

# Conference Bulletin

March 2021

## Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021

Conference Team

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This bulletin contains the timetable and information for  
**2021 Special Local Government Service Group Conference.**

**Please note that both motions and delegations can only be submitted online.  
There are no paper forms.**

**Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021 will  
be online from 9.30am to 5.00pm Sunday 13 June 2021.**

**This is a Special Service Group Conference and will be held online.  
Web access will be required to participate.**

Day 1	Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> June		
	Start	End	Break Start – 15 minutes
Session 1	09.30am	12.45am	11.00am
Session 2	2.00pm	5.00pm	15.15pm

Special Local Government Service Group Conference may look and feel very different to what we are used to, but the Service Group Executive (SGE) feels that it is important to give our members and activists a platform to discuss the issues the Service Group faces and use our democratic processes to shape how we work in the future.

The pandemic continues to place significant pressure on our branches and activists and in these unprecedented circumstances it is understandable that attendance at the conference may be affected.

After the deadline for branch registration has passed, an assessment will need to be made. If the quorum and/or our rule book obligations on proportionality and fair representation are unlikely to be met, the National Executive Committee (NEC), in consultation with the service group reserves the right to postpone the event until such time we can comply with these obligations.

**This is a one-off UNISON Special Conference and sets no precedence for future conferences**

## **Timetable**

Deadline for Submission of Motions	12.00 noon	Thursday 8 April 2021
Publication of Preliminary Agenda		Friday 23 April 2021
Prioritisation Process begins		Friday 23 April 2021
Deadline for Submission of Delegates	5.00pm	Wednesday 5 May 2021
Deadline for reasonable adjustment requests for access	5.00pm	Wednesday 5 May 2021
Deadline for Appeals on Motions ruled out of order”	12.00 noon	Friday 7 May 2021
Deadline for Submission of Amendments	12.00 noon	Monday 10 May 2021
Deadline for Prioritisation of Motions	12.00 noon	Monday 10 May 2021
Publication of Final Agenda		Friday 21 May 2021
Deadline for Appeals on Amendments ruled out of order		Thursday 27 May 2021
Deadline for submitting Change of Delegates online on the OCS	5.00pm	Thursday 27 May 2021
Deadline for Agreement of Composites	12.00 noon	Wednesday 2 June 2021

Enclosed with this Conference Bulletin, and available for download on the conference webpage: <https://www.unison.org.uk/events/virtual-special-local-government-service-group-conference/>

### **How to Attend Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021**

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the way we do business and UNISON is committed to supporting our democratic processes and give our members the opportunity to shape the future of our Union at Conference.

UNISON’s Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021 will be held online and may look and feel very different to what we have been used to.

Attendance will be virtual, and delegates should be submitted on the Online Conferencing System (OCS) in line with the normal rule-book requirements on Branch Representation. Motions will be debated on a virtual platform. Speakers will need to be identified and nominated in advance – please give some thought to who this may be. Further information on speakers will be sent to relevant branches when composites have been agreed.

No shared delegate options will be available for Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021.

Once registration is closed, and before the event, all attendees will be sent on-line joining instructions. These will include a link to the sessions and a two-step password.

**Please keep these details safe and confidential as they will be the only way to access the Special Local Government Service Group Conference. If these details are accessed by anyone else, they will invalidate your own access to conference**

## **Information on how to submit motions and delegations using UNISON's Online Conference System (OCS)**

**Which branch officers can use the OCS?** Motions and delegations can be submitted at branch level by either the Branch Chair or Branch Secretary. The other will receive e-mail copies of the motion or delegation submission as soon as it is submitted. Branch employed staff are also able to enter motions but do not have authority to submit them on behalf of a branch.

At regional level, the regional head of the service group is authorised to submit the motion/delegation, with the chair of the regional committee receiving an instant e-mail copy. This process is replicated at national level for national bodies and their relevant chairs and secretaries.

**Which members can use the OCS?** When a member is registered as a delegate to a conference, they will receive an e-mail informing them of this as long as their e-mail address is listed on the RMS. They can then also access the OCS to upload their photograph, to make online requests for services such as reasonable adjustments, crèche places and babysitting, which should be made by the deadline stated.

**How will these people access the OCS?** Users access the OCS via the UNISON website at [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk) and clicking on 'My UNISON' - which is located at the top of the front page. Using your UNISON membership number and surname, register once and you will be issued with a password. For subsequent access, simply click on 'My UNISON' and then 'Sign-in now' and you will need your membership number and the password you were issued. Branch employed staff should call their regional contact.

**What if the correct branch people have accessed 'My UNISON' but then cannot access the OCS?** Key to accessing the OCS is ensuring that the data held on UNISON's membership system, the RMS, is correct. It records which members hold the key positions of Branch Secretary and Branch Chair. If this information is incorrect, or if it changes, the branch needs to ensure that the RMS records are updated immediately. Then the individual should call their regional contact.

**What else needs to happen?** It will help the system to function if these key branch people also have an e-mail address stored on their RMS records. Please contact your branch or regional RMS team urgently, to make this happen. Each delegate within a delegation should also have their date of birth stored on the RMS.

**Delegates to Conference:** It is important that we collect e-mail addresses for those members wishing to participate in any way in the conference. The e-mail address can be any one that you have easy access to e.g. your personal e-mail, branch e-mail or that of a friend or relative.

- If you already have an e-mail address and access to the UNISON website, the quickest way to update your details is to go to the UNISON website and click 'My UNISON' – you will need your UNISON membership number.
- If you don't have an e-mail address or don't have access to the UNISON webpage, you can contact UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857 and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON Membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.

- Or, you can contact your local UNISON branch and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.

### Key contacts:

If you have a 'My UNISON' registration issue: UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857

If you have an OCS issue, please contact your relevant regional contact. Listed below are the Conference contacts for each region, who can also assist with online conference registration:

Region	Contact	Tel	E-mail
Eastern	Amanda Tickner	01245 608909	<a href="mailto:a.tickner@unison.co.uk">a.tickner@unison.co.uk</a>
East Midlands	Colleen Forrest (Tues & Fri only)	0115 847 5468	<a href="mailto:c.forrest@unison.co.uk">c.forrest@unison.co.uk</a>
	Katrina Grace (Mon & Tues only)	0115 847 5417	<a href="mailto:k.grace@unison.co.uk">k.grace@unison.co.uk</a>
Greater London	Shelley Davey Lorraine Tant Cally Thompson	0207 535 6648	<a href="mailto:glrconference@unison.co.uk">glrconference@unison.co.uk</a>
Northern	Allison Jackson Linda Smith	0191 245 0805 0191 245 0852	<a href="mailto:a.jackson2@unison.co.uk">a.jackson2@unison.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:l.smith@unison.co.uk">l.smith@unison.co.uk</a>
Northern Ireland	Elizabeth Robinson	02890 270190	<a href="mailto:e.robinson@unison.co.uk">e.robinson@unison.co.uk</a>
North West	Kim Scott	0161 661 6777	<a href="mailto:k.scott@unison.co.uk">k.scott@unison.co.uk</a>
	Gillian Gorman	0161 661 6743	<a href="mailto:g.gorman@unison.co.uk">g.gorman@unison.co.uk</a>
Scotland	Rosaleen Rodgers	0141 342 2816	<a href="mailto:r.rodgers@unison.co.uk">r.rodgers@unison.co.uk</a>
	Jean Fraser	0141 342 2880	<a href="mailto:j.fraser@unison.co.uk">j.fraser@unison.co.uk</a>
South East	Louise Barter	01483 406547	<a href="mailto:l.barter@unison.co.uk">l.barter@unison.co.uk</a>
	Kieran Pearson	01483 406510	<a href="mailto:k.pearson@unison.co.uk">k.pearson@unison.co.uk</a>
South West	Jenn Gollings (Mon – Thurs only)	01823 285336	<a href="mailto:j.gollings@unison.co.uk">j.gollings@unison.co.uk</a>
Cymru/Wales	Beverley Powell	02920 729475	<a href="mailto:b.powell@unison.co.uk">b.powell@unison.co.uk</a>
West Midlands	Claire Kenny	0121 685 3174	<a href="mailto:c.kenny@unison.co.uk">c.kenny@unison.co.uk</a>
Yorkshire & Humberside	Laraine Senior	0113 218 2333	<a href="mailto:l.senior@unison.co.uk">l.senior@unison.co.uk</a>

## **National and Regional Representation**

The following bodies are eligible to send two delegates (at least one of whom should be female) who shall be entitled to speak but not vote:

- Regional Service Groups
- Private Contractors National Forum (being members of the Local Government Service Group)
- National Self-Organised Groups
- National Young Members' Forum
- National Sector Committees

## **Disenfranchised Branches**

Branches are reminded that under Rule D.1.3.3.1 you will be disenfranchised from sending delegates to attend National Delegate Conference and Service Group Conferences for the remainder of the financial year following the year to which the financial return applies, if you did not submit your annual financial returns (Rule G.10.1) to your UNISON regional office by no later than **15 March each year**.

## **Branch Representation**

- Branches with up to 1,000 members are entitled to elect one delegate per 500 members or part thereof.
- Branches with over 1,000 members are entitled to elect one additional delegate per 1,000 members or part thereof.

Representation is based on membership as at **30 September 2020**.

## **Proportionality and Fair Representation**

Below are the requirements for ensuring proportionality and fair representation of branch delegations to Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021.

- 1) If the delegation only comprises one full delegate, then this delegate may be of any gender
- 2) The gender make up of the delegation must be based on the proportion of women members in the branch, compared to members who are male or non-binary. If a branch is unable to elect enough women delegates to meet proportionality, then the women's places on the delegation must remain unfilled. This is consistent with the approach to proportionality taken elsewhere in the union.
- 3) Branches with over 2,000 members must include one low paid woman member in the delegation.
- 4) Branches with over 3,000 members must include one young member in the delegation (i.e. Age 26 or under at end of conference).
- 5) Branches must include Black members in their delegation in proportion to the workforce profile of the employers covered by the branch.
- 6) Branches should endeavour to include disabled members and LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus) members in the delegation.
- 8) Overall, branches should also consider factors such as the balance between full time and part time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations and skills.

## **Transgender Members**

UNISON applies strict rules on proportionality in branch conference delegations, to ensure proper representation of women. Members who are in the process of transitioning gender may not yet have changed their UNISON membership details. For example, a member may wish to attend the Local Government Service Group Conference as a woman, but still be attending work as a man. Members will be registered for the Local Government Service Group Conference as the gender in which they will attend the Conference, irrespective of their gender recorded on the RMS.

To ensure that branch delegations including transgender members are not rejected on grounds of proportionality, please contact the Conference Office on 020 7121 5123 with information on any online delegate submissions which include members attending conference in a different gender to that recorded on the RMS. Their confidentiality will be respected at conference.

## **Monitoring for Fair Representation and Proportionality**

All delegates will be asked to complete an online form which enables the Conference to be monitored in order that UNISON can check on progress towards its objectives of fair representation and proportionality at all levels of the union. This exercise is conducted at all UNISON conferences and at regional level.

Please assist us by completing the online form before the end of conference.

## **Appeals**

**Any appeals concerning the composition of branch delegations shall be considered at regional level via a regional appeals panel convened by the regional secretary. Late delegate registrations will not be approved. There will be no exceptions to this. The appeals mechanism in the regions is for the composition of delegations, not for late submissions. Regions have to apply the deadlines strictly.**

## **Fitness to Attend Conference**

With the introduction of Fitness to Work sick notes are slightly different now. Members who are off sick from work may have an illness/condition which means they can't perform some tasks but can perform others. They may have a fitness to work certificate which means they return to work with certain caveats – e.g. places limits on the types of tasks they can perform at work and duration.

So if a member is not at work and off sick and wants to attend the Local Government Conference they need to ask for a note from their GP indicating they are fit to attend the conference (sitting for long periods). We also advise them to get a note from their employer agreeing to their attendance at conference, as this may be a different activity from those at work which they are not able to do.

Members should send a copy of the Fitness to Attend note to the UNISON Conference Office via email, in advance of the conference. This information will be treated with confidentiality.

## **Please help us to help the environment**

We're doing our best to reduce the environmental impact of our conferences. This year, we are providing all delegates with electronic documents **only**. All these documents will be available online on the UNISON website. You can then download them onto your laptop or tablet to view online while you are at conference.

## **Reasonable Adjustments**

**Speech-to Text and BSL Interpreters will be available for all main online conference sessions. Please request these in the normal way even though they will be already provided.**

UNISON aims to provide a fully accessible event to disabled members in accordance with our duties under the Equality Act. Requests for reasonable adjustments must be submitted by **Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 5.00pm.**

For any reasonable adjustments required, please complete the request online by the stated deadline. This can only be done by the registered delegate themselves. Authorisation for personal assistance/facilitation is required from your Branch Secretary that this expenditure will be approved.

While we work within the context of the social model of disability this does not mean that UNISON can automatically provide all resources that are requested as adjustments. We have to consider the finite resources available both in terms of space and finances in order that we can balance our commitment to the social model with the resources available, and channel them to where they are needed most.

While not requesting detailed personal information, UNISON will require sufficient information in order to understand the barriers faced to get the right resources to the right people for this Conference. This will assist us in making adjustments that are meaningful and appropriate to the individual.

The union will determine the allocation of limited resources. If necessary, this may include reserving the right to seek additional information.

## **Change of Delegate**

Branches may change delegates before the start of Conference. A member registering as a substitute branch delegate must have been eligible to represent the branch at the closing date for registration of delegates **Thursday 27 May at 5.00pm.** Any changes must be in accordance with the Scheme of Branch Representation.

## **Advice on Submission of Motions**

Please refer to the advice from the Standing Orders Committee about submission of motions, enclosed with this Conference Bulletin.

The Preliminary Agenda will be published on Friday 23 April 2021. The Final Agenda will be published online on Friday 21 May 2021.

## **Data Protection**

The information you provide via the OCS, in addition to your information held on UNISON's membership database, will be used for the organisation and administration of Conference. It may also be used for statistical purposes as this helps us plan future conferences. We will process your personal data in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). You can find out more about how UNISON processes your personal data by going to [unison.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://unison.org.uk/privacy-policy) or emailing [dataprotection@unison.co.uk](mailto:dataprotection@unison.co.uk).

# Special Local Government Service Group Conference 2021:

## Advice from Standing Orders Committee

This advice is to assist branches and other bodies submitting motions and amendments for 2021 special local government conference. It outlines the criteria used by the standing orders committee in considering whether motions and amendments will be admitted to the conference agenda – whether they are ‘competent’.

In brief, motions must be:

- From a body entitled to submit motions to local government conference
- About a matter relevant to the local government service group and in line with the two agreed themes
- Clear and including specific proposals for action
- Submitted via the online conference system (OCS)
- Within the specified deadlines: 12.00 noon Thursday 8 April for motions and 12.00 noon Monday 10 May for amendments
- In line with UNISON rules.

### Who can submit motions?

UNISON rule P.1.3.5 sets out the bodies eligible to submit motions to service group conferences. For local government conference, these are branches within local government, the local government service group executive, regional local government committees and national local government sector committees. In addition, national self-organised groups, the national young members’ forum and the national private contractors’ forum may submit up to two motions and two amendments.

### Submitting motions using the OCS

There is advice in the conference bulletin on how to submit motions using UNISON’s online conference system (OCS). Only the branch chair or branch secretary have OCS permission to submit motions. **Branch employed staff can enter motions on the OCS but do not have authority to submit them on behalf of a branch.** Please make sure motions are entered onto the OCS and submitted in plenty of time before the deadline.

For branches, only the texts of motions which have been considered by a branch meeting, or a branch committee meeting, are eligible for conference. Local branch rules that delegate powers to other bodies will not be taken into account - the national rule requirements apply for conference.

The date of the meeting where it was agreed to submit the item must be recorded on the OCS, together with the type of meeting. Meetings must be quorate. This may be checked, particularly in relation to emergency motions.

### Subject matter – service group issues

Motions, amendments and emergency motions submitted to the agenda for local government conference **must** be relevant to the local government service members.

Furthermore, the Local Government Service Group Executive has decided that the themes for the Conference should be:

- The impact of COVID-19 on pay, workplace terms and conditions and mental health in local government
- The future of local government in a post-pandemic world, including organising and recovery in schools

### **Citizenship issues**

Some issues which appear relevant to the local government service group may actually be 'citizenship' issues, of relevance to the whole union. This is because members experience the issues as workers **and** as members of the public or as service users.

Motions to local government conference must only have relevance to local government service group workers as workers. For example, a motion on school meals could call for a campaign to improve the pay and conditions or training opportunities for school meals staff. It may not call for a campaign on the provision of school meals as such - this would be a national delegate conference matter.

A number of motions are ruled out each year on these grounds. If in doubt - seek advice.

### **Staffing issues**

Motions which deal directly or indirectly with staffing matters are not appropriate for local government conference debate. The national executive council and the general secretary have responsibility for the employment of staff, under Rule D.2.12.

### **Industrial action**

Rule O gives the national executive council exclusive power to authorise industrial action. To be lawful, industrial action must be in relation to a trade dispute as defined by s.218 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Motions calling for industrial action over privatisation or 'the cuts' do not fall within the legal definition of a trade dispute and so must not be debated as this would put the union in legal jeopardy. Motions relating to industrial action must not contravene Rule O on industrial action or Rule B.4.5 which requires the union to act lawfully. Motions or amendments must not describe previous or current disputes as being 'against privatisation' or similar words, as this could leave the union open to legal challenge.

### **Affiliated political fund/Labour Link**

Matters relating to the Labour Party, both in relation to internal issues and in respect of matters to be pursued at Labour Party conference, are dealt with by Labour Link through its own structures, not local government conference.

### **Legal reasons**

Motions may be ruled out of order for a number of legal reasons. These include legal jeopardy – where a motion places the union at risk of legal action from a third party. The standing orders committee will not enter into protracted legal arguments on whether or not this third party would have a strong case, but will take the decision not to place the union at risk. Further, conference cannot compromise existing or potential legal proceedings for either party in a case. Proceedings include potential, past or current disciplinary issues.

A motion will be ruled out if it is considered to be in breach of UNISON rules. For example, it may breach our values as set out in Rule B or our rules on legal representation in Rule K.

Motions can only call for actions or activities that the union can lawfully undertake. Motions that call on the union to break the law are not competent.

### **Calls vs instructs**

The standing orders committee draws a distinction between motions that **call on** another body or part of the union to do something and one which **instructs** them. When using 'instruct', submitters of motions should be clear that local government conference does indeed have the power to instruct this body and that the body being instructed has the power to undertake the action.

Where motions call on a union body to 'ensure' an action takes place, the SOC will check that it is within their power to do so. If in doubt, branches should use the phrase 'seek to ensure'. Even when using 'call on', submitters should check conference has the power to call on this body and the body has the power to undertake the action.

### **Pension schemes**

Individual occupational pension schemes are normally debated as bargaining issues at service group conferences but submitters are reminded that the local government pension scheme has membership across more than one UNISON service group.

### **Rule P.1.3.6**

Rule P.1.3.6 gives the standing orders committee the power to recommend to conference that if a motion only affects the devolved bargaining groups of Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales, voting on that motion may be restricted to delegates from those groups.

The standing orders committee is keen to avoid the situation where part of a motion applies to the whole service group and part to a particular pay bargaining group. An example would be where a motion on general pay policy is amended to refer solely to the NJC pay agreement. This can cause confusion at conference, as delegates may be able to vote in one part of the debate and not another.

Please bear this in mind when drafting motions and amendments so it is clear whether it applies to the whole service group or only certain bargaining groups.

### **Amendments**

Amendments are subject to the same rules as motions. In addition, they should not be used to introduce an entirely new matter or as a substitute for voting against a motion. Amendments are likely to be out of order as wrecking amendments if they:

- Introduce a direct negative into the motion
- Reduce the motion to a mere re-statement of existing policy
- Seek to change fundamentally the purpose of the motion.

## **Emergency motions**

Emergency motions will not be considered for this special local government conference. Any Emergency motions that are received will be ruled out of order automatically.

## **Challenges to SOC decisions**

If the SOC rules your motion or amendment out of order, you will receive notification including the reasons why, via the online conference system (OCS). If you are not happy with the decision and want the SOC to reconsider, you must appeal **via the OCS**. Please remember it is not possible to reword a motion after the deadline, to make it competent.

For the purpose of this Special Conference **a written appeal must be made in advance of the Conference by the following deadlines:**

Deadlines for appeals against motions ruled out of order:

**12.00 noon Friday 7 May 2021**

Deadlines for appeals against amendments ruled out of order:

**12 noon Thursday 27 May 2021**

Please note, for this special local government conference, the decision of the Standing Orders Committee will be final on any appeal received. No further appeals will be possible.

**Please note this guidance was written for the special local government conference and does not set any precedents for future conferences.**

## **Further advice**

If you have any queries, please seek advice from your regional local government standing orders committee rep or contact:

Helen Raymond  
Administrator, Local Government Conference SOC

[h.raymond@unison.co.uk](mailto:h.raymond@unison.co.uk)

07958 063188

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