency and local government in England and Cymru/Wales.

#### ***Food Standards Agency Committee***

---

### **5. Local government apprenticeships - same work, sub-par pay**

Conference notes that apprenticeships are increasingly the way that young people in the UK enter local government as a profession, providing a structured way to recruit those fresh into the workforce by combining part-time education with the work they'll be doing once the apprenticeship is completed.

Conference further notes however that, while some local authorities in the UK pay more than the un-liveable national minimum wage for apprentices, pay disparity between local government apprentices and their colleagues remains rife, with apprentices typically on lower pay rates than non-apprentice new starters doing the exact same work and of similar experience. This is why UNISON's Apprenticeship Charter includes a commitment to paying the rate for the job.

Conference acknowledges that we can't begin to raise the profile of apprentices in local government and the vital work that they are increasingly asked to do without fighting for equal remuneration for that work.

Conference therefore requests that the local government Service Group Executive:

- 1) Collect from regions and branches information on which local government roles apprentices are placed in and the discrepancy between entry-level apprentice and non-apprentice job grades in that role.

- 2) Publish and circulate the resulting findings as a report into pay disparity to relevant bodies and policy makers, aiming to widely educate about this continued issue.
- 3) Continue to publicise UNISON's Apprenticeship Charter and encourage branches to make its adoption a bargaining objective with employers
- 4) Campaign for the removal of apprentice-only rates of pay in future pay award bargaining, to instead put apprentices on the starting rate of the grade that work would otherwise be awarded.
- 5) Publicise the UNISON membership options available to young members who are local government apprentices and continue the campaign to end discrimination in the national living wage apprenticeship rate.

***National Young Members' Forum***

---

## **Pensions**

---

### **6. Local Government Pension Scheme**

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

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

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

The UNISON guide explains how to argue for 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. It sets out steps LGPS members can take to ensure their pensions are not invested in companies involved with the occupation.

Conference instructs the Service Group Executive, at an appropriate time, having due regard to the legal position, and seeking the support of other service group executives and of the National Executive Council as need be, to:

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

***City of Wolverhampton Local Government***

---

## **7. Local Government Pension Scheme**

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

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

The current position is that, in December 2018, PSC won permission to take the case to the Supreme Court, it has agreed to do so, and the case is likely to be heard later this year.

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

Conference instructs the Service Group Executive, at an appropriate time, with due regard to the legal position, and seeking the support of other Service Group Executives and of the National Executive Council as need be, to:

- 1) Circulate the guide widely;
- 2) Develop training and support to enable members to act, in an effective and sustained way, on its recommendations; and,
- 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.

***Islington UNISON***



---

## **8. Safeguarding LGPS Investments**

This conference notes that LGPS pension funds are invested to secure the best returns and to safeguard the pensions of public sector employees and pension fund members.

We further note that these funds are in the majority invested in funds which add little value to local areas and local economies. This conference therefore calls upon UNISON to:

- 1) Endorse the adoption of a community wealth building approach to pensions investment seeking a minimum of 5% investment from LGPS funds provided such investment is in line with due diligence and regulatory requirements and;
- 2) Support the raising of awareness of community wealth building led investments to our local economies for employment and skills and an economic approach that supports the many not the few.

***Manchester Branch***

---

## **9. Divest from Carbon Campaign - Save our future, save our planet**

Conference recognises the real threat of climate change to our planet.

According to the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, (IPCC) human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1C of global warming above pre-industrial levels.

The Paris Agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by 'limiting global warming to well below 2C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5C. In order to prevent further global warming of more than 1.5C global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide need to fall by about 45% from 2010 by 2030, they would need to peak within 12 years (by 2030) to increase the chances of limiting global warming by 1.5 degrees.

Emission reductions in the UK since 2012 have primarily come from the decarbonisation of electricity generation in the power sector at a national level which is shifting progressively from fossil fuels to low carbon and renewable generation. To maintain the current rate of emissions reduction and reach zero carbon by 2050, further changes to national policy and infrastructure are required in all sectors. And to reach net zero carbon by an earlier date, rapid and wide scale changes in energy production, supply and usage at the national level are needed.

Conference notes the actions of many schoolchildren who have protested to put pressure on local authorities and others to take urgent and meaningful action to halt global warming by 2030.

Some councils are declaring a climate emergency to publicly acknowledge the efforts that need to be made now and to set out a positive programme of change to tackle the climate change crisis.

Conference notes UNISON's Divest from Carbon Campaign that seeks to promote disinvestment of local government pension funds to reduce shareholdings in emission-producing industries. While we applaud this initiative we recognise that making these arguments is currently an uphill struggle for our representatives on pension boards. We want to be part of a trade union movement that makes a real difference to this campaign so that we can both reduce carbon emissions and ensure that our pension funds continue to fund our pensions for current and future generations.

We ask that the Divest from Carbon Campaign is widened to include:

- 1) Information for our members on divestment and other strategies to reduce carbon dioxide emissions;
- 2) On-going training for representatives on pension boards to be able to make the arguments for divestment and for alternative investments;
- 3) Training including workshops on how to influence pension boards and annual monitoring and reporting on progress made.

***Cambridge City and South Local Government***

---

## **Workplace terms and conditions**

---

### **10. Zero hour contracts**

Conference deplores the use of zero hour contracts in local authorities, schools and in private contractors.

Zero hour contracts represent an incredibly insecure form of employment, and are a major cause of in-work poverty. Employers can cancel shifts at short notice, or not award shifts in the first place. Many zero hour workers don't know from one week to the next whether they will be able to pay for their food, rent and bills. This often unsteady flow of income can also stop people from claiming certain benefits.

Zero hour contracts are also a major cause of stress. They require people to be regularly on call for work, often with little notice. This disrupts life outside of work and places a particular strain on families and care for dependants.

In addition, zero hour workers have fewer workplace rights than permanent employees, and inferior terms and conditions – in many cases there is no, or very poor sick pay, and no occupational pension.

Conference believes that the vast majority take zero hour contracts because there are no alternatives – there is insufficient permanent work available and many workers have two or more zero hour based jobs so as to make ends meet.

Most zero hour workers in local government are women, as these contracts are most common in female dominated areas like social care, and a large proportion of zero hour workers are under the age of 25. So, zero hour contracts exacerbate inequality in the sector.

Conference believes that the workplace reforms announced by the government in December 2018 were woefully inadequate. As TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady said, “The right to request guaranteed working hours is no right at all”. Employers remain free to decline workers’ requests to move off zero hour contracts and onto guaranteed hours.

Conference notes with alarm, the use of exclusivity contracts, whereby employers can prevent workers working for other employers even when not required by the first employer, and fines for late notification of non-attendance. Conference condemns these practices.

Conference believes that zero hour contracts are also detrimental to the quality of service provision. Zero hour workers are less likely to raise health and safety concerns or safeguarding issues for fear of reprisal and deprivation of work. Good quality public services are best delivered by a workforce that is fairly treated and properly paid. In social care, continuity of care, provided by a stable workforce, is vital.

Conference further believes that privatisation and outsourcing increase the likelihood that zero hour contracts will be used.

Conference therefore calls on the Service group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the NEC to campaign for a change in the law to prevent the use of zero hour contracts in local government;
- 2) Campaign for an end to the use of all zero hour contracts within local government and schools, including by contractors;
- 3) Seek discussions with the Local Government Association (LGA), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), to push them to support the campaign to get rid of zero hour contracts from local government. Work with UNISON’s Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland Regions as appropriate;
- 4) Campaign to ensure that where zero hour contracts are still used, they do not include punitive elements such as exclusivity clauses or fines for late notification of non-attendance;
- 5) Review the guidance available to local government branches on zero hour contracts and update it if necessary, ensuring that it includes advice on

pushing local authorities to prevent organisations they contract with from using zero hour contracts;

- 6) Work with Labour Link to feed into reviews by the Labour Party into workplace rights, to highlight the damaging nature of zero hour contracts
- 7) Ask Labour Link to raise this issue within the Labour Party to seek commitments from all Labour councillors to oppose the use of zero hour contracts in local government, local authority schools and on outsourced contracts
- 8) Produce recruitment and organising materials to assist branches and regions in recruiting more zero hour workers into membership and getting them more involved in UNISON.

### ***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

## **11. Negotiating disability leave policies with local government employers**

Disability leave is time off from work for a reason related to someone's disability. It is an example of a reasonable adjustment which local government employers have a duty to provide to disabled staff under the Equality Act 2010. It is different to sick leave – in many cases the worker is not actually sick – and it can be planned or un-planned.

Not all disabled workers need to take disability leave. However those that do often find that local government employers refuse to acknowledge their legal duty. These workers can find that what should be counted as disability leave is instead logged as sick leave and they end up on a capability, with the potential to lose their job.

However, if jointly negotiated workplace policies are in place, then this can overcome this reluctance to recognise the right to disability leave as a reasonable adjustment by some local government employers and managers. Some local government employers have already agreed a disability leave policy and where this is done jointly with the union it can give guidance to both managers and staff and ensure fairness and consistency.

UNISON has produced bargaining guidance for branches to help negotiate with employers and this includes a model policy that local government employers can agree with the union. The guide gives some examples of disability leave including:

- 1) Rehabilitation training for a newly disabled worker learning to manage a condition;
- 2) Cancer treatment and rehabilitation;
- 3) Waiting for the employer to make reasonable adjustments;
- 4) Assessment for conditions such as dyslexia;
- 5) Counselling for a mental health problem;

6) Period of sickness related to disability.

UNISON's key bargaining aims when negotiating with local government employers are that disability leave should be:

- a) Paid leave;
- b) Counted separately to ordinary sick leave;
- c) Removed from trigger calculations in capability procedures etc;
- d) There should be no maximum duration, the legal test is what is "reasonable".

Agreeing a disability leave policy with local government employers not only helps individual members and reduces the time our stewards spend on case work but it can also be a good news story about the benefits of collective bargaining to use in recruiting new members.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- i) Collect information from branches to identify existing policies on disability leave and share good practice
- ii) Circulate the UNISON Disability Leave bargaining guide and model policy to branches and regions and urge them to raise and negotiate disability leave policies with their employers;
- iii) Support appropriate campaigns for disability leave to be a statutory requirement written into legislation.

***National Disabled Members Committee***

---

## **12. Exemptions from hot-desking – a reasonable adjustment for disabled workers**

Since 2010 local government has faced swingeing budget cuts as part of central government's austerity agenda. This has led to many councils introducing hot-desking in order to reduce their premises costs. Workers no longer have a fixed desk but instead have to find an empty desk every day.

Conference is concerned about the impact of this practice on our disabled members who may have reasonable adjustments in place that do not fit in with hot-desking. For example, having to set up your desk every day in a way that alleviates pain while working is likely to have the opposite effect. Moving chairs, desks, adapted computer and electronic equipment and footrests as well as having to adjust or find a desk every time you come back to the office, even if only for an hour, wastes time and money as well as causing pain and fatigue. Coming back to find your specially adapted chair has been altered by someone else whilst they've been using it, or changing desks every day or several times a day can trigger or exacerbate stress, anxiety or other mental health problems.

For deaf workers who use British sign language and need to sit next to their interpreter, hot-desking may not allow this. Deaf workers may also need to have a fixed desk which is in sight of a visible fire alarm signal.

For disabled women members experiencing the menopause, hot-desking may mean being forced to sit in a warmer part of the office. Where menopause is severe or exacerbates an existing disability, a fixed desk might be a reasonable adjustment.

The government's guide to reasonable adjustments specifically states that exemptions to hot-desking can be a reasonable adjustment and local government employers therefore have a duty to provide this. The government guide gives the example of "allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking".

Conference notes UNISON's updated guide 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' which can be used to negotiate reasonable adjustments, including exemptions to hot-desking, with local government employers.

Conference welcomes UNISON's new 'Bargaining on Hot-desking Policies' guide and further notes UNISON's health and safety guidance which can be used to assess work stations. However, more work is needed to assess the impact of hot-desking on all of our local government members, including the potential link to work related stress, anxiety and other mental health problems.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Investigate the impact of hot-desking on local government workers and on disabled workers in particular;
- 2) Circulate UNISON's 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' guide and the new 'Bargaining for Hot-desking policies' guide to branches and consider whether any further advice can be given to branches on negotiating for exemptions from hot-desking for disabled members in local government;
- 3) Publicise UNISON's guides 'The Menopause and Work' and 'Disability and Health and Safety'.

***National Disabled Members Committee***

---

### **13. A breakthrough in tackling stress and bullying/harassment**

Conference understands that work-related stress is a top concern of local government members. The 2018 TUC survey of safety reps confirmed that stress, bullying/harassment and overwork were the biggest three health and safety concerns.

Conference notes that stress is not an inevitability; it is a consequence of the way work is organised and the way people are managed in local government. The solution lies in prevention, with the HSE Management Standards approach to tackling stress, which refers to six primary causes:

- 1) Demands including workload;
- 2) The control people have in the way they do their work;
- 3) The support people get from line management and colleagues;
- 4) Relationships at work;
- 5) How well they understand what's expected of them;
- 6) How change is managed.

The approach involves an anonymous staff survey, and then focus group discussion of the results leading to action plans to address the issues identified. It recognises that the solutions best stem from the people affected.

The breakthrough is in full branch involvement in the process; joint working with the employer, significantly improving the effectiveness of the approach. Trust in the branch means we can carry out a confidential survey, which includes people's names, jobs, teams, and locations. We can build a much more accurate picture, identifying hotspots, where things are really bad, and the specific causes behind them. Full branch involvement will also improve survey response rates, focus group discussions, action plans, monitoring of implementation, and staff and employer confidence in the whole process. Bullying and harassment will be addressed along with all the other causes of stress such as violence at work.

In the northern region, the Health and Safety Committee have been leading a stress project which has brought together branches and employers to undertake detailed analysis and to find joint solutions to address the issues raised. Several branches have used the stress survey developed with members and we are keen that the value of such initiatives is shared across the union.

Conference understands this solution will be valuable wherever stress is a serious problem for members, wherever high sickness absence rates are a serious concern of the employer and wherever they are willing to work with us. Where employers have had doubts over the Management Standards approach, this is an opportunity to show that, by working with us, it is very effective.

Conference notes that experience from branches shows that this work:

- a) Is a very real support to our members affected by stress;
- b) Helps prevent the harm that stress can cause;
- c) Helps develop partnership working with employers;
- d) Demonstrates the union effect;
- e) Represents a considerable opportunity for the recruitment of members and reps;
- f) Will help improve our public services.

Conference understands that full branch involvement in tackling stress is a long-term commitment, and that branches will need the appropriate financial and physical resources to help develop the capability and capacity required. Developing capability will involve the provision of training resources and mentors, to help develop the skills, knowledge and confidence required. Developing capacity, the time required, will stem from discussions with the employer over the business case and the significant savings to be made from reduced sickness absence etc.

Conference calls upon the local government Service Group Executive to wholeheartedly grasp the opportunity to develop and support this work, to provide the necessary training, materials, advice and assistance to help make this approach available to all branches.

Building on work done to date, conference calls specifically on the Service Group Executive to:

- i) Identify appropriate financial and physical resources to develop appropriate training resources and materials for branches;
- ii) Identify appropriate financial and physical resources to develop and provide training for those involved with delivering training and assistance at regional level;
- iii) Ask regions to fully back this work, providing the training and advice for branches, and facilitating the sharing of experience between branches;
- iv) Ask branches to consider leading on this development in their area, electing a branch project lead, and discussing it with employers;
- v) Work with the NEC, regions and branches with a view to ensuring that employers at local and national level may develop a greater understanding of how tackling stress more effectively will reduce costs and improve productivity, as well as improving the health of workers;
- vi) Ensure that UNISON continues to lobby local government employer organisations, the Westminster government and health and safety executive for clearer guidance and stronger enforcement action regarding the implementation of the stress Management Standards;
- vii) Campaign with the aim of establishing illness resulting from work-related stress as an industrial injury, acknowledging that stress is always a 'process' rather than 'event'.

***Northern Region***

---

#### **14. Women, wellness and work**

Conference notes with concern that despite previous motions and campaigns highlighting gender specific health issues faced by women in the workplace there is still very little recognition nor help and advice in the workplace for employees or employers.



Whilst these health issues may not in themselves impact on productivity, lack of support and unsympathetic workplace cultures can exacerbate symptoms and this can influence women's engagement with and enjoyment of work.

Menstrual cycle related problems, pregnancy, miscarriage, termination, hysterectomy, and menopausal transition to name but a few gender specific health issues are all important aspects in considering women's occupational health. Whilst there are some safeguards for women experiencing pregnancy related illnesses, other gender specific health issues are dealt with through draconian sickness absence procedures.

Women make up approximately 50% of the UK workforce. Female workers are to be valued and women are a growing labour pool. Supporting women in the workplace means they stay longer, and are happier, in work. And yet, women's unemployment is currently at a 24 year high.

There are approximately 36 million people of working age with official workforce figures of 33 million with 3 million unable to work or claiming long-term benefits. That is more than sixteen million women of different ethnic, faith, and socio-economic backgrounds, different family and marital status, disabled and non-disabled women, and lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, plus and heterosexual women, spread across all industries in every corner of the country of which a significant proportion will experience one or more gender specific health related issues while still holding down a job. Despite this fact, there is scant guidance for employers and employees to specifically support women through gender specific health issues.

Many employers have 'tightened up' existing procedures in an attempt to reduce rates of sickness absence. Other employers have no flexible working or are cutting down on the flexibilities allowed. Such measures discriminate against women as they do not take account or recognise the gender-specific health issues many women face and are often forced to take time off sick for.

Employers need to ensure that their workplace environment is inclusive of female workers and that there is an investment in the specific health-related needs of working women to include making allowances either in sickness absence procedures and/or flexible working to include menstrual cycle related problems, pregnancy, miscarriage, termination, hysterectomy and menopausal transition.

Absences as a result of issues relating to menstrual cycle related problems, miscarriage, termination, hysterectomy, and menopausal transition are recorded in the same way as any other sickness absence. Most employer procedures do not even mention that there are specific difficulties that may be experienced by women. Absences are often not treated in a sensitive manner and many members face the prospect of sickness absence interviews where absence statistics are being used as the primary motivator and no consideration taken of the actual illness. Effectively, many female UNISON members are being subject to capability or competency hearings just for being a woman.

Conference calls upon the local government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Produce national guidance and training that enables reps to challenge attitudes and raise awareness of gender specific health conditions suffered by women in the workplace;
- 2) Develop negotiating guidance on policies to support women with gender specific health conditions including mandatory training for all employers and employees in the workplace;
- 3) Include gender specific policy, for example on menopausal transition, as part of pay claims;
- 4) Influence policy makers for women with gender specific health conditions to have legal protection including more flexible working against punitive sickness absence policies.

***National Women's Committee***

---

## **15. Undermining of terms and conditions**

UNISON in Northern Ireland represents thousands of workers in the education sector and plays a leading role at the regional bargaining tables on behalf of our members.

These workers are the cooks, the cleaners, the maintenance and admin staff who are the backbone of the further education, primary and secondary school support services. Together with the thousands of classroom assistants in UNISON they are a vital part of our growing membership in the education sector.

On the bargaining front we have taken advantage of the opportunities in the NJC pay deal to secure commitment from the education authority covering schools to a pay and grading review with the aim of enhancing pay progression.

We have welcomed the involvement of our HQ colleagues in the upskilling of our lay bargainers in job evaluation.

We have also committed to prioritising a challenge to the undermining of terms and conditions of our special needs classroom assistant membership. School employers are altering and lowering pay levels by allocating lower pay rates for hours spent outside the classroom. Heretofore the rate of pay is contractually the same for all hours in post. As school budgets for special needs school staff resources have remained stagnant and therefore stretched to meet a growing demand, it is the classroom assistants who have felt the pinch.

Conference notes that UNISON is challenging this and that a special review with the education authority is now underway.

Conference also notes that our regional negotiating team has warned that failure to resolve this issue will be grounds for a trade dispute.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Support this challenge;

2) Discuss practical ways in which members can be supported.

## ***Northern Ireland Region***

---

### **16. Education funding formula**

UNISON Northern Ireland is pressing for greater transparency in the Education Funding Formula. The funding of education in our region is as complex as the governance arrangements. The total amount to be spent on schools is called general schools budget and is made up of three categories of spending:

- 1) The aggregated school budget available to individual schools;
- 2) Resources held at centre (payment of additional resources in teaching);
- 3) Centrally held resources attributable to schools (home to school transport and school meals).

It is of great concern that the education authority has reported a funding shortfall of £58 million for 2018/19. They are warning that the funding gap could grow to £350 million for 2019/20. UNISON's policy is to demand sustainable funding for schools and that the Barnett Consequentials be properly allocated to ensure the funding resource required is available.

Conference notes that in these circumstances the pressure on schools to make cuts is immense and we are very concerned that our membership in support services are vulnerable to these cuts. While a review of the cleaning and school meals service are in play we have managed to date to hold off any privatisation threats.

Conference also notes that a further consequence of the financial pressures is the reduction in funding of additional measures to improve the nutritional quality of the schools meals service. UNISON is challenging this shift in policy and our Regional Council has decided to prioritise a focus on school meals.

The consequences at the bargaining table are that we must remain vigilant and protect our members jobs, terms and conditions.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to support our education membership in their campaigning and bargaining strategies in the education sector.

## ***Northern Ireland Region***

---

### **17. LGBT - the + factor**

Conference celebrates UNISON's work over the past 25 years to promote women's equality and participation and to tackle sexism and sex discrimination at work, in our union and across society.

Like other service groups, the local government service group has a majority of women members and our rules and practices to encourage women's participation are vital to achieving our equality objectives. Likewise, in our negotiations, it is vital

that we demand employers consider the impact of policies and practices on women workers and take active steps on equal pay and to tackle all forms of workplace discrimination. Considerations of gender and monitoring of women's progress or experiences are key to much of this.

Conference notes however that an overemphasis on gender where gender has no relevance can have the effect of reinforcing gender stereotypes, which can in turn reinforce gender job segregation and the 'glass ceiling' and have no recognition for workers who do not identify as women or men.

Conference believes that workers should be able to attend work according to their gender identity, whether this is female, male or non-binary. This may mean small but important changes to systems and facilities so that they are inclusive, such as inclusive gender and title options in electronic records and non-gendered dress codes. By becoming more inclusive for our members we also become more inclusive to the people we work with.

Conference notes that the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) self organised group (SOG) has always sought to be fully representative of its diverse membership, in line with UNISON's rules. It notes that the LGBT group works with inclusive, umbrella definitions of bisexual and transgender. Its bi network is for all members who feel attraction to more than one gender, and its trans network is for all types of self-identifying trans people; for people with trans backgrounds and members whose gender identity does not fit into the gender binary i.e. non-binary members.

However, despite these inclusive definitions some members who the LGBT group considers to be part of the group are put off. The LGBT group hears repeatedly that when members attend its meetings, they feel welcomed and included, but before they attend they had been unsure. This is particularly the case for members who do not personally use the label LGBT about themselves, for example members who identify as queer. It is clear that there must be many other members who are put off and never get over that barrier.

Conference notes that the national LGBT committee undertook a consultation during 2018 on making the LGBT SOG fully inclusive. This followed a motion from the national young members' forum to 2017 LGBT conference highlighting the growth in the number of people, and young people in particular, identifying their sexual orientation and gender identity in many different ways beyond a binary definition, and expressing their preference to see the LGBT group move to organise on an LGBT + (plus) basis. The overwhelming majority of the consultation responses were in favour of the proposal to change the group's name to LGBT + (plus).

Putting the + in the group's name would not change its existing remit of being a self-organised group for all members who experience prejudice because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, but would demonstrate an inclusiveness beyond that conveyed by the current name so that people who the group consider to be members are not put off from participating.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to encourage the negotiation of inclusive language in local government agreements and policies, and of inclusive practices and procedures across our local government workplaces:
- 2) Gather good practice examples from branches organising in the local government service group of inclusive employer policies and practices;
- 3) Encourage support amongst local government members for the rule change from LGBT conference to national delegate conference on the LGBT group changing its name to LGBT+;
- 4) Circulate the national LGBT committee's briefing on the group's name becoming LGBT+, LGBT bargaining factsheets and how to be a good trans ally leaflet to branches organising in the service group.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee***

---

## **18. Increasing access for young workers to training and professional development**

Conference notes that austerity has seen local authority spending on in work training slashed as staff development budgets have been cut back to the bone. In social care private sector providers focused on making profits provide the bare minimum of opportunities for training. There has also been a shift to online and distance learning and eLearning.

UNISON strongly believes that where local government employers invest in training this can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of staff and lead to better morale and improved outcomes for service users.

Nonetheless, where training is offered by local government employers, young members often find it difficult to access. There is often a feeling that we haven't "done our time" or proved our commitment to the organisation.

Research has shown that training and development opportunities are often concentrated at the upper echelons of organisations, with younger workers on low pay losing out. Where training is offered to young workers it is often unaccredited and not part of a professional development approach which would allow them to further their careers. Employers tend to focus on mandatory and statutory training and less on development.

Conference further notes that the shift to online and eLearning formats can often exclude members who are disabled, "agile workers" or part-time staff (particularly women), which often leads to their personal training and development being far behind that of their colleagues which can be a slippery slope to capability concerns, being passed over for promotion and low morale.

Conference notes that the National Young Members' Forum consultation found that training and development is a key area of concern for our young members in local government and therefore believes it is vital that we develop more campaigning and

bargaining materials to ensure young members' professional development is not being neglected.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group executive to work with the National Young Members' Forum to:

- 1) Investigate young workers' access to training and professional development in local government employers;
- 2) Produce guidance for branches and regions on making the case to employers that training young workers can bring benefits for employers, staff and service users;
- 3) Negotiate with national local government employers' bodies to invest in staff training that is accredited and forms part of a career and professional development approach;
- 4) Support and encourage local government employers to sign and implement the UNISON Apprenticeships Charter;
- 5) Liaise with Learning and Organising Services to promote UNISON's learning programmes to young members.

***National Young Members' Forum***

---

## **Local government finance and cuts**

---

### **19. Cuts in council budgets**

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

Local government workers and the communities they serve have both paid for and borne the brunt of austerity since the crisis in the banking system in 2008.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to highlight the damage to council services of the cuts;
- 2) Demand an increase in council funding from central and devolved governments;
- 3) Campaign for additional tax raising powers for local government to fund local services; and

- 4) Call for a review of the current council tax system to make it more progressive or to replace it with a different system that is fairer and raises more money for local services.

***South Lanarkshire UNISON***

---

## **20. Save local government services**

Local government funding has been cut at a greater rate than any other part of the public sector since 2010.

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

We therefore call upon the local government Service Group Executive to:

Campaign and lobby the appropriate committees in parliament, Scottish parliament, Welsh assembly and Northern Ireland assembly, to re-evaluate spending priorities and increase funding to ensure the needs of local government services are met.

***Welsh Joint Education Committee***

---

## **21. Social care cuts**

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 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 predominantly 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) Urge the NEC to encourage regions to maximise their efforts to publicise the impact of social care cuts, including the development of cross-service-group activity and discussion designed to develop wider understanding of social care cuts and how they can be resisted.

### ***South East Region***

---

## **22. Income generation**

As part of UNISON's campaign against austerity cuts, UNISON Renfrewshire has been working on a project of income generation and job creation to improve services for the local community.

The first part of the project, the creation of resident's funeral scheme, has been approved by Renfrewshire council. This scheme would reduce the average cost of a funeral for local residents by as much as £1900.00.

The second part of the project is looking at a capital programme to build a publicly owned crematorium and associated funeral services. It is estimated that this could potentially create 40 jobs and generate a 50% return for the local authority.

This initiative will also require the local economy to respond positively as there is a potential gain for them in terms of associated business.

This conference encourages the Service Group Executive, regions and branches to:

- 1) Fully investigate possible income generation schemes.
- 2) Resource feasibility studies and work alongside the employers to develop initiatives.
- 3) Work alongside organisations such as APSE (Association for Public Sector Excellence) who can assist in research and development of ideas.
- 4) Work with representatives of local communities to seek their involvement and input.
- 5) Recognise that different arrangements for governance are in place across the UK and ensure that full consideration is given to the devolution protocol.

***UNISON Renfrewshire***

---



---

### **23. A state of crisis in local government**

UNISON Wales has been highlighting the damage being done to our communities through our Fair Funding campaign and Wales audit of austerity work which has highlighted that councils have lost over 28,000 jobs since 2010.

The budget given to local authorities is an investment in local services, in prevention and early intervention work which ensures that councils can continue to make a positive difference to their residents' lives. It also helps to ensure the reduction of pressures on the rest of the public sector, to save money for the public purse, and to contribute to the wide prosperity and wellbeing of our nation.

It would assist all local authorities if Welsh government did not enact new legislation with initial grant funding which is then later withdrawn and not included in a settlement budget. Welsh government needs to stop pitting public services against each other. Local government services are as important to communities as the NHS; we need to protect the education of our children, the care of our elderly and other vulnerable sections of our society. Welsh government needs to deliver a sustainable funding settlement for local government. Unprecedented funding pressures and demand for key services are pushing councils to the brink, with the extinction of some services.

Local government has sustained disproportionately large reductions to its funding over this decade, in comparison with the rest of the public sector. The financial viability of some councils is now under threat and many are becoming increasingly unable to ensure the provision of dignified care for our elderly and disabled, protect and educate our children, boost economic growth within their communities, fill potholes, keep green spaces accessible or build homes and collect rubbish.

Unless councils have an increase in their financial settlement from Welsh government, then many will reach the point where they only have the funds to deliver their statutory responsibilities and it will be our local communities and economies that will suffer the consequences. Council staff work hard to deliver services to those most in need, but it is becoming increasingly difficult.

Using Neath Port Talbot council as an example, when scrutinising draft budget for consultation 2019/20 proposals, it is evident that some service provision is going to be drastically affected with the loss of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service, which will have a detrimental impact on all children with English or Welsh as a second language, as well as affecting children's attainment moving forward and their productivity within the communities that they live. Neath Port Talbot schools will lose teachers due to the Westminster agreed pay deal, the cost of which has not been included in the budget settlements. Neath Port Talbot Council will need to reduce the costs of residential care, and in doing so will limit the available options to our elderly and vulnerable residents at a time when we need to minimise the disruption in their lives.

In June 2018, UNISON's local government service group executive conducted a government-wide survey on the impact of cuts to local councils and the work carried out by council workers. The results are indicative of a crisis in social work, with social

workers describing their work as “in a state of crisis”, and we believe that policy-makers in Welsh government should take note that 8 out of 10 social workers are working unpaid overtime in order to keep their service going, and over half are thinking of leaving their profession for something less stressful.

The situation in social work finds itself in is complex. From a lack of resource within the service itself, to the impact of wider austerity on social services, the problems are multi-fold – but the solution is more straightforward. It is clear that the under-financing of social services, and the wider community services that social workers rely on, is crippling the system. The lack of preventative services will lead to crisis across all sections of public provision. With an ever increasing focus on budget needs, rather than the needs of service users, social workers describe the loss of a “person-centred” approach. The shortfall in the funding of adult social care has had an impact on the ability to support hospital discharges. Social work depends on access to a multitude of services, and cuts to these services are undermining the work that social workers do. Staff refer to a lack of voluntary, charitable and private sector services to refer service users to due to funding cuts. These include clubs for disabled children, youth clubs, hostels, counselling and mental health services, parent groups, youth groups and children’s centres.

The crisis in the benefits system is adding further strain. Universal credit roll-out has seen a rise in homelessness and increased poverty. In some cases, families are being relocated to other counties when facing homelessness. Cuts to other public services such as policing means longer waiting times for social workers who may be dealing with violent individuals, putting both the social worker and the user at risk, another example of public service funding deficit.

In UNISON’s survey, when asked what they believed the biggest challenges facing the employer, members highlighted the following areas to highlight their top concerns: Adult social care; Cuts to youth services; Lack of housing options’, Safeguarding children and young people. When asked to comment about how cuts are affect their jobs, social work staff refer to “Work has become solely reactive rather than being able to plan well and make the best use of resources. The situation feels like an overstretched piece of elastic that’s about to snap!”

The Westminster government needs to act now to end austerity and restore public sector funding levels to their 2010 level to allow the Welsh government to address this situation before we have failures in the system. We cannot sustain the well-being of our communities without a much needed cash injection into local authorities, to fund the new duties and responsibilities that Welsh government has legislated for. Should this fail to materialise, then we are warning of significant failures in the systems within local authorities, putting residents across Wales at significant risk.

With the uncertainty of Brexit looming, and the financial implications, predicted food and medicine shortages, communities will be ever more reliant on public service provision which is a citizenship issue, not only a local government concern.

We therefore call on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Highlight the damage that Tory austerity policies are having across the UK, in particular the drastic effect that slashing local government funding is

having on our communities; by conducting a UK wide audit of austerity which can be used in our campaigns to evidence the blight that austerity is having on our communities;

- 2) Lobby the UK and devolved governments for appropriate fair funding for local government and public services generally;
- 3) Engage elected members at all levels of UK and devolved governments.

***Cymru/Wales Region***

---

## **24. Funding and the state of northern local government**

Conference notes:

- 1) The huge cuts in local government funding since 2010, that have seen local government across the UK bear the brunt of austerity with the National Audit Office identifying in June 2018 that councils had experienced a 49.1% real-term reduction in government funding between 2010-11 and 2017-18;
- 2) The decision to increase business rate multipliers by CPI instead of RPI from April 2018 with the potential long term impact on local government finance amounting to a cumulative loss of £78bn over 20 years according to estimates made to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee;
- 3) Councils in the north of England have been hard hit and the new English fair funding formula is squeezing the public health grant too. The predicted impact shows councils would lose up to 38% of current funding and this clearly makes the sustainability of essential services and a long-term prevention model unsustainable. UNISON has been working with local authorities to highlight the impact of local government funding cuts in the region.
- 4) That UNISON's report 'Central Government's Hand in the Local Government Till' states that the Westminster government's retained central share of business rates raised by local councils is expected to be over £10bn by 2019/20;
- 5) That the Local Government Association (LGA) and UNISON both argue that this money should be used to meet the financial pressures faced by local authorities in England;

These cuts are causing widespread misery throughout all our communities and the local government workforce, as evidenced by UNISON's report 'Councils at Breaking Point'. The national UNISON survey last year of 21,000 council workers from across the UK illustrated that services are collapsing, vulnerable people are not being supported and that some council workers have had to resort to using food banks. The north of England is no exception.

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

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

Conference calls upon the local government Service Group Executive to:

- a) Continue the fight against cuts to local government funding and the campaign for sufficient funding as the main focus of the SGE in 2019;
- b) Develop more effective alliances with a range of outside organisations, such as the various local government associations, service user groups and political parties, to help secure equitable funding for local government;
- c) Continue to raise support amongst the general public by putting across the damaging human consequences of the cuts to services alongside demonstrating the value of all local government services;
- d) Support and involve all regions and branches and help them to recruit, organise and involve members in the campaign;
- e) Work with politicians at all levels, including councillors, metro mayors, MPs, AMs, MSPs to get them to take effective action to end the cuts to local government services;
- f) Campaign to ensure the Fair Funding Review in England results in positive meaningful change for the allocation of local government funding;
- g) Continue to call for unallocated business rates to be given back to local government by Westminster;
- h) Continue to work with regions and branches to raise awareness of council income generation and the expansion of trading to offset the loss of income from central government grants;
- i) Develop guidance on income generation, the expansion of trading, and develop a strategy to utilise social value, build relationships with and promote a constructive dialogue with national and regional employer groupings, councillors and senior local government officers and also work with UNISON's Labour Link and campaign fund to promote this initiative;
- j) Carry out a targeted piece of work across UNISON regions to highlight the damaging impact of council funding cuts to services in the constituencies of all MPs, but in particular high profile Westminster government ministers and request additional funding ahead of the comprehensive spending review.

***Northern Region***

---

## **25. Double jeopardy – the impact of local government cuts on women**

Conference notes that the impact of austerity and cuts to local government funding is particularly hard on women - the workforce is predominantly female, many of whom who are low paid. Conference also notes that there is a double jeopardy for these women. As well as bearing the brunt of cuts in pay, terms and conditions, they are often the primary carers of children and elderly parents or other relatives. Cuts to local services mean that more and more women are forced to bear more responsibility for meeting the care needs of their loved ones as vital services are stripped away, unfairly adding to their stress levels as they struggle to balance work and home commitments.

At the same time, demand for local services is growing as a consequence of the ageing society and increasingly chronic public health issues. A “more for less” culture in the workplace coupled with the higher demand for services struggling to cope with depleting finances is undoubtedly leading to a higher rate of work related health issues, including mental ill health and stress.

Women are working longer due to pension changes and face further workplace pressures in relation to their reproductive health, made worse by often unsympathetic and intolerant employers. Conference notes further that cuts to services such as Sure Start centres, nurseries, care homes and day centres is leading to an increase in the caring responsibilities to already overworked women as they lose services that could support them.

Conference believes that unless central government recognises that austerity measures have not worked and increase funding to local government, there will continue to be a negative impact on the workforce, particularly women. This inevitably impacts on morale and motivation, recruitment and retention and generates a spiral effect increasing the pressure on women as their caring roles will increase.

Conference also notes the work to date by UNISON to raise awareness of and campaigning against the disproportionate impact of the cuts to local government and in particular the women workers. But we must continue pressing on with this issue and working together to fight the unfair cuts to local government funding.

Conference therefore calls upon the local government Service Group Executive to work with the national women's committee, relevant UNISON committees and departments, regional women's committees and local government groups to:

- 1) Continue fighting against the cuts to local government funding highlighting in particular the double jeopardy for women as workers and service users and;
- 2) Continue to research into the health impact for women working in local government, in particular, work related stress, mental health issues and reproductive health matters as the basis for producing guidance about the range of reasonable adjustments and flexibility employers can provide to support these women to continue working.

***National Women's Committee***

---

## **26. Councils at breaking point - highlighting the damage**

Conference notes that cuts to local government services are biting ever deeper and deplores the damage they are wreaking on local services and our members who work in them.

The impact on our members includes job losses, increasing severity and complexity of service user needs, and reduced pay and terms and conditions. Our members are increasingly pressurised into 'doing more with less' and to take on increased workloads, leading to higher rates of work-related stress and sickness absence.

The social care system is in crisis, and women are bearing the brunt of that crisis. The majority of the care workforce –paid and unpaid – are women, and the majority of those in need of care are women. There have been enormous cuts in adult social care - £7 billion has been cut from social care budgets in England since 2010. It has long been recognised that the funding of adult social care needs reform, and the government has said that it will publish proposals for reform, but these have been delayed repeatedly.

Meanwhile, the number of adults in receipt of these services has gone down by one third since 2013, and the number of people over 65 in England with unmet care needs is going up and is now estimated at around 1.2 million (one in eight).

The cuts to local government services affect all local government members and we remain united in our call for fair funding for local government and our opposition to outsourcing and privatisation.

Conference acknowledges however that the cuts affect different groups of local government members in different ways. It particularly notes that cuts and privatisation have a disproportionate impact on equality groups, including Black, women, disabled and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workers and service users, and will embed inequality in the workplace and in service delivery and society for years to come. It further notes that the findings of the NatCen Social Research LGBT cuts research in relation to the local government workforce included increasingly wide-ranging remits for equality work, which prove very difficult to cover, and LGBT equality and inclusion being increasingly seen as a buzzword with little value.

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

- 1) Ensure that the disproportionate impact on equality groups is an integral part of the Save Our Services campaign;
- 2) Use the findings of the NatCen LGBT cuts research in campaigning against local government cuts and to recruit and organise around the impact of the cuts, working with the LGBT group to highlight the particular LGBT impact;
- 3) Further develop its recruitment and organising strategy to build union density across council services and organisation in services already privatised, and work closely with the self organised groups and Young Members' Forum to

enhance our recruitment and organising of Black, women, disabled, LGBT and young workers;

- 4) Continue to publicise the arguments about how cutting jobs and services damages local economies and the evidence of how privatised services are failing staff, service users and draining resources away from service delivery;
- 5) Continue to encourage local government branches to work with community organisations to campaign against cuts and privatisation, and support initiatives in the save our services campaign;
- 6) Continue to campaign for services to be brought back in house.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee***

---

## **Service Delivery**

---

### **27. The youth work profession**

Conference notes that youth services play a crucial role across the UK, and the work youth workers and youth support workers do provides huge value to the lives of the people they engage with. Youth services help young people into employment, training or education; they help with potential mental health issues; and they help prevent alcohol, substance abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour.

In 2018, UNISON published research that made clear the extent of the damage inflicted on youth services by the government's cuts. Between 2010 and 2019, £400m was cut from youth service spending, resulting in the loss of more than 4,500 youth work jobs and 760 youth centres between 2012 and 2019.

Conference agrees with the Labour Party that local authorities should have a statutory duty to provide youth services. But this duty can only be meaningful if it is backed up by resources. Conference therefore calls on the government to restore funding to local authorities so that they can provide these vital services for young people.

Conference also believes that youth services should be provided on a universal basis, accessible to all young people. This should be backed up by monitoring, to ensure that young people from different equality groups are all able to access youth services.

Conference believes that quality youth services can only be provided by trained, qualified youth workers and youth support workers. In recent years, cuts and re-structures have diluted the use and importance of JNC-qualified youth workers. Youth services frequently end up merged with other services like social work, youth offending teams, and libraries, and this often means that youth work qualifications are no longer a requirement.

This has meant that fewer and fewer qualified youth workers are employed, and in recent years several universities have stopped providing their youth work degree courses in response. The result is a systemic decline in youth and community work.

Conference calls on the service group executive:

- 1) To continue to campaign for universal youth services directly provided by local authorities;
- 2) To highlight and promote the importance of qualified youth workers and youth support workers, and the importance of clear professional standards;
- 3) To continue to defend the youth work profession from the threats posed by cuts and service mergers, and to promote the importance of the link between high quality services and the JNC-endorsed degree qualification;
- 4) To work with the Labour Party to seek to ensure that a future Labour government would legislate for a statutory duty for local authorities in England to provide youth services, backed up by sufficient funding from central government;
- 5) Work with UNISON's Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland regions to campaign for a statutory duty for local authorities to provide youth services, backed up by sufficient funding, working with appropriate political parties where possible;
- 6) To further promote UNISON's report, 'Youth Services at Breaking Point', so as to highlight the extent and impact of the cuts in youth services.

### ***Youth and Community Workers Committee***

---

## **28. Crisis in social care**

Conference recognises that the crisis in social care continues apace across the UK as councils suffer the consequences of almost a decade of underfunding. According to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, £7bn has been cut from social care budgets since 2010. UNISON members have spoken out about the impact of cuts on the quality of care they deliver and on their personal lives. Significant numbers of low paid care workers have spent their own money on supporting care users and even had to bring along food for them.

UNISON research has shown non-compliance with the minimum wage remains a major problem in social care. The majority of councils in England, Wales and Scotland are still not forcing the homecare providers that they commission to pay workers for their travel time. UNISON is pursuing a high profile legal case to ensure that all the time spent working on sleep-in shifts counts towards calculation of the minimum wage for care workers.

The social care crisis will only be solved when services are properly funded, privatisation is reversed, and steps are taken to ensure that care workers are given fair treatment to allow them to deliver good quality care. Accordingly conference



welcomes the fact that 20% of councils in England, Wales and Scotland have now adopted the Ethical Care Charter to improve care standards and treatment of the workforce in the homecare sector (up from 10% in 2017). Conference also welcomes the co-ordination of future work on social care across the service groups.

Conference therefore instructs the Service Group Executive, working with the new cross-service group project board, to:

- 1) Take steps to ensure that UNISON service groups work together on social care issues;
- 2) Carry out research to determine where the money goes in our largely privatised care system and what local councils can do to rebuild their ability to deliver these services again in-house;
- 3) Continue its efforts to force the government, councils and providers to improve compliance with the National Living Wage in the care sector as a bare minimum across the UK, to improve compliance with the Scottish Living Wage for all care workers in Scotland, and to continue to campaign for the foundation living wage for care workers throughout the rest of the UK;
- 4) Promote further take-up of UNISON's Ethical Care Charter and Residential Care Charter as a basis to improve the working conditions of care workers whilst organising and recruiting in the sector and ensure that councils that adopt the charters comply with their requirements;
- 5) Work with regions and branches to ensure that all local authorities and other public service providers in Cymru/Wales comply with the Code of Practice for Ethical Employment in Supply Chains, and work with the NEC to campaign for similar codes for the rest of the UK;
- 6) Work with Labour Link to try to positively influence the Labour Party's approach to resolving the social care crisis;
- 7) Support care workers who are European Union nationals in their fight for the right to continue to work in the care sector as well as providing support for all other migrant workers in the care sector.

***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

## **29. Libraries at breaking point**

Conference is deeply concerned at the state of our public library service.

In 2017-18 alone, spending by local authorities on public libraries fell by £30 million. The service lost 712 full-time equivalent posts and suffered a net loss of 127 service points. Volunteer numbers rose to a staggering 51,394 volunteers putting in 1,780,843 hours. Our public library service is being dismantled at pace as councils struggle to balance the books with cuts to staff, opening hours, stock, and swathes of libraries being handed over to communities or the private sector to run. This situation can only worsen with the phasing out of the revenue support grant.

But as cuts and automation take hold, more of our members are finding themselves working alone. This raises serious concerns for the health, safety and well-being of library members.

Alongside staff cuts, conference is particularly concerned that over fifty libraries are delivering biometric visa support services via a sub-contract awarded to Libraries Connected and led by Sopra Steria on behalf of the Home Office. Conference deplores the lack of consultation with UNISON over the implementation of this contract at both national and local level. The contract means UNISON members are facing increased stress in the workplace and at a greater risk of violence if they are perceived to be agents of the Home Office.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with other campaigning organisations to build a new vision for the future of libraries;
- 2) Promote UNISON's End Violence at Work Charter, UNISON's guidance on lone working and UNISON guidance on mental health to library members;
- 3) Investigate how the delivery of visa support services is affecting our members and share this information across UNISON regions and branches;
- 4) Continue to lobby Libraries Connected and the government regarding the delivery of visa support services in libraries;
- 5) Co-ordinate a national campaign against the privatisation of library services, and against the provision within libraries of private contracts for visa support services;
- 6) Provide branches with campaign materials to defend libraries against cuts and to encourage branches to recruit and organise library members.

### ***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

## **30. Local service champions**

Local government is a diverse network of roles and services that all work together to keep our local communities going. Local government workers have a vital role to play in this, working tirelessly to support the public in their everyday lives. They are true local champions, sometimes working 'behind the scenes' to make sure our communities run smoothly. They deserve to be celebrated for all the hard work they do.

However, local government workers rarely get the public recognition they are owed, because of a lack of awareness of the roles within local government structures or their importance. Local councils have also taken on the largest burden of cuts from central government since 2008. Central government funding for English councils fell by over 49% between 2010/11 and 2017/18. Severe cuts to central government funding available for local services have a knock-on effect on local government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Welsh and Scottish local authorities have lost

£850m and £1bn respectively over the last decade. The age of austerity is far from over for local authorities across the UK, with many still facing an uncertain future: in England alone there will be an estimated funding gap of £8bn by 2025. As a result, council workers are suffering job cuts, stagnant pay and attacks on their terms and conditions to make up the shortfall.

Cuts have affected local authorities so severely that they have been forced to make larger cuts to services that they have fewer legal obligations to provide, hitting some occupational groups harder than others. For example, although social care spending has been cut by 3% between 2010/11 and 2016/17 (while demand for support increased), spending on youth services fell by 65% and housing by 46%.

Combined with limited public knowledge of the value of particular local government roles, these devastating cuts mean that many UNISON members' jobs and the services they work in are still being cut to the bone despite a decade of austerity. Far too often this happens without the media coverage or political and public outrage that other services with similar importance in our communities, like police or health services, receive when they face similar spending cuts.

As the leading trade union for local government workers, it is essential that UNISON takes up the challenge of promoting the interesting and vital services that our members provide and encouraging us all to celebrate our local services. Conference calls on the local government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Launch a Local Service Champions campaign that builds on the work of the Public Service Champions campaign, raises awareness of the importance of local government workers and supports UNISON's efforts to recruit and organise;
- 2) Work closely with UNISON's media and press office to increase the number of local government related media, social media and press activities;
- 3) Work with learning and organising services to explore the possibility of creating training for members that builds their confidence in talking about the value of their role within local government and the impact of austerity on their workplace;
- 4) Hold a celebration day similar to the 'Stars in Our Schools' campaign, that focuses on promoting the roles of a selection of local government occupational groups;
- 5) Produce a resources pack for branches to support planning activities for the Local Service Champions celebration day;
- 6) Develop a database of local government members and activists who are available for different types of communications work, from social media to press interviews;
- 7) Work with membership participation unit and the self-organised groups to ensure that this campaign highlights the diversity of staff working in local

government and the particularly important role of women who make up the majority of local government staff.

### ***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

#### **31. Continuing to promote the Ethical Care Charter**

Conference notes the charter sets minimum standards to protect the dignity and quality of life for care clients and the workers who care for them.

Conference notes that over 40 councils across the UK have signed the charter.

Conference believes the charter is a positive development for UNISON members, and is a useful tool for organising and recruitment.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Carry out an analysis of the impact on services and staff in those councils where the charter has been adopted;
- 2) To increase campaigning efforts to ensure more councils sign up to the charter in the coming year.

***Eastern Region***

---

#### **32. Knife crime and cuts to youth services**

Conference notes the alarming spike in knife crime in 2018. Knife crime in London has risen by 16 percent in the past two years and over 50 people were killed by stabbings and shootings in the first 3 months of the year.

Conference notes that the furore over the 'knife crime epidemic' served to demonise Black youth who are blamed for the stabbings, whilst in reality they are victims of the crime. Urban youth music such as 'drill' music has also been blamed for the rise in knife crime.

However, conference recognises that one of the main reasons behind the rise in stabbings is the cuts in services to young people. Young Black people have been worst hit under the Tories' austerity programme with Black youth unemployment of 25 percent compared to white youth unemployment of 12 percent.

Youth services in particular have been slashed to the bone. Youth services help young people to lead positive lives as members of society. If they are properly organised under the democratic control of the local authority, they also have the potential to bring diverse communities of young people together. This would lead to greater community cohesion.

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. Figures from

the House of Commons library show councils predicted spend on youth services dropped by 53.6 percent 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.

In 2015, in response to Southwark council's 60 percent cut to youth services and merger with leisure services, Damilola Taylor's father stated 'More kids will be stabbed if youth services are cut. Bearing in mind the level of killing, stabbing and violence this is not the right time. This is the wrong approach and bad decision of the council.'

Conference notes that cuts to youth services are compounded by cuts to children and adolescence mental health services, support for young people with behavioural difficulties in schools and all education services are all having an impact on the lives of young people.

Conference therefore welcomes Labour manifesto commitment, when in government, to reverse the youth service cuts, restore EMA, set a £10 per hour minimum wage, ban zero hours contracts and end student tuition fees. Conference notes that Labour's anti-austerity message is massively popular with young Black people and amongst our members.

Conference calls on the local government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Further develop the campaign against youth service cuts and UNISON initiatives fighting the cuts in youth worker jobs and the closure of youth centres;
- 2) Work with Labour Link to support the call to stop youth centre closures, to support funding to youth organisations and to make youth services a statutory function;
- 3) Work with the national Black members committee to develop campaign material that specifically expose the impact of these cuts and the rise in youth violence.

***National Black Members' Committee***

---

## **Housing**

---

### **33. Housing out of reach for public service workers**

This local government service group conference recognises that high housing costs and affordability are among the biggest issues facing the workforce in the south east and nationally, affecting where members can live, what they can access and what they can afford.

According to the National Housing Federation, there was a shortfall of over 85,000 homes in the south east between 2012 and 2016, the highest in the country after London. The average home is over £360,000, 12 times the average salary; and the average monthly rent is £994. Data reported by The Guardian found that 40% of houses sold under the Right to Buy are now in the private rented sector, tens of millions of pounds are being paid by local authorities to rent former council homes to house homeless families, and some councils have bought back their former homes at more than six times the amount they sold them for.

A report by the Office for National Statistics confirms that the south east has the worst affordability rating for median house prices compared to median earnings outside of London. A UNISON study also shows that saving money for a down payment on a property would take over 52 years in some parts of the south east, making it virtually impossible for a huge number of UNISON members to buy their own home.

Conference notes that the worsening affordability crisis is a result of failed housing policies and cuts to the “affordable housing budget”, which have led to a drastic decline in the number of new social rent homes built nationally. The shortage of genuinely affordable homes means that thousands of people are on social housing waiting lists. Thousands more are forced to live in overcrowded or unsuitable homes where they are exposed to health and safety hazards. For the people caught in the trap of ever increasing housing costs and stagnating wages, the stress put on all areas of life are all too real; the human misery of this expressed all too vividly by the scandal of homelessness doubling under the Tories since 2010.

Many towns and cities are out of reach for public service workers due to the rising costs of housing compared to wages. In the private rented sector, where rents are un-regulated and tenancies are insecure, research by Shelter shows that rents rose by 16% between 2011 and 2017 in England, compared to average wages which rose by only 10% over that period. The situation is worse in some areas, including Elmbridge, Surrey, where rents have risen by 21% while wages are down by 15%; and in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, rents are 19% higher while wages have dropped by 9%.

Conference is concerned that the high costs of housing, coupled with real term cuts to public service pay, tax credit and Universal Credit changes are blighting the lives of our members. This is putting a further financial strain on our members’ household budgets and eroding their living standards. More workers are spending a significant proportion of their income to meet housing costs, leaving less money for other household essentials and exposing them to hardship, poverty and even homelessness. Many workers face lengthy commutes to work, high costs of travelling and pressure on their ‘work life balance’ because they simply cannot access social housing or afford a decent home near their place of work.

Conference is concerned that despite the government’s pledge to “fix the broken housing market”, it has failed to comprehend the ways in which social housing could be used to tackle the housing crisis. The government’s housing policy remains focused on helping the privileged to buy their own home through schemes such as the Right to Buy and Help to Buy, and encouraging the development of costly and so

called “affordable rent homes” priced at 80% of market rates. It is not doing enough to help those on modest incomes access decent and secure housing.

The Right to Buy and barriers to new council house building have resulted in reduced democratic accountability with the housing sector. This stealth privatisation needs to be reversed as a matter of urgency and Conference believes a massive council house building programme is essential to achieve this. Recent measures to provide housing associations with longer-term strategic partnership funding from 2022, to build more “affordable homes”, including social housing, and the scrapping of the housing revenue account borrowing cap, which prevented councils from borrowing to invest in new homes, are steps in the right direction. However, they are not sufficient to address the depth and scale of the crisis unless the Right to Buy is suspended, as in Scotland and Wales, and ultimately ended as soon as practicable, and councils are supported with significant grant funding to build more homes for people on modest incomes.

With household growth projected to be higher in the south east, London and parts of the midlands over the next decade and government funded social house building at an all time low, there is an urgent need for innovative, bold and radical measures to resolve the deepening housing crisis.

Conference calls on the local government Service Group Executive to work with the NEC and the community Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Undertake further research across UNISON to find out the implications of housing costs and affordability on local government members and use the evidence to campaign for improvements in housing policy
- 2) Continue to campaign for staffing levels which enable housing workers to do their jobs safely and effectively.
- 3) Continue to make the case for decent, secure, safe and affordable housing – particularly those provided by councils and housing associations to ensure there are sufficient homes for workers on modest incomes;
- 4) Highlight the cost of housing in all national pay campaigns to ensure that our members have additional income to pay for their housing costs and campaign for £10 an hour minimum wage;
- 5) Produce a housing manifesto setting out UNISON’s policies on dealing with the housing crisis and use this to galvanise support for UNISON’s campaign for improvements in housing policy.

This conference further calls on the Service Group Executive to press the National Executive Committee to lobby the Westminster government and devolved administrations where appropriate to:

- a) Give councils and housing associations significant grant funding and increased financial flexibilities to enable them to build more homes at scale;

- b) Establish a new definition of affordable housing linked to people's income not market prices, and scrap the so called affordable rent homes, which makes some social homes inaccessible to the low paid;
- c) Reform the land market to make it cheaper and easier for local authorities to build new homes;
- d) Set up a "homebuilding capacity fund" to help councils to build capacity to deliver a new generation of council homes, to ensure that they have the resources to re-create architectural, design and engineering teams and modern direct labour organisations to boost house-building;
- e) Introduce stronger measures to regulate the private rented sector, including indefinite tenancies, a system of rent caps to limit rent increases, and increased rights and protections for private renters to improve standards and affordability in private renting, as Scotland has done;
- f) End the 'Right to Buy' scheme as soon as practicable.

### ***South East Region***

---

#### **34. Delivering a mass council house building programme**

Conference notes that in October 2018, the UK government finally lifted the borrowing cap on local authority Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA), allowing councils to borrow against the value of their housing stock to fund new-build council homes in England.

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

In Wales, eleven of the twenty-two local authorities own housing stock. Following discussions with Welsh government and the WLGA on the distribution of the settlement figure and the borrowing cap, all eleven local authorities exited the HRA subsidy system and became self-financing in 2015.

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

Conference further notes that the last time councils delivered half of all new homes in the country, half of all architects worked for the public sector. Today, it is less than



1 per cent. This is just one example of how the borrowing cap has, over the course of decades, caused a huge drain in housing development skills and knowledge away from local authorities and into the private sector. The housing development skills-gap carries across various departments in local authorities, including planning, finance, legal, asset and property services.

There is therefore a risk that it will be the private (not public) sector who capitalise on the borrowing cap being lifted, with councils forced to outsource housing development rather than deliver it in-house. Conference believes that housing should be provided in-house, by directly employed staff.

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

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

- 1) Work with and provide support to the Wales local government committee and Wales Labour Link to campaign for Welsh government and Welsh councils to commit to utilise the opportunities presented by the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap and the removal of the right to buy (in Wales) and deliver a mass council housing building programme in Wales;
- 2) Producing materials (articles, blogs, etc.) that highlight this council house issue, in England and the devolved nations, and raise awareness in the wider housing debate nationally;
- 3) Give a voice to our members working in local government housing services via interviews etc., letting them explain the challenges around council housing development in their own words;
- 4) Campaign for the employment and up skilling of in-house housing development workforces, by lobbying councils and UK and devolved governments for the use of apprenticeships and better development for existing staff;
- 5) Promote the vital work UNISON members in local government housing do;
- 6) Use UNISON's local government housing forum and biennial housing seminar to encourage debate and sharing of ideas around this topic; letting members who are housing professionals share their experiences with one another and propose and develop solutions.

***Cymru/Wales Region***

---

---

### **35. Rebuilding the housing development workforce of local authorities**

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

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

While some councils have managed to build in small numbers, most councils haven't built new homes in decades.

But even with the borrowing powers to deliver housing on a large scale, the challenge councils now face is how to rebuild their capacity to build. Meanwhile, there are still numerous counter-productive policies in place which need reform, including Help to Buy, Right to Buy and Universal Credit.

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

There is therefore a risk that it will be the private (not public) sector who capitalise on the borrowing cap being lifted, with councils forced to outsource housing development rather than deliver it in-house.

Conference believes that housing should be provided in-house, by directly employed staff. Privatisation and outsourcing of housing services leads to lower pay and worse conditions, so that companies can maximise profits. This is unacceptable.

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

Conference calls on the local government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Pre-emptively challenge any criticism from central government on local authorities for failing to deliver new homes even after the cap has been lifted by:
  - a) Producing materials (articles, blogs, etc.) that highlight this issue and raise awareness in the wider housing debate nationally;

- b) Giving a voice to our members working in local government housing services via interviews etc., letting them explain the challenges around council housing development in their own words.
- 2) Campaign for the employment and up-skilling of in-house housing development workforces, by lobbying councils and government for the use of apprenticeships and better development for existing staff;
- 3) Promote the vital work UNISON members in housing do;
- 4) Use UNISON's local government housing forum and biennial housing seminar to encourage debate and sharing of ideas around this topic - letting members who are housing professionals share their experiences with one another and develop solutions.

***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

## **Education**

---

### **36. Cuts to pastoral support in schools**

A recent UNISON survey of staff who provide pastoral support for pupils raised significant concerns at the impact of cuts to services. Support staff are often trusted adults and confided in by pupils about a huge range of welfare issues, from parental separation, bereavement and caring responsibilities to bullying, eating problems and suicidal thoughts; regardless of whether this is expected of them in a formal capacity. However a third (33%) reported that their schools had made cuts to staff carrying out pastoral roles over the past year. These cuts have included decreases in staff hours, employees not being replaced when they leave, redundancies and increased class sizes. 56% said they don't have the time, space or privacy to talk to children about their issues, despite more than a quarter (28%) saying they work up to six unpaid hours a week – the equivalent of almost an extra day in school. The lack of time is often down to cuts in the hours they work and huge workloads, as a result of funding constraints on schools.

UNISON is concerned that as other local government services are being cut back schools are increasingly expected to fill the gaps. Yet just as their role has perhaps never been more crucial, school support staff are being made redundant, potentially exposing some of the most vulnerable children to great risk.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to put pressure on all UK governments to urgently investigate the impact of school funding cuts on pastoral support in schools and the impact this is having on pupil welfare.

***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

---

### **37. Bring back the Education Maintenance Allowance**

Conference notes that education is the key to improving life chances. Yet, to be able to take advantage of the many opportunities that education can bring, young people need to be able to afford basic resources to enable them to fully participate.

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was a means-tested allowance of between £10 and £30 for 16-18 year-olds in full-time education per week that was scrapped in England by the coalition government in 2011. The bursary scheme that replaced it received considerably less funding than EMA. Additionally, the bursary system is more burdensome on students, since they need to provide evidence of need, and UNISON believes this requirement can stigmatise young people unnecessarily. A student in England who would have received the full £30 a week in 2010, and still would receive this if they resided in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, missed out on up to £1,080 last year.

Like so many Tory policies, scrapping EMA was an attack on the most disadvantaged in society, in this case those from lower income, and often more difficult, backgrounds. Conference welcomes the commitment by The Labour Party, as part of its National Education Service, to bring back EMA if elected to power.

Analysis by the Labour Party of Department for Education statistics showed that in 2017, nearly 18,000 disadvantaged young people failed to complete their main study programme. In 2018 there were 132,208 disadvantaged young people in education, but retention of those students was only 84.49%, well below the rate of 92.63% for non-disadvantaged young people. EMA has a clear link to attendance which helps with retention of students. Colleges are seeing fewer low-income students and fewer students, particularly when coupled with the already dire effects of years of underfunding, lead to staff in colleges - UNISON members - losing their jobs.

EMA gave disadvantaged the certainty of knowing they would have regular financial support. Without this, many disadvantaged students will not feel able to continue their education. For the first time since 2011 the number of 16 year olds who are not in education, employment or training is rising. Research demonstrates that students who have poor experiences early in their working lives will feel the effects of this through-out their careers, through lower lifetime earnings and insecure employment.

Conference therefore calls upon the local government Service Group Executive to work with the Further Education Committee to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link to promote the National Education Service and the restoration of EMA;
- 2) Campaign for the restoration of the English Education Maintenance Allowance for further education and 6th form students;
- 3) Work with equalities groups to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of certain groups, namely young men, those from lower socio-economic households and lower with low to moderate prior attainment.

***National FE and 6th Form Colleges Committee***

---

### **38. Further education colleges should be the only provider of apprenticeships**

Conference notes that the government drive to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships in the UK is failing.

In 2017 the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced – a charge of 0.5% of the salary bill of large employers which must then be claimed back to fund apprenticeship provision – simply isn't being used by enough employers. This lack of take-up has had huge implications for those colleges who made financial plans based on high numbers of apprenticeships, causing some colleges to need emergency financial assistance to remain viable. Conference notes that the introduction of the insolvency regime in April 2019 means that colleges can be allowed to go into administration in future. This will have devastating consequences for both college staff and the communities they serve.

Employers who want to deliver apprenticeships need to find an appropriate training provider to deliver the 20% off-the-job training requirement. This can be a private provider or a college. Conference, UNISON believes that our college sector are best placed to deliver the high quality training that employers want. Commenting on the 18% failure rate of private providers inspected in 2018, the head of Ofsted warned that history tells us that the "...large injection of training money is bound to encourage the creation of providers more concerned about taking a share of the available cash than providing high quality....".

Colleges have years of experience of delivering high-quality vocational learning and are able to provide highly-trained staff, who can deliver robust quality standards. Conference notes that colleges will be delivering the huge changes afoot in vocation provision, namely T-Levels. T-Levels and apprenticeships are closely linked, both through the 15 vocational pathways available and through the requirement to work closely with employers. Colleges can build on these synergies to deliver high quality apprenticeships.

Equalities are at the heart of everything UNISON does and it is fair to say that colleges will be more equality-aware than most private providers. Colleges can ensure that groups who may be marginalised by the private sector will have their needs met. Young people with special educational needs and disabilities and care leavers attract extra funding and it is important that this funding is used to help these groups. Colleges know how to do this.

The proliferation of private sector providers in the apprenticeship market is yet another example of the creeping privatisation of our public services. This not only directs funds away from those who need them into the hands of profiteers but undermines the union movement as a whole. College workers are unionised workers. Coupled with this, employers and apprentices have been left high and dry by a large number of high-profile failures of private-sector providers. Figures published in October 2018 from Department for Education data showed that 16 private providers had been barred in 2018 due to the poor quality of their provision.

Much has been said about the skills deficit in the UK. Well-funded colleges, at the heart of their communities, delivering high quality vocational training are the answer.

Apprenticeships have so much potential to improve the lives of young people and adults who need to retrain as the economy changes.

Conference therefore calls upon the local government Service Group Executive to work with the Further Education Committee to:

- 1) Work with the Institute for Apprenticeships in raising the profile of the need for high quality apprenticeships;
- 2) Run a prominent campaign on the benefits of apprenticeships;
- 3) Promote UNISON's apprenticeship charter in negotiations with employers;
- 4) Work with the Association of Colleges to promote colleges as the first choice of apprenticeship provider;
- 5) Raise awareness of poor quality provision of apprenticeships in private providers.

***National FE and 6th Form Colleges Committee***

---

### **39. Supporting schools**

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

Many of our low paid local government members work within schools settings, often over worked and under-appreciated.

Conference applauds the 'Stars in our Schools' initiative, which acknowledges the important contribution support staff make to the education of our children.

However, budgetary pressures on schools often mean support staffs are vulnerable when staffing reductions are considered.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to encourage branches to promote Stars in our Schools;
- 2) Raise the profile of this initiative in the local and national press;
- 3) Increase efforts to campaign for adequate and appropriate levels of funding for schools.

***Eastern Region***

---

### **40. School support staff - unsung heroes**

UNISON school support staff make our schools the success that they are. They play a vital role and often don't get the recognition that they deserve.

Our members in schools are often the first victims of cuts to school funding facing redundancy on a more frequent basis than ever before.

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

This Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to support and defend schools members in campaigning against school funding cuts;
- 2) Actively recruit and organise in schools;
- 3) Work with local politicians to promote the good work our members do in school;
- 4) Support joint initiatives with teaching trade unions who support UNISON's policy on education.

***Manchester Branch***

---

#### **41. Recruiting and organising fire and rescue staff**

Non-operational fire and rescue staff are a key but often overlooked part of the fire and rescue service. Technicians, driving instructors, administrators and many others work tirelessly alongside fire fighters and control room staff to keep businesses, communities and members of the public safe.

The severe cuts to public spending in local government and their impact on fire and rescue services across the UK, but particularly in England, have been well documented. After eight years of funding cuts by Conservative-led governments, 40 fire stations have closed and nearly 12,000 firefighter jobs have been lost. This has led to an increase in response times to incidents and a corresponding rise in the number of deaths or serious injury caused by fire.

As well as the harsh impact of austerity on operational staff, nearly a decade of spending cuts has had a devastating effect on support staff. As they are often seen as easier jobs to cut than operational staff, fire and rescue staff are often the first in line for redundancies, which is reflected in Home Office workforce statistics: 69% of all compulsory and voluntary redundancies in the fire and rescue service in England since 2010 have been fire and rescue staff roles.

Introducing an opportunity for Police and Crime Commissioners to take over governance of fire and rescue services has also put fire and rescue support staff jobs at risk. This provision, introduced under the Policing and Crime Act 2017, was arguably created with the aim to make cuts within the fire and rescue service and encourage employers to share 'back office' resources, which would have a clear impact on fire and rescue staff roles.

These issues have all resulted in a steadily falling rate of membership amongst fire and rescue staff within UNISON membership and a fall in the number of activists who can support them. As the lead union for fire and rescue staff, it is essential that UNISON focuses on developing our membership of fire and rescue staff in the fire and rescue service and raising their profile within the union and more widely. Ensuring that there is increased awareness of the value of fire and rescue staff could help to challenge the misconception that their jobs are an easy cut to make within the service.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Assess and update materials to support recruiting, retaining and organising fire and rescue staff;
- 2) Work with UNISON's regions and the Strategic Organising Unit to develop and implement a strategy for recruiting and organising fire and rescue staff;
- 3) Work with the media, press and communications teams to increase the presence of fire and rescue staff in UNISON's media and social media activities;
- 4) Explore the possibility of holding a targeted recruitment campaign aimed at fire and rescue staff.

### ***London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority***

---

## **42. Facility time**

Trade union facility time is one of the basic and most vital building blocks for local trade union organisation, and it is also of enormous benefit to employers. Since 2010, many local authorities have cut facility time significantly, sometimes driven by ideology and sometimes by cuts in funding.

Conference notes that in December 2018-January 2019 the local government service group surveyed branches on facility time, including the impact of the new publication requirements, cuts in facility time, and how facility time is allocated and implemented in different employers. The detailed findings of the survey can be found in a report sent to branches and regions in 2019.

Among the key findings:

- 1) 22% of branches said that their employer had not discussed with them what information they needed;
- 2) 23% of branches said their employer's published figures was not an accurate reflection of facility time use;
- 3) 64% of branches are not able to use facility time outside their 'core' employer;
- 4) 32% of branches have had their facility time cut in the last four years.

We must continue to be vigilant and oppose any moves to cut facility time.



Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- a) On an annual basis, circulate UNISON's guide to facility time to branches, and also to councillors;
- b) Work with Labour Link, the Labour Party and other political parties where possible, to promote facility time among councillors;
- c) Consult branches on priorities for 'in-kind benefits' and develop guidance;
- d) Lobby the different political groupings at the Local Government Association, Welsh Local Government Association, Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities and Northern Ireland Local Government Association to ensure that in-kind benefits are recognised as a way of maintaining positive trade union relations in a cost-effective way;
- e) Consider how to involve activists who hold regional/national positions and aren't granted time off to attend these meetings;
- f) Continue to monitor how new reporting requirements may impact on allocation of facility time to represent members in non-core employers;
- g) Consult with regions on how facility time cuts are monitored and managed;
- h) Consider ways to promote UNISON's facility time guidance further;
- i) Focus on increasing steward recruitment and training as a way of mitigating against facility time cuts;
- j) Raise with other service groups and the NEC's development and organisation committee the request for a review of different models of facility time allocation, and promoting different models based on the size, shape and spread of employers;
- k) Raise with other service groups, the self-organised groups, and the NEC's development and organisation committee the request for a review of how current facility time distribution may disproportionately favour particular groups within UNISON.

### ***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

#### **43. Black members mentoring scheme in local government**

With the continued cuts to local government and the disproportionate impact on Black workers, the national Black members committee are seeking to explore the opportunity for young Black members to be paired with more experienced activists to enhance the work of the union in the 'Year of Young Workers.'

UNISON has about 63,000 young members, of whom approximately 8 percent are Black members.

However, there is a noticeable and worrying shortage of young Black members and activists in UNISON and more importantly in Local Government, where Black workers have borne the brunt of redundancies and evidence suggesting Black workers posts being downgraded or on zero hour contracts. We recognise that more needs to be done to retain and recruit young Black members and to encourage them to become involved at all levels of the union. In 2019, the year of UNISON's campaign 'Year of Young Workers', this is a great opportunity to explore this initiative.

Young Black members are often dealing with discrimination and racism in their workplace and can sometimes be isolated as a consequence of these issues. It is therefore, imperative that we do all that we can to recruit and support young Black members to ensure that their voice is heard and to increase representation within our structures.

Role models within our communities can be a useful resource in recruiting young Black members by mentoring them. Black members who have established themselves within UNISON and local government can offer support, encouragement and guidance to young Black members.

This can be achieved through a mentoring scheme aiding new members in becoming more active starting at branch and regional level. Giving young members a list of reliable contacts that they can use will increase activism. It will also help bridge any gaps in communication as each member can be assigned to a specific mentor who can inform them of how the union works, where to find training opportunities etc. This can give young Black members the confidence to become activists.

Conference calls on the local government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Black Members' Committee and explore the opportunity to devise strategies for recruiting young Black members and consider ways of promoting the training available to young Black members in the service;
- 2) Explore and discuss how a mentoring programme could be developed at branch and regional level to target young Black members;
- 3) Encourage regional and branch Black members and the young member's forum to have the recruitment of young Black members on their agenda and work programmes and explore the potential to develop a sign up register for experienced activists to become part of a mentoring scheme to help young Black members get more involved;
- 4) Continue to support UNISON's work in recruitment campaigns of young members, especially young Black members in 2019 and beyond.

***National Black Members' Committee***

## **Motions Ruled Out of Order**

---

### **Beyond remit of the conference**

---

#### **Extending recognition agreements in local government**

Conference notes that the Employment Relations Act 1999 established the right to statutory recognition by employers of trade unions for the purposes of collective bargaining on pay, hours and holiday.

The UK government has also ratified several key laws and conventions from European Law, e.g. Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union giving all workers the fundamental right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements and to take collective action (including strike action) to defend their interests.

While many agreements are reached voluntarily each year, some of our members in local authorities are either not covered by such agreements or the agreements are outdated, leaving our members with only partial protection, especially if they are subsequently 'out-sourced' or transferred to another organisation.

Conference believes that UNISON should seek to build and extend its influence to defend improve our pay, terms and conditions. And each level of the organisation should work together to achieve this, therefore we ask the NEC to:

- Require regions and branches to annually map those organisations which do not have recognition agreements and those where agreements are inadequate,
- Require regions to agree annual targets to increase UNISON recognition,
- Provide training and relevant materials to branches and regions, to be used in preparation for building UNISON's density within those organisations and negotiate recognition agreements. Organising staff should be allocated to key sites and work with branches in sustained and in depth recruitment and retention campaigns.
- Assist regions and branches in reaching recognition agreements voluntarily and where this is not possible, to seek statutory recognition.
- Share 'case-studies' within our service group in order to spread best practice and to publicise our success where agreements have been reached.

***Cambridge City and South Local Government***

---

---

## **Conflicts with an existing rule**

---

### **Term Time Working**

This Conference congratulates Greenwich Local Government Branch on negotiating a settlement worth over £4 million of back pay for term time workers in 2018. The size of this settlement emphasises the extent of the underpayment that many term time only staff that have suffered due to incorrect calculations of their pay by employers.

The NJC has published joint guidance with the Local Government Association on issues relating to term time working. We commend this guidance to branches and believe that all employers that have staff on term time contracts should negotiate local agreements with UNISON that ensure fair treatment for term time staff.

The Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Further develop guidance, bargaining advice and training for branches on term time working issues
- 2) Encourage and monitor the implementation of comprehensive local agreements on term time working arrangements following the publication of the NJC guidance
- 3) Continue to pursue legal action against those employers who we believe are discriminating against term time workers

***NJC Local Government Committee***

---

## **Could place the union in legal jeopardy**

---

### **Fighting Local Authority Cuts**

This Local Government Conference believes that the funding crisis in local government, caused by the austerity policies of the conservative government, has reached a critical level. In towns and cities across the country vital services have been closed and cut back – with no end in sight.

This Conference notes with disappointment that it is not only Tory-controlled local authorities, but also those with Labour majorities, that are carrying out cuts. Often our union is the last line of defence for workers in local government services and for those who use council services.

We believe that councils, particularly Labour councils where UNISON may have some influence, should do everything within their power and within the law to avoid making cuts, whilst promoting their actions in the community and building a local

campaign. They should also link up with others to develop a national strategy to fight the cuts.

This Conference believes that UNISON must be seen to actively oppose austerity-driven cuts to services – through public campaigning, lobbying, petitions and through supporting our members who work in these services – whoever is running the council.

This Conference calls upon the SGE:

- To call on all councils to look at what options they have to generate resources and avoid making cuts – including the use of reserves, capitalising eligible general fund expenditure and using prudential borrowing to generate resources.
- To support those councils who take up this option, in developing local campaigns in defence of local authority services.
- To support and promote efforts to link up those councils across the countries of the UK.
- To promote this position at all levels of the union, including within the Labour Link.

***Surrey County***

---

## **In conflict with Trade Union Law**

---

### **Cuts and Local Government Finance**

Conference notes:

- 1) The huge cuts in local government funding since 2010, that have seen local government bear the brunt of ‘austerity’ with the National Audit Office identifying in June 2018 that councils had experienced a 49.1% real-term reduction in government funding between 2010-11 and 2017-18;
- 2) The decision to increase business rate multipliers by CPI instead of RPI from April 2018 with the potential long term impact on local government finance amounting to a cumulative loss of £78bn over 20 years according to estimates made to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee;
- 3) That UNISON’s report ‘Central Government’s Hand in the Local Government Till’ states that the Westminster Government’s retained central share of business rates raised by local councils is expected to be over £10bn by 2019/20;
- 4) That the Local Government Association (LGA) and UNISON both argue that this money should be used to meet the financial pressures faced by local authorities;

- 5) In Wales, the 2019/20 local government finance settlement resulted in a poor settlement that will lead to further devastating cuts due to increasing demand, costs and inflation. UNISON's 2018 Audit of Austerity Cymru/Wales demonstrated that real terms spending in local government in Wales fell by more than £1bn since 2010;
- 6) In Scotland, the 2019/20 settlement continues to follow a sustained downward path of resource availability with a £200m cut to council budgets which will lead to more attacks on service provision and terms and conditions;
- 7) Far more money is needed for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland through the Barnett Formula so as to begin to reverse the years of cuts that have been endured.

The cuts are causing widespread misery throughout all our communities and the local government workforce, as evidenced by UNISON's report 'Councils at Breaking Point'. Our survey last year of 21,000 council workers from across the UK illustrated that services are collapsing, vulnerable people are not being supported and that some council workers have had to resort to using food banks.

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

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

Conference calls upon the Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE) to:

- a) Continue the fight against cuts to local government funding and the campaign for sufficient funding as the main focus of the SGE;
- b) Develop more effective alliances with a range of outside organisations, such as the LGA and the Labour Party, to help secure equitable funding for local government;
- c) Continue to raise support amongst the general public by putting across the damaging human consequences of the cuts to services alongside demonstrating the value of all local government services;
- d) Support and involve all regions and branches and help them to recruit, organise and involve members in the campaign;
- e) Work with politicians at all levels, including councillors, MPs, AMs, MSPs to get them to take effective action to end the cuts to local government services;
- f) Campaign to ensure the Fair Funding Review in England results in positive meaningful change for the allocation of local government funding;
- g) Continue to call for unallocated business rates to be given back to local government;

- h) Continue to work with regions and branches to raise awareness of income generation and the expansion of trading to offset the loss of income from central government grants;
- i) Develop guidance on income generation, the expansion of trading, and develop a strategy to utilise social value, build relationships with and promote a constructive dialogue with national and regional employer groupings, councillors and senior local government officers and work with UNISON's Labour Link to promote this initiative;
- j) Carry out a targeted piece of work across UNISON regions to highlight the damaging impact of council funding cuts to services in the constituencies of high profile Westminster government ministers and request additional funding ahead of the Comprehensive Spending Review;
- k) Explore the possibility of lawful industrial action, in line with UNISON rules and relevant legislation, to protect against the impact of funding cuts on jobs, pay, conditions and workloads.

### ***Local Government Service Group Executive***

---

#### **Rich or Poor not North v South – the Local Government Cuts Divide**

This Local Government Service Group Conference believes that despite claims by some that Austerity is over, Local Councils throughout the UK are still suffering the most within our public services as their funding from the Tory Government continues to be pared back significantly.

According to recent research (State of Local Government Finance Survey 2019, published 14th February 2019) 80% of responding councils say they are not confident in the sustainability of local government finance; none said they were “very confident”.

When people see their council tax go up and the availability of their services decline, they rightly ask questions. But in reality council tax only accounts for 16% of aggregate local authority income: over half comes in the form of grants from central government.

However, local authority grant income has plummeted by £16bn since 2011, first because of wider public sector budget cuts after the ‘financial crisis’, and then as part of government’s plan for councils to transition from grant funding to relying wholly on local business rate income by 2020 – the implementation of which has been severely delayed and remains in question.

As it stands many councils are facing their 2020 financial cliff-edge without a clear idea of either how they will be funded afterwards or how much money they will have. In the North West Region the majority of local authorities have been amongst the very hardest hit and will continue to suffer disproportionately not because of geography necessarily, but due to the demographic and political make-up of the majority of Councils in this part of the UK.

Austerity has actively (or reactively) reshaped the relationship between central and local government in the UK; shrinking the capacity of the local state, increasing inequality between local governments, and intensifying territorial injustice.

Central government public spending cuts have seen many targets in the UK, but local government has had the largest proportional cuts of all. Yet the diversity of local government structures and insufficient trade union and government data, compounded by the variation in local responses to the cuts, means there has been a lack of hard analysis available to be shared within our Local Government Service Group of the impact and severity of recent budget cuts on a geographical/regional/sub-regional/authority-type basis.

Like many other regions, the North West believes that the politics of austerity 'dumped' the fiscal crisis onto the local state. Central government grants were cut across the board, which weakens the redistributive element of the grant formula, and forces local government to rely more heavily on local sources of income - locally raised tax revenue, the sale of local assets, local reserves and additional revenue sources. Although central government grants were cut across the board, local government cuts to service spending vary enormously - increasing inequality between places. In England cuts in central government grants were particularly severe for municipal budgets, and particularly those boroughs and cities with a legacy of an older industrial base. Conversely, a swathe of 'Middle England' in the South-Central part of the country experienced the smallest spending cuts. This form of urban austerity thus drives a division between those areas that have the economic ability to withstand this fiscal disciplining and those that are unable to do so.

Almost a decade of sustained budget cuts in the UK has pushed austerity down to the street level of local government. This has resulted in a shrinking capacity of the local state to respond to the needs of communities for public services; a turn away from the provision of many discretionary, universal public services; increasing inequality between local governments themselves; and intensifying territorial injustice. The Tory government has used the funding systems to punish some Councils and reward others and the North West has been a significant loser as a result of the disproportionate cuts to Local Government funding. We see little prospect of any improvement for all unless UNISON and like-minded organisations give this unfairness much greater profile.

This Service Group Conference therefore agrees to task the Local Government Service Group Executive:

1. To undertake or commission a specific piece of work that examines the cuts to Local Government and the impact on a geographical/regional/sub-regional/authority-type basis.
2. To share the findings across the full spectrum of the Local Government Service Group with a view to campaigning around fair funding for all Councils and highlighting the disproportionate cuts suffered by local government as a service group within the public sector.
3. To work with Labour Link to raise the profile of the Fair Funding campaign.



4. To explore the possibility for taking lawful Industrial Action within UNISON's rules around the issues of cuts to services and jobs suffered by Local Government.

---

## ***North West Region***

### **Local government finance**

Conference notes:

Across the UK, local government services are in financial meltdown. This is caused primarily by the deliberate policy of continued underfunding from central government over the last decade or more.

In Scotland, against tightening budgets from Westminster, despite talk of being anti-austerity, the Scottish government has largely passed on those cuts to spending with only some protection for what it sees as priority services such as health and to a lesser extent - social care and teacher numbers. This has left all those other local government services that are not protected by ring-fenced funding, bearing the brunt of cuts over the years.

Many services have seen massive real term reductions in funding and therefore staffing. Outsourcing is on the rise – despite the evidence that it can often be a false economy.

All this has happened while pay restraint/freezes or cuts have seen average Scottish local government pay fall over 15% behind inflation resulting in a loss of over 1 whole year of pay against CPI since the start of austerity politics (it's even worse against RPI).

The onslaught against the welfare state has also led to far greater pressures on our communities and those services.

The Tories have made clear their intent to reduce central funding to local government to zero, with no significant alternative sources of revenue to replace it. They will be happy to return to the dark ages where everything was accessible only to those who could afford to pay for it.

This year's Scottish budget agreement has seen the Green Party win a commitment from the SNP administration that there will be moves towards reviewing/replacing the council tax in Scotland but with a delay in any legislation until the next Parliament.

Conference believes:

Further cuts must be resisted, if necessary by industrial action. We must also fight for a change of government and direction.

Our members and the communities they serve are crying out for such a change.

We demand that there is a massive switch in the balance of tax and spending. This must be done by increasing income from taxation at both a national and local level.

This can only be achieved by a complete overhaul of those tax systems to force those who can to pay more, while lifting the burden on those least able to pay.

Central funding of local government budgets must be increased beyond the levels before the crisis. This must be sustained by a shift in national public spending levels and priorities, assisted by significant changes towards a progressive Income tax and corporation tax system and the implementation of new initiatives such as the Robin Hood tax on stock market transactions.

Particular attention must be paid to funding a massive new council house building programme across the country, to address the chaos of the housing “market” and associated homelessness.

Such funding must also finance the restoration of lost jobs and income to our long-suffering and overworked members, without whom those services could not exist.

The council tax, must be completely overhauled or replaced by a progressive local property tax system that will allow councils to sustainably raise sufficient local revenue to fund local priorities. This should be on top of any other local initiatives, such as a Tourism Tax (on hotel bookings).

Conference calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Continue to campaign for recognition from all levels of government within the UK of the vital importance of local government services and the urgent need for their funding to be restored to at least pre-crisis levels.
- 2) Develop a clear position and strategy on different mixes of central taxation and funding and local taxation that will deliver increased, progressive and sustainable funding of local government services into the future.
- 3) Put UNISON at the forefront of campaigning to achieve those changes, in terms of promoting, supporting and shaping any change in policy regarding greater funding of public services, and in particular, local government.
- 4) Continue to support branches campaigning against the effects of cuts and find ways to unite those campaigns to make them more effective.

---

***Scotland Region***

### **Fighting back in local government**

Conference condemns the Conservative-led coalition and Conservative governments for the widespread and unprecedented destruction of council services that has resulted from the savage and unprecedented reductions in central government grants to local authorities and fire authorities and to the devolved nations. Local government workers have borne the brunt of this in job losses and attacks on terms and conditions.

Conference welcomes the proposals from the Local Government Association's

Labour Group for an immediate end to council cuts; an urgent injection of £4bn to prevent collapse; and restoration of funding to 2010 levels, i.e. reversal of all the cuts, by 2022.

Conference believes:

We need a real, high-profile, mass-mobilising campaign for this - to assert our demands against the Tories now, start to turn the tide and ensure a Labour government carries them out thoroughly.

We need to build an activist network in communities, anti cuts campaigns, unions and the Labour Party to make all this happen.

Conference therefore;

- 1) Calls upon the Service Group Executive to work with the National Executive Council to initiate a discussion in the labour and trade union movement about how we should respond to the continuing savage spending cuts, including labour movement demonstrations and the possibility of coordinating lawful industrial action
- 2) Requests that UNISON Labour Link establishes a dialogue with the Labour Party about launching joint campaigns on local government funding locally and nationally
- 3) Requests that UNISON Labour Link establishes a dialogue with the Labour Party to ensure we have local government services with funding based on need; calling for restoration of local government funding to 2010 levels, an insourcing programme across local government, repealing Right to Buy

---

***Lambeth***