

## Local Government and National Unison Conference 2017

18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> June and 20-23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017

### The Local Government

This year's conferences came after the awful incident at Grenfell Tower, where many of our members did above and beyond in assisting the public, both in rehousing and also in obtaining the essentials that are needed day to day. Both Local and National opened with a 1 minutes silence both to commemorate those who died but also in support of our colleagues some of whom were present at conference.

Local Gov. gave much debate around the cuts and, in the aftermath of the General Election, what action could or should be taken in the future as we work to improve our situation both in terms of pay and also in working with the Labour Party to bring about another General Election, which could bring in a Labour Government. There were also motions on Libraries, facility time and the crisis in Social Work as well apprenticeships and others – a total of 30 motions were debated. Of the 5 delegates who attended Local Gov (Ruth Johnson, Deb Bell, Stacey Drummond (young member and 1<sup>st</sup> time attendee) , Maureen Harris, and myself) we all work in various areas of the council so had a range of interests that we supported throughout the conference.

On the Sunday - I attended a fringe meeting which marked the introduction of the Residential Care Charter. This follows on from the introduction of the Home Care Charter – **Time to Care**, which has been adopted by many local council's as they commission services from agencies to provide care for the most vulnerable in their own homes. The Residential Care Charter has 5 main areas – Protecting and Supporting residents; Training and support of employees; Decent pay for Quality work; Time to Care; and Part of the Union. One of the main aims is for it to be used as a recruiting tool. But it's also to try and ensure that those in Res Care get the care they need and those working in our residential homes have a good deal – who knows when it might be our family member (or us) that needs good levels of care in a residential setting.

See attached the results of the motions debated at the Local Government

## The National Conference.

As indicated above the National commenced with a 1 minutes silence in respect of Grenfell Tower.

We also held a further 1 minutes silence in respect of the Finsbury Park incident –which is Jeremy Corbin’s constituency.

There was lively debate throughout the 4 day of conference. Both speeches by the National Secretary – Dave Prentis - and by Jeremy Corbin were extremely well received, and much mention was made of how the Labour Party Manifesto closely followed the needs of Unison, and how important they would be bringing down the Tory Government.

Our own motion (19 – Tackling Stress) had a number of additional speakers, all mentioned how stress was affecting them in their workplace.

There were many fringe meetings, both at lunchtime and after conference was completed at the end of the day. I attended the “Show Racism the Red Card” and attempted to attend the Social Care fringe but unfortunately got stuck in the Conference Centre Lift – along with 8 other delegates, one who suffered from claustrophobia, for 30 minutes until released by conference staff. It was with great reluctance and trepidation that I entered the lift the following day!.

Some motions were extremely emotive – perhaps none more than the “child marriage is child slavery” one (which had follow a guest speaker Stephen Lewis from AIDS Free World, who spoke on how children sometimes as young as 8 or 9 were being married off to older men and then were lost with no education no voice and often nowhere to turn when they become ill from pregnancy at a too young age. A member cried for our support of the motion as she faced her daughter being taken back to her partner’s home country to be married off. She explained that their partnership had been an abusive one and the women cried as she explained that she lived in fear, that her partner would take their daughter, would have no legal fees if she took him to court, while she would have to fund this herself and she had no idea where she would find the money for this. She was given a standing ovation in support, but also told from the platform that the Vice President and National Secretary would meet with her privately and put her in contact with Unison Legal to support her. We were told later that Thompsons had taken up her case and were supporting her in fighting this legal battle.

Throughout the National Conference speakers to each motion were usually kept to reasonable numbers with “Point of Order’s” being raised. In fact by Friday some motions only had two speakers before someone raised the PoO (Indeed on one motion someone sat in the reserved seat for this before the motion had even been moved! - Needless to say it was pointed out that the motion had to be moved before a point of order could be made). But even with conference moving on there were a high number of motions not debated.

I did feel that there were a number of motions that could have been composited, to bring similar motions together, without affecting the body of the requests being lost.

Perhaps my only negatives of the conferences was, as a replacement delegate, I was unable to get the specialist chair that I need, for the whole of the National Conference – this left me in need of increased pain relief throughout. In addition travelling back on the Friday

meant that we did need to leave conference before the end, but this also meant that, as a single female, I arrived back in Newcastle alone at 11 pm. I had ordered a taxi but then had to get my case and other luggage well away from the station, as out of city taxis are not allowed at the taxi rank outside of the station. This meant that I was left feeling very isolated and vulnerable while waiting for the taxi. It also meant that I arrived home totally exhausted, after a heavy day of concentrating at conference, an 8 hr train journey and not getting home till midnight.

See attached the results of the motions and rule changes discussed at National Conference.

Joan Laverick