



# TRADE UNION VISION FOR BRISTOL

**TUC**







**T**he priorities of Bristol's next elected mayor matter to working people. It is important that they vote whether they support the position of mayor or not. The Bristol mayor has the authority of leadership well beyond the strict powers of the position. The mayor can take a lead on developing a vision for the city for the benefit of all its citizens.

Such a vision should include challenging the current unacceptable levels of inequality. Where you live in Bristol is a key determinate in whether you go to university, your career, life chances, health and even life expectancy.

Employment and the quality of work is crucial and the mayor can champion decent work opportunities and expose the bad employers. More powers of skills funding look set to be devolved just as the cash has been slashed by government. Unions can play a key part in providing support to workers but also in contributing to the decision over spending priorities.

Getting to and from work relies on efficient and affordable public transport as well as an effective road network. The controversial issues around Bristol's transport system deserve a thorough debate during the mayoral election.

The issue of housing is rising up the political agenda. Young people in particular know the vital need to address the shortage of decent homes to rent and buy at reasonable costs. Trade unions believe the answer is a revival of council housing as well as a drive to build affordable homes for sale.

This trade union statement highlights some of the key issues that matter to working people in Bristol. Unions want workers to vote and participate in the life of their city. Unions want to work with good employers and a city leadership that recognises the importance of trade unions and the voice of working people.

**Nigel Costley**  
South West TUC Regional Secretary

## TRADE UNION VISION FOR BRISTOL

Bristol can be a fabulous place to live and work. It has a diverse and vibrant economy, offering a high quality of life that makes it an attractive destination. World-leading businesses in aerospace, finance, micro-electronics, renewable, creative industries and others can call on a skilled and diverse workforce.

### but...

Bristol is a very unequal city. In Clifton 80% of teenagers go to university. In Filwood in south Bristol it is just 5%. Measures such as unemployment, health and poverty all highlight the yawning gaps between rich and poor in different parts of Bristol.

The great potential of the Bristol economy must be harnessed to produce education, employment and quality career options for all its citizens. Trade unionists know that decentralisation and devolved decision-making can deliver a range of benefits if harnessed well. This cannot mean passing on cuts to local authorities and the elected Mayor. Bristol has its own particular opportunities and challenges. It has a diverse and successful economy but its governance is hampered by flawed geographical boundaries.

This statement doesn't try to cover every aspect of life for people in Bristol, but reflects trade union priorities in education and skills, the economy and an alternative to austerity, sustainable development, fair pay and equalities, working together as a city, international solidarity, transport, housing, trade unions and workforce engagement.

Trade unions are working in partnership with specialist campaign groups and community bodies to make more detailed submissions. We work with employers and business groups to press for common interests.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ to be a champion for the people of Bristol
- ◆ to rise above the day-to-day business of the city council and the short-term pressures of party political life to inspire and engage people in public life - even those disaffected with society
- ◆ to promote Bristol's economy nationally and internationally
- ◆ to inspire young people to develop themselves within the city

## 100,000 TRADE UNION MEMBERS IN THE BRISTOL AREA



- ◆ to support the Local Enterprise Partnership
- ◆ to stand up for public services, the people who depend upon them and the workers who provide them.

### **Devolution**

Local politicians, businesses, trade unions and community groups have a greater understanding of the needs of Bristol than do politicians and civil servants in Whitehall. We call on the new mayor to bring together the council, voluntary and community groups, trade unions, businesses, academia and other public agencies to share common objectives and set out new ways of partnership working. Such a partnership can maximise effort and shared budgets and can develop a progressive approach to public service delivery. Unions remain sceptical about elected mayors. The people of Bath have just voted against having one but George Osborne wishes to force one on the former Avon region in return for devolved powers. The next mayor of Bristol will need to help build a consensus across the region to gain real devolution but not at the expense of ignoring the wishes of local people.

### **Education and learning**

Bristol's education provision has been improving but trade unions are fearful of the consequences of the academy and free school process. We need investment in leadership, school buildings and staff. Education is central to the challenge of reducing inequality and early years' learning is critical.

The school system has been fragmented by academies and free schools. We want a mayor who will encourage the closest possible collaboration between all education and training providers in the city.

Bristol can be proud of its universities and colleges. At a time of high fees and heightened competition between institutions, the mayor should encourage collaboration and joint working. There is a crisis in Further Education and Bristol City College has suffered more than most. Courses have been cancelled and jobs lost. The mayor has seemed powerless to help.

We want a mayor who will press for:

- ◆ investment in school leadership, buildings and staff
- ◆ collaboration and partnership between all schools and learning providers
- ◆ champion the successes in local colleges and universities
- ◆ support all efforts to sustain successful further education provision in the City



### **Skills for the future**

The mayor should work with the Local Enterprise Partnership, colleges, universities, employers and unions to champion ambitious aims to lift skills in Bristol. More investment is needed at every level to build the skill base for the future. No-one should be left not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The mayor should support the city council's promotion of apprenticeships and build this approach into its procurement processes. Special efforts should be taken to promote such training to non-traditional entrants so we can break down barriers along gender lines.

Many people in Bristol will need to retrain and develop their skills and knowledge as the nature of technology and work continue to change. The city needs a culture of lifelong learning where no-one is denied another chance and where learning providers reach out to all. The city's further education colleges are struggling under government cutbacks. The mayor needs to argue their case and use local powers to support them.

The recently-launched Bristol Employment and Skills Positioning Statement 2015-2020 which highlighted Bristol as a 'Learning City' was welcomed by the South West TUC but missed ways to engage and inspire working people. The partnership needs to recognise the role of workplace representatives and their unions.

Trade unions have a network of Union Learning Reps who provide front-line assistance and advice to workers. They are helping to transform people's lives and boost skills for business.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ promote apprenticeships within Bristol City Council and its suppliers
- ◆ commit to making Bristol 'NEET-free'
- ◆ encourage lifelong learning in communities and workplaces
- ◆ recognise the importance of Union Learning Reps

### **Economy**

Bristol's economy is resilient but working people are paying a heavy price for the failings of wealthy bankers and financial speculators. The city needs a leadership that will champion an alternative approach. Bristol needs growth and the returns should be spread more fairly.

### **Work**

The priority is to provide employment for all those searching for work. This aim can only be met by a commitment to economic growth. Work is a key part of the answer to poverty but the shocking levels of hardship faced by those on poor pay shows we need good quality employment offering family-sustaining wages.

Work must pay a fair and living wage. Too many Bristol workers are in insecure employment on abusive zero-hour contracts, dubious or bogus self-employment, agency and casual work. Bristol Citizens' Advice has recently produced a damning report into the impact of insecure employment in the city. We recognise the mayor has limited powers over the labour market but can use the authority of the office to champion good employment practice and to ensure the Living Wage is paid to council staff and contractors.

The mayor should oppose the Trade Union Bill and commit to maintaining the best possible standards of employment practices within the council.

## **Sustainable development**

The free market alone will not deliver a growing, prosperous and sustainable Bristol. The mayor will need to champion a vision for the city that will win private investment as well as national government support for infrastructure.

The government's promised devolution holds out a promise of greater funds and flexibility in return for a commitment to growth. Unions remain sceptical and fear the government is simply devolving decisions on cutbacks. The South West TUC is nervous about Bristol's capacity to deliver significant housing growth within its narrowly defined borders. Instead of fragmented programmes that the West of England has won through competitive bidding we would rather see a strategic approach to pursue a shared vision developed with the engagement of the whole community.

## **Green jobs**

Such a coherent approach must also be grounded within a commitment to sustainable development and care for the environment. The South West TUC supported the Green Capital project but opportunities were missed to engage working people during the year. Unions used their resources to promote green reps and green workplaces but volunteer reps lack the time and capacity to drive such initiatives. Government attacks on 'facility time' of union reps make this problem worse. The result will be workplaces are less safe, health and green.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ protect essential services to families and communities and the most vulnerable individuals in the city
- ◆ value, recognise and appreciate the role of public sector employment as a positive contributor to the local economy
- ◆ understand and develop the role of local government as key drivers of economic and social progress
- ◆ work with trade unions
- ◆ reject the arguments that massive cuts in public spending are necessary to reduce the deficit within four years and who believes there is an alternative
- ◆ support an approach based on sustainable growth and the increased tax revenue which will come from greater employment and business activity.

## **Equality**

The scale and speed of cuts is having a major impact on the council's ability to provide essential services to the most vulnerable families and communities. Austerity is causing hardship to those in most need of support and pushing more families into poverty. Demand for council services is rising at the very time they face severe cuts. Women are expected to fill gaps left by the withdrawal of services, they tend to be the ones most affected. For example, the mayor should support projects to eliminate rape and violence against women and girls.

Bristol needs a leader who will be alert to the needs of all sections in society and promote equal representation on bodies that serve the council. We welcome the development of a Manifesto for Race Equality and call on the next mayor to work with the partners to progress its recommendations. It states: "Race equality appears to be at a standstill in Bristol. Inequality, lack of social mobility and exclusion from the economic, social, cultural and political spheres are among the key challenges facing Bristol's BME communities. Such

exclusion and inequality, whether it is driven by race, class, gender or any of the other means of dividing our world, has a huge cost. There is a cycle of self-perpetuating poverty, powerlessness and exclusion for BME people, which needs to be broken.”

4% of Bristol’s white workers are unemployed, 8% of BME workers. This is despite the BME population have higher qualifications. The city needs positive approaches to careers advice, support for the unemployed, skill development and assistance for those facing discrimination with a determination to eliminate race inequality.

We signed the declaration against slavery and have promoted ways to recognise the terrible legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The South West TUC was one of the first to sign the declaration to name Bristol a ‘City of Sanctuary’, welcoming those fleeing persecution from around the world. We believe the city could offer more support to those displaced from war zones such as Syria and Eritrea.

New arrivals to Bristol over generations have added to the vibrancy and culture of Bristol, bringing skills, ideas and energy to the local economy. This is something to celebrate and recognise as a business advantage.

## **Bristol, a caring city**

We have a vision of Bristol as a city that is proud of the way it cares for people, especially children, elderly and the most vulnerable.

### **Child care**

The lack of affordable child care is one of the greatest barriers to employment, especially for women. The council is key to providing universal free or low-fee child care at consistently high quality.

### **Elderly care**

It should be great to grow old in Bristol with a city centre welcoming to all and a health and social care system that everyone can be proud of. We want to work with care providers and the council in developing a skilled and well-motivated workforce.

We want to work with the new mayor to promote high quality care and help raise the status of care work within the city. In partnership with the mayor and employers, they can help provide access to skill development to offer care workers enhanced job opportunities.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ commit to UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter
- ◆ develop free or low-fee universal child care provision
- ◆ make Bristol a great place to grow old in
- ◆ support council care homes
- ◆ help develop a skilled and well motivated care workforce
- ◆ make sure carers are paid properly including for travel time between clients
- ◆ raise the status of care work

### **Vibrant, creative, engaged city**

Bristol is a vibrant creative place. The art, music and cultural life of the city are some of its great strengths. Bristol needs a mayor to champion all aspects of this from fine art and classical music to the edgy street art of Stokes Croft. Bristol is known around the world for Banksy as well as BBC nature programmes.



A diverse and strong media is essential for the lifeblood of Bristol. Local newspapers are under severe pressure and need the support of civic leaders.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ champion Bristol's creative and cultural life
- ◆ be an ambassador for Bristol's arts and creative industries
- ◆ support local media and a vibrant reporting of news and events

### **Working together well**

Success for the new mayor will require close cooperation with a wide range of institutions. Getting on well within the council itself will of course be crucial and the mayor will need to be able to bridge party political divides.

The mayor will need to work well with the council staff and their union representatives. Much of what the mayor will want to champion, such as transport, infrastructure, economic growth, will require joint working with the neighbouring authorities in the West of England and the wider South West.

The mayor should set out to work within the LEP and champion its agenda but should also be open to a wider partnership with the voluntary and community sector in Bristol, the trade union movement and other campaign groups who deserve a voice as part of the city's civil society. It is important that every part of our local society is encouraged to participate and be represented.

### **Bristol, a global city**

Bristol is an international city and needs a mayor that will champion this at every opportunity. This is not only vital for our success in the global market place but also for the cultural richness of life in the city. Bristol's twinned partners around the world have benefited from links over many years and the resources to sustain these need to be protected.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ champion Bristol as an international city, encourage global trade, welcome visitors from around the world and sustain council support for twinning.

### **Transport**

Conflict between the vested interests of Bristol's four neighbouring councils hasn't helped resolve Bristol's transport needs. The West of England must have a single transport authority to ensure the provision across its four authorities. The South West TUC has helped promote cycling and walking to work schemes.

We would like the council to take back control of the city's bus system from private operators. Bristol has won bus rapid transport schemes and the mayor will need to oversee their successful delivery. Disruption will be inevitable during the process and those who support the programme must come together to back the work.

Electrification of the Great Western main line will improve journey times and capacity on the main routes to London. We have been alarmed at the slow progress and cost over-runs.

Trade unions have joined with community to press for:

- ◆ the Portishead line and station to be opened and for improvements in access to Bristol Port and Airport.
- ◆ minimum half-hourly service on all local rail, over extended hours, including Severn Beach line.
- ◆ Henbury Loop and station
- ◆ establish an Integrated Transport Authority covering the four authorities that used to make up the County of Avon
- ◆ provide an 'oyster'/contactless card, integrated payment system
- ◆ introduce a timed-ticket system across bus operators
- ◆ regain public control over the city's buses
- ◆ deliver the new metro service
- ◆ oppose cuts to Bristol rail services, to protect the public's safety and enable those more vulnerable in society to access valuable services
- ◆ campaign on fair fares.

### **Housing**

Bristol faces a housing crisis. Few young people can afford to buy a house. The ratio of median house prices to median earnings is now over seven, confirming the impact of the housing shortage for those who seek to buy a home.

Some 14,000 people are on the waiting list in Bristol for social housing, with between 2,500 and 3,000 vacancies each year. House building has slumped to record levels and the West of England authorities have cut planned housing growth.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ build more houses – work with housing associations and house builders to win investment to get building in Bristol
- ◆ champion council housing
- ◆ recognise the need for genuinely affordable housing to buy and rent
- ◆ regulate to ensure consistent quality for private rented housing
- ◆ commit to the Acorn Ethical Lettings Charter

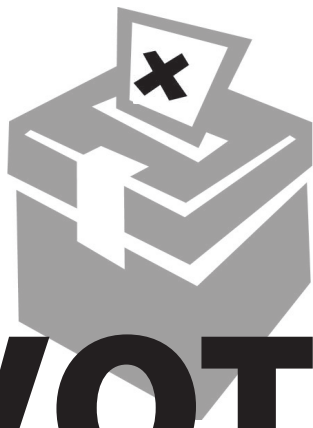
### **Workforce engagement**

The mayor will need to lift the spirits of council staff who have been struggling through cuts in pay and jobs. Most damaging to staff morale is the loss of public services. Staff and trade unions will continue to play a constructive role in achieving efficiencies and in creating a positive industrial relations environment.

We want a mayor who will:

- ◆ value and appreciate the significant contribution that trade unions make to a high performance workplace and wider society
- ◆ support a full and open engagement with trade unions and the workforce
- ◆ avoid compulsory redundancies

- ◆ oppose further privatisation of services, with a commitment to in-house options for services
- ◆ commit to ensuring that contractors meet public sector employment standards, including the Living Wage, and prevent the development of a two-tier workforce in public service provision and, to achieve this, support the application of TUPE plus in contracts involving staff transfer
- ◆ protect and develop good quality terms and conditions of employment, particularly for those jobs subject to reorganisation due to budget reductions and especially vulnerable, low-paid workers, such as school support staff following the government's decision not to proceed with a new national framework.
- ◆ support a determination to improve work-life balance policies and practices
- ◆ investigate innovative ways to promote a proactive approach to improving health and well-being
- ◆ support the innovative work of unions in promoting the 'green agenda' at work, including the role of environmental reps who champion resource efficiency and environmental protection
- ◆ maximise the opportunities for training and development for staff, young people and unemployed.



**VOTE on  
Thursday 5th May**



## South West TUC

Church House

Church Road

Filton

Bristol BS34 7BD

0117 947 0521

[southwest@tuc.org.uk](mailto:southwest@tuc.org.uk)

[www.tuc.org.uk/southwest](http://www.tuc.org.uk/southwest)

@swtuc

April 2016