

**UNISON Local Government Service Group  
Conference 2022**

# **Composite booklet**

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

**12-13 June 2022**

- A      Climate Change in Local Government**
- B      Organising to Win**
- C      Recruiting and Organising Young  
Members and Activists**



# Composite A

## Climate Change in Local Government

### (Motions 27, 30 and 34)

Conference recognises the climate emergency and supports the de-carbonisation ambitions of national and devolved governments. Conference notes the key role that local government will play in delivering net zero strategies, being uniquely placed to lead by example and also increase public awareness of the scale and pace of change needed to meet the climate emergency.

Conference notes that councils are key to meeting emission targets. They are directly responsible for between 2% and 5% of their local area's emissions and play a significant role in emissions reduction due to their powers over housing, planning, transport, waste and other issues.

Conference notes the failure of Glasgow Climate Pact, the outcome of COP26, to live up to the crisis of climate change. The measures in the pact, if all are achieved, will still see global temperatures rise above the 1.5 degrees, and no more than 2 degrees, above pre-industrial levels that was agreed in the Paris Agreement as necessary to prevent disastrous climate change.

Conference recognises that the ambition to tackle climate change is not matched by the actions of the UK government and many more, particularly in the developed world.

Conference recognises that climate change is impacting now on our members' workplaces, jobs and service delivery through the:

- 1) Increasing frequency of severe weather events and the associated disruption, risks and costs
- 2) Increasing temperatures in workplaces and for outdoor workers
- 3) Need to develop new skills and train in new technologies
- 4) Worsening air quality in workplaces and when travelling to and from work.

Conference recognises the need for all councils to have climate change adaptation policies to meet these already occurring impacts of climate change.

Conference welcomes the declarations of a climate emergency declared by many councils which is a recognition of the seriousness of the issue and a recognition that councils are part of the solution, as well as part of the problem.

Conference welcomes the fact that 91% of councils have adopted at least one net-zero commitment and 38% of single and upper tier authorities have declared intentions to decarbonise their local area by or before 2030.

Conference welcomes the publication, during COP26, of UNISON's report 'Getting to net zero in UK public services: The road to decarbonisation' which details the measures and costs for public services to meet climate targets.

Local authorities are directly responsible for between 2- 5% of their local area's emissions and so the decarbonisation of local government is critical. This will require significant investment from central government to enable councils to meet the challenge and political will at local level to implement a transition to zero-carbon local authorities.

Conference recognises that such a transition presents significant challenges to the workforce with a need for new skills to be developed, changes in working practices and how services are delivered and that, therefore, there is a need to negotiate a just transition for local authorities both at a national and at a local level.

Local authorities have been at the forefront of investment and innovation in energy, transport, buildings, and procurement for many years. As we cautiously look towards a post-Covid future, there are opportunities for realising some of the co-benefits of investing in a green recovery, such as improved health and wellbeing, better digital connectivity, improved housing and schools, and reduced fuel poverty.

However, conference recognises that local authorities' powers in relation to housing, planning, transport, waste and other issues are key to delivering the transition. As such, local authorities have a direct impact on the government's commitment to achieve 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and 2045 in Scotland, beyond the issue of their direct emissions.

During the crisis CO2 emissions fell by 17% and we know that new behaviours such as home working, increased use of technology and digital delivery of services, amongst others, have helped to achieve this.

Whilst the immediate focus is about managing and recovering from the current crisis, there is an opportunity to build on these changes and create a sustainable low-emissions society.

If local government is to lead by example, there must be adequate funding in place to ensure that no-one is left behind, including the workforce, in the transition to a carbon neutral society.

Last year, UNISON research uncovered a budget shortfall for councils in England, Scotland and Wales of £3 billion. Conference believes this will jeopardise the climate targets of local authorities. Councils will be left with a false choice between delivering essential services or meeting climate targets. It is UNISON members and their families who will pay the cost environmentally, health-wise and financially, with jobs under threat as council budgets become squeezed further.

Research undertaken on behalf of UNISON last year estimated that to deal with the climate crisis, local government required both the largest upfront investment (£68 billion) and additional operational budget (£0.5 billion a year) of all the public services due to its responsibility for building retrofits, active travel infrastructure and the need to enhance waste collection and processing services.

UNISON research has demonstrated that local delivery of decarbonisation and retrofitting of public buildings, social and community housing would create over 240,000 jobs over fifteen years, or even more jobs if this work is done more urgently

over a shorter time period. Green job creation in local government is urgent given that the UK Committee on Climate Change has stated that the next decade is critical if we are to transition to 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Conference believes that UNISON has a vital role to play in campaigning for greener policies nationally and in the workplace. This will involve working with employers every step of the way to ensure that the transition to 'net zero' is fair to every worker. The active support and engagement of local government workers is crucial.

Conference recognises that UNISON and our local government branches and activists have a key role to play in achieving the decarbonisation of councils and in negotiating the just transition necessary. Union reps and members are experts in the services they provide and are a knowledge base for ideas needed to realise net zero ambitions in local government.

Conference therefore calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- a) Develop guidance for all sectors on the bargaining issues relating to climate change, adaptation and a just transition for the local government workforce;
- b) Campaign for, and raise awareness of, what a worker focussed 'Just Transition' would look like in practice in local government;
- c) Campaign and lobby for adequate funding for local government across the UK and Northern Ireland to meet net-zero ambitions; demand the level of central government funding needed to meet the climate change crisis as outlined in UNISON's report 'Getting to Net Zero.'
- d) Lobby central government for an additional decarbonisation funding stream for local government services to enable local authorities to reach 'net zero' targets without further cuts to local services;
- e) Call on central government to provide local government with the statutory powers to oversee and make decisions around the local delivery of decarbonisation and retrofitting of public building and social housing;
- f) Encourage all bargaining groups in local government to develop a clear 'just transition' strategy for negotiation with employers including skills audits, introduction of electric vehicles, allowances and facilities that encourage active travel to and during work, workplace recycling facilities, appropriate home working policies to reduce emissions due to travelling to work, etc;
- g) Conduct research into council estimates on the cost of reaching 'net zero' at a local level and share the findings with branches;
- h) Campaign for local authorities to develop renewable energy generating capacity, municipally owned, for the benefit of council services and their communities;
- i) Lobby for the involvement of union reps at all levels of the decarbonisation discussions taking place in local government;

- j) Support the training and development of UNISON Green Reps in local government and associated sectoral employers;
- k) Encourage all bargaining groups in local government to seek recognition for UNISON trained Green Reps allowing facility time to take forward climate issues in workplaces and to support bargaining at a local level;
- l) Work with the sectors and regions to negotiate with employers and employers' sides for facility time for union environment reps; campaign and negotiate for time off for Green Reps to participate fully at employer level.
- m) Provide guidance to reps on first steps to negotiating on environmental issues;
- n) Identify good practice examples of UNISON environmental projects in local government;
- o) Continue to promote UNISON training sessions on environmental issues to regions and branches;
- p) Continue to promote regional and local events to raise awareness of climate breakdown and its implications for UNISON members.

<b>27</b>	<b>Local Government Service Group Executive</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>Cymru/Wales Region</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>Scotland Region</b>

# Composite B

## Organising to Win

### (Motions 39, 41 and 44)

This conference notes:

- 1) The pandemic has posed union organising new challenges, with activists learning new tools and means to engage members;
- 2) Engaging members working from home, particularly non-members, remains challenging;
- 3) Some employers used the pandemic to attack pay, terms and conditions, some using fire and rehire tactics;
- 4) That despite the challenges, last year witnessed a number of sectional disputes across the UK where unions organised to beat the 50% ballot turnout thresholds, with many disputes securing wins for workers;
- 5) The UCU held national ballots on a disaggregated basis, organising to surpass the 50% ballot thresholds in many Universities;
- 6) That sadly, UNISON's national ballots fell well short of surpassing the 50% turnout threshold;
- 7) There are no UNISON training courses on how to organise industrial action ballots and win disputes.

This conference believes:

- a) Nationally, regionally and at a Branch level UNISON needs to beat the 50% ballot thresholds if we are to win for our members;
- b) Learning the organising methods from those ballots that do surpass 50%+ turnouts, from both local disputes and other trade union national successes is an urgent task for UNISON.

This conference resolves to request the SGE liaise and work with the NEC Industrial Action Committee to:

- i) Request that the SGE establishes a working group to examine and explore the organising methods used in both local and national trade union ballots, within the local government service group, that have surpassed the 50% ballot thresholds in recent times. For this working group to undertake this task to make findings and recommendations on which methods of organising are key to holding successful industrial action ballots in local government;
- ii) Request that the SGE seek to work with other relevant parts of UNISON to devise a UNISON training course for activists in local government on how to organise industrial action ballots and win disputes;

- iii) Request that the SGE seek to work through UNISON's structures to explore if there is a possibility of a co-ordinated all service group and UNISON wide approach to the actions in points i and ii.

<b>39</b>	<b>Sandwell General UNISON Branch</b>
<b>40</b>	<b>Birmingham UNISON Branch</b>
<b>41</b>	<b>North West Region</b>
<b>44</b>	<b>West Midlands Region</b>



# Composite C

## Recruiting and Organising Young Members and Activists

### (Motions 43 and 45, Amendments 43.1)

Conference recognises that young workers can make a real difference in local government branches by campaigning on the issues that affect them directly. Insecure/precarious work, zero hours contracts, training, discrimination, workplace rights, pay and conditions, mental health, and bullying and harassment are key issues experienced by young workers.

Young people are more likely to be in full-time education and working part-time alongside their studies. Their relative inexperience and the need for flexibility means that young people are more concentrated in low-paying jobs and their work is more unstable, with a greater use of zero-hours/temporary contracts.

Conference notes that during lockdowns, young workers of all ages experienced a fall in hours when furloughed or worked fewer hours on flexible contracts and their job prospects and pay had hit them hard. Young Black workers, young male workers, and those living in southern England, Scotland and Wales were more likely to have seen falls in employment. The Local Government Association (LGA) had seen a 22% drop in the annual number of apprenticeship positions offered within local government and said continuing financial pressures would reduce opportunities for young people in the short term.

Apprenticeships are a particular concern for young people. Noting the impact of the pandemic on young people's employment, UNISON's young members' conference in December 2021 carried motions calling for increased bargaining on quality apprenticeships, training, and internal development, and for the NEC to prioritise recruitment and development of apprentices and a campaign for improved pay and rights.

Conference notes with concern a noticeable and worrying shortage of young members and activists in UNISON and in Local Government. Young members represent just 5% of the whole UNISON membership and only 2% of activists.

This conference notes the continuing discrepancy between numbers of young members and numbers of young activists. Conference notes that RMS figures from February 2022 show that only 4.3% of members in the local government service group are aged under 27.

The role of the young members officer is the post least likely to be filled in a branch. Within local government less than 4% of members are under 27. There is a particular shortage of young members and activists in fragmented areas where organising is more difficult.

A UNISON survey of young members found that 70% of young members said they were not regularly active in UNISON. However, UNISON young members feel positive about the union and said they would like to take part in UNISON activities in the future but just did not know where to start. The findings also show that young women, young LGBT+ and young Black members were more likely to feel

intimidated by UNISON or worried about what would be involved if they attended meetings or took part in UNISON activities.

Conference welcomes the work done so far by the Local Government Service Group Executive to recruit and organise young workers, including developing guidance on mentoring for young Black activists.

Conference believes that the full participation of young members is vital to the success of the union in developing a sustainable Local Government activist base for the future and making sure that the voices of young workers are heard across the sector.

UNISON's Young Workers Charter, launched in November 2019, sets out five key pledges that local government employers should implement in workplaces so as to make a real difference to young people's working lives: a real living wage, fair employment, equality, training and development, and quality apprenticeships.

Conference believes to grow our union, we should focus on encouraging recruitment, organisation, and meaningful participation of young people who can provide a powerful voice for other young members in local government workplaces and gain the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge necessary to participate in all levels of the union.

Conference recognises that many UNISON members find their way into union activism through involvement in one of the self-organised groups (SOGs) and commends initiatives by SOGs which seek to increase participation by young members and to support and encourage them to become involved in the union beyond those groups. It therefore welcomes the establishing by the National LGBT+ Committee of a new national LGBT+ young members network and mentoring scheme for young LGBT+ members.

Conference recognises we need to consider new ways of organising and involving young people. For example, our offer to student social workers is based on what we can do for them once they graduate and are employed rather than while they are on their courses and placements and giving them a voice in UNISON as students. There is much to be learnt from the Health Service Group's organising of student nurses. The Northern region's model of organising student social workers gives students access to a UNISON social worker representative who helps them with any difficulties on their placements and courses.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young members and activists across the Local Government sector; to promote UNISON membership among young local government workers, encourage members to become active and support campaigns on the issues that are important to young members;
- 2) Encourage local government branches and regions to use UNISON's resources to recruit, organise, and increase meaningful participation of young people, particularly young Black, disabled, and LGBT+ members who remain

underrepresented in UNISON and local government; including promote the NYMF's report "Getting Active in UNISON" to Local Government branches who want to develop a plan to increase activity by young members;

- 3) Survey branches across the sector to identify both challenges and success stories in developing young activists;
- 4) Encourage and support local government branches to develop mentoring and buddying schemes to support new young activists, including promoting UNISON's Learning and Organising Service's (LAOS) resources on mentoring and their own guidance on mentoring young Black activists
- 5) Promote the new LGBT+ young member network widely within the service group and encourage young members to participate
- 6) Work with the self-organised groups and the National Young Members Forum to promote existing learning resources on activist development, mentoring and buddying mentoring schemes across the service group
- 7) Continue to promote the UNISON trans ally training widely within the service group and encourage young members to participate"
- 8) Work with regions, branches, and members of the Service Group sector committees to promote UNISON's Young Workers' Charter and encourage local government employers to sign up to the Charter;
- 9) Ensure that regions and sectors, in bargaining with national local government employers, promote the five priorities as set out in UNISON's Young Workers Charter;
- 10) Continue to monitor apprenticeship schemes within local government workplaces, recruit and organise apprentices in our branches and continue to push to get employers to sign up to the UNISON Apprenticeship Charter;
- 11) Encourage local government branches and regions to use UNISON's resources to recruit, organise, and increase meaningful participation of social work students and promote UNISON's Social Work Manifesto which sets out how we see the profession now and how we see it evolving in the years ahead.

**43 Local Government Service Group Executive**

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

**45 National Young Members' Forum**

## **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 scan the QR Code below to access the Fair Representation and Proportionality form

