



The future for TUSC

Discussion document

In early July the Socialist Party, one of the founding organisations of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), submitted a discussion paper to the TUSC national steering committee outlining a number of proposals it felt were necessary to re-set the role of TUSC nearly three years after the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader.

This is now being published here by the steering committee for comment and consideration by all TUSC supporters and interested friends.

The first item is the paper from the Socialist Party, starting on page three. It is followed, on page nine, by a brief history of TUSC – A TUSC Timeline 2009-2018 – which sets the current discussion in its context.

The aim is to conclude the discussion in the autumn – although events such as another snap general election may cut across that, or pose new questions to answer on the issues raised! (The Socialist Party paper was submitted before the cabinet resignations triggered the latest government crisis).

And further submissions are welcome, to be sent to the steering committee at info@tusc.org.uk

12th July 2018

The future for TUSC

Proposals from the Socialist Party to re-set the role of TUSC after three years of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party leadership

Should the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition continue? The Socialist Party, one of the co-founders of TUSC, believes that it still has an important role to play, if it is re-cast at least in broad outlines in the way we propose in this discussion paper to the TUSC national steering committee.

We discuss below the changed political situation that exists compared to the time of TUSC's foundation; a proposal for a national petition calling for a guarantee from an incoming Labour government to replenish reserves spent by councils to avoid making cuts today; and the idea of a 'Charter for Workers' Political Representation' campaign on the steps that would be needed to transform the Labour Party.

But most immediately, we are particularly concerned that there should be socialist, anti-austerity candidates in the 2019 local elections standing against right-wing Labour councillors who still carry out Tory cuts – and that preparations for these elections should begin in the autumn.

We are not proposing that TUSC stands candidates in a general election contest where there is the possibility of a Corbyn-led government, as we explain. But local elections are different and TUSC should be prepared to stand against local candidates implementing austerity policies. If the feeling of our allies in TUSC is against that, however, the Socialist Party would like to know by the autumn so that we can discuss what possibilities we would have to organise an electoral challenge by alternative means.

But that is not the preferred position of the Socialist Party. We not only defend what TUSC has achieved in its eight years of existence but believe that its potential role in helping establish socialist working class political representation is far from exhausted.

Three years on from Jeremy Corbyn's leadership victory

TUSC, an alliance of trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists co-founded by the late Bob Crow, the Socialist Party, and others, was set up in 2010.

At that time the capitalist establishment – the wealthy elite who dominate the economy and society – were politically represented not just by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats but by Labour too. They had achieved unchallenged control of the Labour Party for 20 years, moulding it politically and organisationally into a new party – Tony Blair's New Labour, continued under Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband – and in doing so had effectively disenfranchised working class voters, who no longer had a mass party they saw as their own.

TUSC's aim in this situation was to push forward the process of re-establishing a vehicle for mass working class political representation. It developed out of the alliance formed for the 2009 European elections, No2EU:Yes to Democracy, which saw the successful collaboration of different forces under a common umbrella, including the RMT, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Britain, Scottish Solidarity and others. An important part of TUSC's function was to enable fighters in the unions and our communities, and from different socialist organisations, to combine together

electorally to try and make sure that pro-capitalist politicians implementing austerity policies were not left unchallenged at the ballot box.

In its 2010 founding statement TUSC recognised that there were “different strategic views” within the coalition about how to achieve the common end goal of renewed workers’ political representation. “Whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed by the labour movement”, the statement read, “or whether a new workers’ party needs to be established”, was a strategic question that was left open.

Jeremy Corbyn’s election as leader posed the question more sharply. It showed that Labour could become the mass vehicle for working class political representation – if his unanticipated victory was to be followed up with fundamental changes to the party’s policies and organisation.

In the period since Corbyn’s victory the Socialist Party, one of the constituent organisations of TUSC, has applied to affiliate to Labour on the same terms as the Co-operative Party, to be free to fight for the socialist policies and organisational changes needed to transform Labour without losing its political independence. The RMT also, another TUSC constituent organisation, expelled from New Labour in 2004, has debated whether it should re-affiliate to the Labour Party. TUSC as a whole re-calibrated its electoral tactics so that it moved from being the sixth-biggest presence on the ballot paper in the 2015 general election to not standing any candidates in the 2017 contest, supporting instead the prospect of a Corbyn-led government (while still contesting local elections against Blairite Labour candidates – see below).

But three years after Corbyn’s initial leadership victory it is clear that the political and organisational legacy of New Labour is far from being overturned. The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) is still dominated by the Blairites; right-wing Labour local councillors continue to slash jobs and services; and the structures of the party remain much as they were under New Labour.

The RMT at its recent special general meeting (SGM) decided not to re-affiliate to Labour at this stage and on the terms offered. The SGM agreed that Labour “has the potential to be a mass party of the working class” but that the RMT could best “support, defend and develop the socialist advances that have been made” through its own independent political activity. The Socialist Party has not been re-admitted.

Events could develop – the formation of the long-touted ‘Stop Brexit’ centre party with a big chunk of the PLP splitting away, for example – which could hasten the process of transforming Labour into a workers’ party. But equally the current situation could drift on unresolved.

The possibilities shown by Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership victories have not been exhausted. Three years on, however, it is necessary to soberly assess how the goal of workers’ political representation can be realised. That includes discussing what TUSC’s future role in that process could be.

Time for anti-austerity action

One of the most important priorities will be to step up campaigning against austerity policies that are being implemented by local councils, regional authorities, and the devolved administrations, whichever party leads them. When bin-workers have to strike against wage cuts in Birmingham; fire-fighters agree action against imposed new contracts in the West Midlands; or guards strike against their removal from Merseyrail trains – amongst many other examples – it is clear that Jeremy Corbyn’s anti-austerity message is being sabotaged by these allegedly Labour-led bodies. This is undermining the chances of winning a Corbyn-led government and for that reason alone cannot be left unchallenged.

Building in particular on the struggle of Liverpool city council in the 1980s, but in the new legislative framework for local government, TUSC has pioneered a strategy of councils using their prudential (legal) borrowing powers and reserves to formally 'balance' no-cuts budgets to buy time for a mass campaign for increased government funding. Detailed information on council reserves and guidance material on how to prepare a no-cuts 'Peoples Budget' has been produced. TUSC supporters have won significant backing for this strategy in the main local government unions, Unison, Unite and the GMB. And we have engaged in a dialogue on this issue with that minority of Labour councillors who are looking for a means to turn anti-austerity words into action.

The Socialist Party believes that TUSC should continue with this activity but should also launch a new initiative this autumn – a councillors' petition to the shadow chancellor John McDonnell, asking him to guarantee that an incoming Labour government would replenish any reserves a council used to avoid cuts now and underwrite borrowing made for the same purpose.

Such a commitment to retrospective action is not unprecedented. When the newly-elected Labour government of 1974 moved to repeal the Housing Finance Act it included provisions to remove penalties from councillors who had refused to implement the act (although 17 MPs voted with the Tories or abstained to keep the disqualification against the eleven Clay Cross councillors in place). Notoriously the Con-Dem coalition passed the 2013 Jobseekers (Back to Work Schemes) Act to retrospectively reverse a court of appeal ruling that jobseekers were entitled to compensation for having been made to work unpaid on workfare schemes. With such precedents why couldn't an incoming Labour government effectively indemnify councils which refuse to implement cuts now?

Such a pledge would give confidence to those Labour councillors who really want to act on Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message – and put pressure on those that don't. TUSC and its constituent organisations can play an important role in organising for this step to be taken.

A Charter for Workers' Political Representation

As Labour was changed into New Labour the power of the trade unions within the party was gutted. A vital step to transforming Labour into a party representing the working class must be to restore a role for the unions, the biggest voluntary organisations in Britain, commensurate with their position as the collective voices of millions of workers, as part of a complete democratisation of the party.

To this end the Socialist Party believes that TUSC should launch a concise seven-point 'Charter for Workers' Political Representation' to take into the labour movement this autumn on key demands that would be necessary for the Blairites to be decisively defeated and Labour transformed. The steps proposed are not exhaustive but they should include:

- Mandatory re-selection of MPs – with unions having the right to directly nominate candidates onto parliamentary shortlists
- The abolition of the National Policy Forum, where unions hold just 16% of the votes – with policy-making power restored to the party conference
- The replacement of the council Labour Group-dominated Local Campaign Forums, responsible for council candidate panels, by a 'district Labour Party' structure – with directly-elected union branch delegates and the power to decide local election manifestos and elect Labour Group officers

- The end of the non-delegate organisation model for Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) – to restore representative democracy in the administration of local parties and ensure a full role for affiliated union branches
- End the MPs’ veto over who can be a leadership or deputy-leadership candidate – by introducing a qualifying threshold based on CLP and trade union nominations only
- Reinstate socialists who have been expelled or otherwise excluded and ensure their right to be organised – allow the affiliation of socialist parties and anti-austerity, anti-racist, socialist feminist and Green campaigns and organisations in a modern version of the early federal structure of the Labour Party
- A new Clause Four – replacing the clause introduced by Tony Blair praising “the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition” with a commitment to a democratic socialist society based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange

While the Charter’s demands may need to be modified after the publication of the Labour Party’s Democracy Review proposals in September it is regrettably not likely that the review will be recommending such a transformational approach.

Consequently TUSC can continue to play an important role in popularising what will still need to be done to re-create Labour as a workers’ party.

One possible initiative in this regard would be to organise a ‘20 city tour’ of public meetings (like TUSC did in the EU referendum campaign) after the 2018 Labour Party conference around the theme: ‘Three years after Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership victory – what still needs to be done to get a socialist political voice for workers?’. This would include speakers from the constituent organisations and invited trade unionists who support the Charter’s demands, as a way of building support for the decisive action needed to transform Labour across the unions.

Organising TUSC supporters in other unions

The idea of building trade union support for a Charter for Workers’ Political Representation shows the need to address how TUSC supporters are organised in unions other than the RMT, still the only union officially represented on the TUSC steering committee.

This will also be important in answering the charge that campaigning for a restoration of the unions’ role within the Labour Party would at this point actually re-inforce the right-wing against Jeremy Corbyn. This argument has been bolstered by the way some right-wing led unions have abused even the limited rights that do remain for affiliated unions – for example, by head office organising bogus branch affiliations to local parties to vote in ‘trigger ballots’ against an open selection for mayoral candidates. Unite has referred to this problem in its submission to the Democracy Review. But the democratic exercise of union influence is an issue that must be taken up first and foremost within each union. TUSC supporters groups organised in individual unions, both Labour-affiliated and unaffiliated, could play an important role in this.

In its eight years existence TUSC has experienced a greater level of trade union leadership and involvement than any other ‘comparator’ organisation but further participation by trade unionists in an official capacity is just not likely in the immediate period ahead. Organising formal TUSC Supporters Groups in the different unions, however – a PCS TUSC Supporters Group, Unite TUSC Supporters, Unison, NEU, Usdaw etc – is possible and should be done.

The currently existing structure of TUSC would facilitate this, as it allows the participation of national trade union officials and national executive members on the TUSC national steering

committee in a personal capacity (and with a general provision for this to be replicated in local groups for union branch officers etc).

So as part of an autumn campaign around a Charter for Workers' Political Representation the Socialist Party proposes that the TUSC national steering committee approaches potentially supportive union NEC members and national officers to join the steering committee (or appoint representatives from amongst themselves if there are a group of TUSC supporters on their union's NEC), with the provision that they prepare a plan to organise a formal structure for a TUSC Supporters' Group, including TUSC steering committee representation, by the 2019 union conferences.

Election tactics: for a Corbyn-led government *and* anti-cuts councillors

TUSC has already re-calibrated its electoral activity following Jeremy Corbyn's initial leadership victory in September 2015. In the 2017 general election, in which the working class had an opportunity to put Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten, the TUSC national steering committee agreed not to stand any candidates, from the position of being the sixth-biggest party on the ballot paper two years earlier in 2015.

If the same situation arises – a general election in which there is the possibility for a Corbyn-led government to be elected – TUSC should adopt the same approach. TUSC parliamentary candidates should only be considered then in exceptional cases, for example if a leading Blairite is imposed as a candidate on a constituency party in a solid Labour seat.

But local elections are not the same as a general election, which is about determining who forms the government at a national level. The issue in local elections on the other hand should be about how councils can expand or at least defend local public services provision – and, in doing so, best use their still considerable powers to resist the drive for cuts and privatisation coming from Westminster.

But that is not the position of Labour's right-wing in local government – who predominate not just among MPs but in local council Labour Groups too. They unresistingly carry out the Tory government's austerity agenda.

It is councillors from this camp that TUSC has stood candidates against in the three sets of local elections held under Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party leadership. And while the responsibility for challenging such alleged 'Labour' representatives who implement Tory policies does not rest with TUSC alone, our coalition should continue to contest local elections on this basis, beginning preparations this autumn to stand in the May 2019 elections.

But should TUSC continue?

The Socialist Party has been committed to TUSC because we recognised the role it could play in crystallising the arguments around working class political representation particularly within the trade unions. Participating in TUSC inevitably puts constraints on the Socialist Party's independent activity. However, although the terrain has changed since Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader, we are prepared to continue carrying this overhead because we believe TUSC still has a role to play, three years on, if it is re-cast along the lines set out in this position paper.

There are other issues too on which TUSC could play an important role in the next period – for example, following up its position as a Leave organisation in the 2016 EU referendum to defend Jeremy Corbyn's refusal to accept the neo-liberal rules of the single market in any Brexit deal. This could be the issue used by the Blairites to give cover to their next moves against Jeremy

Corbyn, particularly if a pro-remain position is pushed through at September's Labour Party conference. And if TUSC is to continue attention must be given to developing its local structures and ensuring that individual TUSC members have an organised input into the coalition.

It would be wishful thinking however not to recognise that there is some support within the RMT for TUSC not to continue. It is inevitable, for example, in a union of over 80,000 members, that there will be some who want to support Labour councillors in local elections regardless of the cuts policies they are carrying out and who will be unhappy with TUSC standing candidates next May. So it is appropriate to discuss what TUSC's future role should be – on the lines of the Socialist Party's proposals or any others – or whether it is time to end the project and agree a process to do so.

If it is decided to wind-up TUSC it would be possible to keep its registration with the Electoral Commission open for future use, if circumstances change. The registered officers would comply with the Commission's annual reporting requirements. The residual assets could be kept in trust by the registered officers and three trustees, one each appointed by the RMT, the Socialist Party and the individual members' steering committee representatives.

But that is not the preferred position of the Socialist Party. We not only defend what TUSC has achieved in its eight years of existence but believe that its potential role in helping establish socialist working class political representation is far from exhausted.

A timetable for decisions

There are a number of looming events and deadlines which mean that decisions about the future of TUSC, while they do not have to be taken immediately, should be considered now and resolved by the autumn. These range from the results of the Labour Party Democracy Review, due in September, to the annual release of councils' statement of accounts with their reserves figures (which have been collated together in recent years and published on the TUSC website as part of the campaign to resist right-wing Labour councils' austerity policies).

The Socialist Party is particularly concerned that there should be socialist, anti-austerity candidates in the 2019 local elections standing against right-wing Labour councillors who have not been deselected and that preparations for the elections should begin in the autumn. If the feeling of our allies in TUSC is that they cannot commit to this, and that the coalition should therefore be effectively discontinued, the Socialist Party would like to know by the autumn so that we can discuss what possibilities we would have to organise an electoral challenge by alternative means.

So we suggest that the TUSC steering committee has an initial discussion on the proposals here, and any others that may be made, which are then reported back for consultation for final decisions to be made at a committee meeting either at the end of August or early September.



■ A TUSC timeline

2009

■ Early in 2009 the No2EU:Yes to Democracy coalition is established to stand candidates in the **4 June** European parliament elections on a platform of opposition to the EU's neo-liberal agenda. The coalition involves the RMT – with general secretary Bob Crow heading the candidates' list in London – the Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), Scottish Solidarity, and others, including convenors and leading activists from the Visteon plant closures and Lindsey oil refinery construction workers' disputes, prominent industrial struggles of that year.

■ No2EU stands candidates for all eleven regional lists and polls 153,236 votes. With the RMT's formal backing this was the first time a trade union had supported a national electoral challenge to Labour since the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. The coalition participants continue to meet in the summer to discuss how the successful model of co-operation between different forces could be continued and a common platform of core policies agreed for the general election due in 2010.

■ Resulting from a resolution at the RMT annual general meeting (AGM) a conference to discuss working class political representation is hosted by the union on **7 November**, at which it is announced that a federally-organised coalition has been agreed which will stand candidates in the coming general election (with the name still to be finalised). Speakers at the conference include Bob Crow, Joe Higgins (Socialist Party Ireland MEP), Dave Nellist, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack and... Jeremy Corbyn! On the issue of working class political representation the then backbench Labour MP says "there has always been a debate, in or out of the Labour Party, but what we can agree on is the need to stand up against war and poverty".

■ The POA executive discuss the proposed electoral coalition at its **16 December** meeting. While deciding that the union would not officially participate, they agree that individual members and officers can do so in a personal capacity. The then general secretary of the POA, Brian Caton, declares his support.

2010

■ The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is formally founded on **7 January**, with an initial steering committee including the Socialist Party and, in a personal capacity, Bob Crow, Brian Caton and PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh. Places are reserved for other socialist organisations who may wish to participate. Dave Nellist is registered with the Electoral Commission as the legally required 'party leader'.

■ Later in January NUT president Nina Franklin and PCS vice-president John McNally join the steering committee in a personal capacity, and the SWP join as a participating organisation. A founding meeting of Scottish TUSC is held at the RMT Scotland HQ on **30 January**, also attended by Bob Crow and Dave Nellist. The CPB executive, however, votes narrowly not to take up its place on the TUSC committee, albeit while agreeing to support two TUSC candidates in the general election, Dave Nellist and John Metcalfe. TUSC

stands 42 candidates in the **6 May** general election and 33 in the council elections held on the same day, polling a combined vote of 23,580.

■ Following the May elections an open conference of TUSC candidates and agents is held on **12 June** where it is agreed that TUSC will continue to stand candidates and establish local steering committees in preparation for future contests. The RMT 2010 AGM approves the executive's political report on the general election, including the union's formal endorsement of 21 TUSC candidates in May. At the end of the year the steering committee agrees that Nick Wrack, the former secretary of the Respect party, should organise a national meeting of independent members of TUSC (those not in the constituent organisations) to formalise their involvement in the federal coalition.

2011

■ A TUSC conference on **22 January** agrees the core policy platform for the 2011 local elections. While candidates are to be responsible for their own campaigns and election literature, agreement with the core policies is the basis on which they are able to use the TUSC name on the ballot paper. TUSC stands 179 candidates in the local elections on **5 May**, polling a combined vote of 26,765.

■ A second TUSC conference of the year is organised on **16 July**. As well as discussing future electoral plans, the conference agrees proposals to include the TUSC Independent Socialist Network as a constituent component of the national steering committee to represent individual members.

2012

■ The 2012 election conference is held on **28 January**, agreeing a challenge in the English and Welsh local elections and the London assembly elections on **3 May**. There are 120 council candidates in England, 14 in Wales, and 38 organised separately by Scottish TUSC for the local elections there. The TUSC candidate for the Liverpool mayor, former Liverpool 47 councillor Tony Mulhearn, polls 4,792 votes (4.7%), coming in fifth ahead of the Tories and with double the UKIP vote. The combined vote of all TUSC candidates is 46,816.

■ The RMT AGM in **June** supports a motion congratulating "all RMT members who stood as TUSC candidates, or whose branches or regional councils supported TUSC candidates, for contributing to the hard, long-term task of rebuilding political representation for working class people" and agrees that the union should be officially represented on the TUSC national steering committee. POA general secretary Steve Gillan, assistant general secretary Joe Simpson, and FBU NEC member Ian Leahair also join the committee in a personal capacity.

■ A further TUSC conference is organised on **22 September**, which includes a platform speaker from the CPB. The CPB is again invited to join the steering committee but, while looking to collaborate with TUSC, decides in **November** that they will still not formally participate in the coalition. Later in the year Socialist Resistance are invited to a steering committee meeting to make their case to be represented on the committee. A TUSC Structure Review Commission open meeting to discuss proposals to improve the coalition's functioning is held on **15 December**.

2013

■ A TUSC Trade Union Forum is organised on **6 April**, attended by 19 NEC members and senior officers from eight unions. Socialist Resistance are accepted onto the steering committee, although for a probationary period without having the right to veto decisions under the committee's 'consensus rule'. In the mainly Tory county council local elections on **2 May**, TUSC stands 121 candidates, polling 10,182 votes.

■ Over the summer the RMT hosts three meetings to discuss a challenge in the 2014 European elections embracing the different organisations involved in the 2009 No2EU coalition and TUSC. The main organisation that was involved in 2009 that had remained outside TUSC was the CPB so another approach

is made to invite them onto the steering committee with full rights. By August however it is clear that they are insisting on a separate European election coalition so it is agreed at the **4 September** steering committee that TUSC will not contest the Euro-elections in its own name and leave it to constituent organisations to decide whether or not they will support the re-established No2EU electoral list.

■ TUSC enters discussions with two ‘rebel councillors’ in Southampton who have been expelled from the Labour Party for opposing the closure of a swimming pool in their ward and the general austerity policies of the Labour-led council. TUSC is also contacted by a group of eight former Labour councillors in Harrow to discuss the possibility of joint work.

2014

■ The TUSC conference is held on **1 February**, with attendees including councillors from Harrow, Rotherham and Southampton. With Labour’s special conference endorsing the Collins Review proposals to further reduce trade unions’ collective rights within the party, TUSC agrees to make a particular appeal for active trade unionists to stand in the forthcoming local elections. Following Bob Crow’s tragically early death on **11 March**, 53 RMT members stand as TUSC candidates in the elections on **22 May**. They are part of the biggest left-of-Labour electoral challenge since the immediate aftermath of world war two, with 559 candidates together polling 68,152 votes – including ten councils where TUSC scores over 2,000 votes.

■ Two councillors in Leicester leave the Labour Group to form an Independent Councillors Against the Cuts official council group, which subsequently becomes part of the Leicester TUSC steering committee. Two rebel councillors expelled from the Labour Party in Hull also approach TUSC to discuss joint work on preparing a no cuts budget.

■ The RMT AGM in **June** unanimously agrees that the union “will continue to participate as a founding element of TUSC with representation on the TUSC national steering committee”; “will continue to support TUSC candidates in local and national elections under rule”; and “encourages RMT branches to consider standing members as candidates in the forthcoming general election”.

■ In **September** places on the TUSC national steering committee are agreed for two representatives of the group of TUSC supporters on the NUT executive. Socialist Resistance, however, step down from the committee, citing their ‘heavy involvement’ in the Left Unity party. This was set up in 2013 by, amongst others, the film director Ken Loach. Despite being offered a place on the TUSC steering committee with the full rights of a constituent organisation, Left Unity decides not to participate in the coalition.

■ The Scottish TUSC steering committee meets on **9 December** and approves its first seven candidates for the forthcoming general election.

2015

■ A 300-strong TUSC conference to discuss the 2015 elections is held on **24 January**, addressed by rebel councillors from Hull, Leicester, Walsall and Warrington. The national steering committee meetings in **February** and **March** process over 750 applications to be candidates for the general and local elections, approving the big majority but not accepting parliamentary candidacies in seats where the RMT executive separately endorses the Labour or Green Party candidate. TUSC also registers a joint description with Left Unity to enable any of their candidates who wish to contribute to a broader electoral challenge to do so, while retaining the Left Unity name on the ballot paper. In the event seven of the ten Left Unity parliamentary candidates take up this option.

■ 748 TUSC candidates contest the **7 May** elections, polling 118,125 votes in total. But while having 135 parliamentary candidates means TUSC reaches the threshold for ‘fair media coverage’ – and a TUSC party election broadcast goes out in April (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcEMrCTVRdg>) – coverage is

strictly at the statutory minimum. Nevertheless, TUSC local council candidates poll over 3,000 votes in seven councils and over 1,000 votes in a further 17.

■ Following the general election Labour holds a leadership contest. Two weeks after the winner is announced TUSC meets in conference on **26 September** to discuss Jeremy Corbyn's welcome victory and the new situation that has opened up. A revised local elections policy platform is agreed and a call made on TUSC supporters to approach Labour councillors to discuss the new possibilities for anti-austerity action, while recognising that Jeremy Corbyn had only received the public support of 450 out of Labour's 7,000 local councillors. On **19 October** representatives from TUSC and the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) national committee meet for exploratory talks on how the inevitable reaction by the capitalist establishment to Jeremy Corbyn's victory could best be combated, in the labour movement and in society at large.

■ The September TUSC conference had also agreed after a full debate that TUSC will campaign for a leave vote in the referendum on EU membership scheduled for 2016, while preserving the right of those in TUSC who support EU membership to publically present their own position. It is agreed that TUSC will not back any leave campaign headed by Tory or UKIP politicians but will campaign on its own core policy platform of opposition to austerity and support for socialist policies. The **25 November** steering committee meeting agrees draft wording of a petition to the Electoral Commission demanding they use their legal power not to choose an official Leave campaign at all "if there is not one organisation that adequately represents those supporting a particular outcome to the referendum". Neither the Vote Leave nor Leave.EU campaigns, TUSC argues, should get the public resources and profile that official designation would give them.

2016

■ In **January** Unite's Local Government National Industrial Sector Committee agrees a resolution calling on Labour-controlled councils to use their reserves and borrowing powers to set no-cuts budgets, using TUSC-published research on council reserves. In **February** Unison's Local Government Service Group Executive makes a similar call. The TUSC steering committee publishes a comprehensive briefing pack, *Preparing a No Cuts People's Budget*.

■ The 'Don't give taxpayers money to UKIP and Tory EU campaigners' petition is launched in **February** with the signatures of two national union presidents, two vice-presidents, and 26 national executive committee members. In **March** the PCS NEC supports the call on the Electoral Commission to not designate any group dominated by UKIP, Tory and other pro-austerity and racist politicians as the official Leave campaign. The Commission is due to decide on **13 April** but refuses to discuss the option of not making a designation, stating instead that "it is of course open for TUSC itself to apply for lead campaigner status". So to keep the pressure on TUSC does apply – in what the BBC calls "a surprise bid" – but, exposing the political bias of the Commission, it goes ahead anyway and appoints the Boris Johnson-fronted Vote Leave as the recipient of millions of pounds of public funds and guaranteed media coverage.

■ In the new political context of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party TUSC adopts a more targeted approach to the elections on **5 May**. TUSC candidates poll 43,309 votes in total, including 3,540 votes for the six constituency seat candidates for the Scottish parliament, while the Liverpool mayoral candidate, Unison NEC member Roger Bannister, increases TUSC's support from 2012, winning 4,950 votes (a 5.1% share) and coming in fourth, ahead of the Tories once again.

■ From the end of May to the **23 June** EU referendum a TUSC '20-city tour' of public meetings takes place under the heading, 'The Socialist Case Against the EU' (eventually 25 cities are covered). There are platform speakers from the TUSC constituent organisations, including RMT general secretary Mick Cash at the London leg, and other labour movement speakers supporting a leave position, including BFAWU president Ian Hodson and FBU NEC member Paul Embury.

■ The government's defeat in the EU referendum triggers a crisis in the Tory party but also a leadership coup attempt by the Parliamentary Labour Party. The RMT AGM, meeting from **26-30 June**, gives

resounding support to Jeremy Corbyn to continue as leader of the Labour Party. At the same time it agrees to continue participating in TUSC to ensure that the union will not be trapped into supporting alleged Labour politicians who vote for austerity and war, for lack of an alternative electoral vehicle to use.

■ Following Jeremy Corbyn's re-election as Labour leader the TUSC steering committee meeting on **12 October** initiates a discussion on TUSC's role now, including the question of electoral strategy, in preparation for the 2017 elections conference. It also agrees a new procedure for individual members' representation on the steering committee, who will now be elected by those who attend the national TUSC conference who are not otherwise members of a constituent organisation.

2017

■ The TUSC conference is held on **28 January**, with the main debate under the heading 'TUSC's role now and the 2017 elections'. The conference agrees to continue contesting local elections but to insist that prospective TUSC candidates seek a dialogue with the Labour candidate on their preparedness to resist cuts to council jobs and services before their candidacy is approved. A Scottish TUSC conference is held on **25 February** to agree plans for the Scottish local elections. However, in **March** the SWP suspend their participation in the TUSC steering committee in disagreement with the plan to stand in the council elections in England and Wales (while supporting candidates in the different political situation in Scotland).

■ TUSC stands 78 candidates in the Scottish and Welsh council elections and the English county council elections on **4 May**, plus two mayoral candidates, polling a combined vote of 15,407. During the campaign Theresa May makes her surprise snap general election announcement, cutting across the council contests.

■ Meeting on **10 May**, the TUSC steering committee agrees that it will not stand candidates in the **8 June** general election but will work all out to try and get Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten. In contrast to the prevailing media talk after the local elections of a 100-seat Tory majority the TUSC press release agreed argues clearly that "the election outcome is not a foregone conclusion".

■ Following the surge of support for Jeremy Corbyn at the election the RMT AGM at the end of **June** agrees a branch consultation on whether re-affiliation to the Labour Party would help the union pursue its goal to "create a mass party of labour that fights in the interests of the working class". The union will approach Labour for answers to questions on its' democratic structures, the rights of unions within the party, and what it will do about 'Labour' councillors and mayors who continue to implement Tory austerity policies. The AGM also agrees policy for local authorities to use their reserves and borrowing powers to set legal 'No Cuts Budgets' that protect public services and jobs while fighting for more government funding.

■ The TUSC steering committee meets three more times in 2017, releasing a report on the level of reserves held by the 124 Labour-led councils across Britain and organising a survey on how far Labour councillors are preparing to back Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message in the next round of council budget-setting – the first since the general election produced a weak and feeble Tory government which would not be able to defeat concerted resistance to its cuts policies if Labour councillors were prepared to fight.

2018

■ The TUSC conference meets on **10 February** and agrees a motion calling on the steering committee "to continue with the broad electoral approach adopted since September 2015" for the local elections, "but ensuring that no candidates are authorised to stand against consistent public supporters of Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-austerity policies". The resulting electoral stand on **3 May** was the most selective taken in TUSC's history, with 112 candidates polling a combined 14,073 votes. The national steering committee member Keith Morrell is re-elected in his Southampton council ward with a 46.9% share of the vote.

■ A special general meeting (SGM) of the RMT is held on **May 30** to discuss a formal invitation from the Labour Party to re-affiliate. The SGM decides by 31 votes to 25 not to re-affiliate at this stage but instead

continue with its current political strategy, acknowledging in the agreed motion that Labour “has the potential to be a mass party of the working class” since Jeremy Corbyn’s election to the leadership, but that the RMT can best “support, defend and develop the socialist advances that have been made” through its own independent political activity. The current political strategy includes retaining RMT representation on the TUSC steering committee and supporting candidates that support the union’s policies.