

TUSC shows alternative to Con-Dem and Labour cuts

174 candidates, standing in 50 councils, contested the English local elections under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) umbrella, polling over 25,000 votes. In 13 seats TUSC polled over 10% and in over a quarter more than 5%. In one in eight seats TUSC outpolled the Lib Dem candidate.

In eight wards contested by TUSC the Labour Party was so moribund that it either did not stand a candidate or stood in less than the total number of seats up for election. TUSC candidates in these wards included an RMT union regional president, a Unite branch secretary, a Unison branch officer and a NASUWT Association officer – trade unionists whose only means of fighting the cuts on the political plane was by picking up the TUSC banner.

In 30 wards there was a clash with the far-right, racist British National Party (BNP). In nearly half these seats TUSC either outpolled the BNP or came in less than two percentage points behind, including four contests in the North West and Yorkshire regions where the BNP have MEPs. The BNP finished ahead of TUSC by more than five points in just five seats.

The TUSC steering committee met on 9 May and agreed to call a candidates’ conference on 16 July to discuss the election campaign and future plans.

A full breakdown of the results is available on the TUSC website at www.tusc.org.uk

Huddersfield

In Huddersfield former councillor Jackie Grunsell, who was elected on a Save Our NHS ticket in 2006, stood again for the third time and got an excellent 866 votes for TUSC, coming third in the poll.

Jackie was very open about her socialist credentials. We have now extended that support to three other wards where our candidates got creditable votes even though our campaigning concentrated on Jackie’s ward.

Jackie’s ward used to have a Lib Dem councillor, but their candidate this year came fourth.

Typical of the many responses we received on the doorsteps was a text sent to Jackie immediately after we leafleted one street: “Just to let you know your leaflet makes a lot of sense and I will be voting for you... I don’t believe the cuts will achieve anything but make the poorest worse off, good luck!”

Mike Forster
Huddersfield Socialist Party

Leicester

Before the last council elections four years ago the Lib Dems controlled Leicester with Tory support. The Lib Dems and Tories are now reduced to one seat each compared to Labour’s 52, and the sole Lib Dem councillor was a Tory a few weeks ago!

However, the Labour council will push ahead with cuts such as closing old people’s homes, shutting day care centres for the disabled and destroying many other services.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates alongside others in ‘Vote Against Cuts in Leicester’ put forward an alternative to just accepting the government’s cuts.

In this slate there were 13 council candidates, including nine Socialist Party members and four from Unity For Peace and Socialism (UPS), plus the mayoral candidate.

We got 5.3% for TUSC in Braunstone ward, and 4.5% and 4.3% for UPS in Evington and Coleman respectively. Mohinder Farma, for UPS, got 1,944 votes for mayor.

Steve Score
Leicester Socialist Party

Salford

George Tapp, electrician and Unite union and Socialist Party member, stood for TUSC in Salford’s Ordsall ward, and won 381 votes and 16%, coming second only to Labour.

We beat the Tory candidate by 42 votes. The Lib Dem candidate’s highly memorable name – Kate Middleton – didn’t save her from finishing 101 votes behind us! When canvassing we found some of the hidden cuts made by the Labour council: cleaners’ and care workers’ hours cut to below survival levels, and a 50% reduction in security guard cover in tower blocks. We are now determined to take up these issues through Salford Against Cuts.

For more anti-cuts reports and analysis go to www.socialistparty.org.uk

Before the election the Ordsall library was due to be shoe-horned into a leisure centre. With a community protest and an anti-cuts candidate standing, Labour withdrew its proposal in the middle of the campaign and claimed to have ‘saved’ the library! Who from, themselves?

Paul Gerrard
Ordsall ward TUSC election agent

Gateshead

In Gateshead 559 people voted for three anti-cuts candidates: TUSC in Deckham (189) and High Fell (165), and an inde-

pendent, who is close to TUSC, in Low Fell (205). In High Fell the 7.5% TUSC vote beat the Lib Dems by 60.

In its election address Gateshead Labour criticised the Lib Dems for not fighting ‘unfair cuts’. However, this is sheer hypocrisy as Labour is implementing in excess of £30 million cuts in Gateshead this year alone.

At the count a local Labour MP expressed the view that the cuts are terrible. He commented: ‘But what can we do?’ He didn’t reply when we commented that a starting point would be to build a mass campaign against the cuts!

We say that none of the cuts are fair or necessary and intend to use the TUSC election campaign to launch Gateshead Against All Cuts.

Elaine Brunskill
High Fell TUSC candidate

Southampton

Thirteen TUSC candidates stood in the local council elections in Southampton. They were trade union activists, students, disaffected ex-Labour councillors as well as members of Southampton Socialist Party.

Across the city TUSC candidates held stalls, delivered leaflets and took part in hustings and public meetings, one of which Alex Gordon, RMT president, spoke at.

Pete Wyatt, TUSC candidate for the Redbridge ward in Southampton, delivered a campaign leaflet to nearly every one of the 13,000 homes in that ward. For his efforts he received a 6.1% share of the vote.

In the months running up to the local election TUSC candidates had been involved in a successful campaign to save a local walk-in health centre from closure.

Graham O’Reilly
Southampton Socialist Party

Stoke-on-Trent

The six TUSC candidates in Stoke-on-Trent achieved an average vote of 3.9%. Smaller parties were squeezed as voters punished the Con-Dems by supporting Labour. The local media completely ignored our campaign.

In the 2010 general election 133 people voted TUSC out of the 32,470 who voted across the Stoke Central constituency. In the six wards in which we have stood in these local elections, from 12,656 who voted, 486 voted for TUSC.

New Labour increased its grip on the city council. The Lib Dems were removed completely and the Tories lost six seats, leaving them just two. Community Voice lost all their seats along with other independents.

Very welcome was the complete removal from the council of the far-right, racist BNP. But we should not be complacent as they polled an average of 10%, whilst another far-right organisation, England First, averaged 12.5%.

Andy Bentley
Stoke Socialist Party

Coventry: support for Socialist Party still strong in St Michael’s



Socialist Party candidate Rob Windsor photo S Figg

Paul Delaney

Coventry Socialist Party stood in all 18 of the council seats up for election on 5 May.

With two out of the three establishment parties in government, the Labour Party saw an increase in its vote, winning five more seats on the council.

Our main campaign was in St Michael’s ward, where we fought hard to try to get former Socialist Party councillor Rob Windsor back on the council.

Despite Rob receiving 1,263 votes, which in the past would have been enough to win, Labour had an increased margin of victory with its 2,419 votes. The Tories came third with 434 votes.

Our vote in some parts of the ward was as high as 70%, with people seeing us as the only principled fighters and campaigners on issues such as the battle to save Charterhouse Fields parkland from being taken over by a local

academy school.

Our task was made harder because of the national situation, but also complicating local factors. For instance Mia Ali, the Tory candidate from 2010, had made a seamless transition to Labour, which undoubtedly increased the vote for Jim O’Boyle, the Labour councillor opposing Rob, as some of her support base would have gone with her.

We slightly increased our share of the vote across the city, to obtain 3.5% from 3,081 votes.

As we start to see the effects of Coventry’s Labour council implementing cuts, there will be more pressure for it to resist and more anger if it carries on doing the Con-Dem government’s bidding.

In a sign of things to come, the council’s Unison branch passed a motion just before the election expressing its disappointment that the council had voted for £38 million of cuts and calling for a ‘needs’ based budget and a mass campaign to resist the Tories.

Wakefield

Mick Griffiths, standing for TUSC, received 355 votes. Standing as a Socialist Alternative candidate in Wakefield east ward since 1996, this represented Mick’s best result.

Whilst canvassing, Socialist Party members got a sympathetic response which translated into an increase in window display posters showing support for TUSC. At 9% of the votes cast, the TUSC vote also pushed the Liberal Democrat candidate into fourth position on 7.4%.

Wakefield Socialist Party

Leeds

The Socialist Party stood two candidates in Leeds as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), Ian Pattison in Headingley and Andrew Smith in Horsforth. Whilst gaining a modest 88 (2.3%) and 164 (2.1%) votes respectively, the campaign has allowed us to reach out to wider layers of the community to help build up anti-cuts campaigns in both areas.

Altogether there were eight TUSC and Alliance for Green Socialism (AGS) candidates, opposed to all public sector cuts and vowing to vote against them in the council chamber, with AGS getting 7.8% in Chapel Allerton ward.

Iain Dalton
Leeds TUSC election agent

Aylesbury

TUSC Walton Court & Hawkslade ward candidate Roger Priest received 7.2%

(183) of the overall votes (3,215) in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

Our campaign included extensive leafletting, canvassing a third of the ward and holding a public meeting.

Find out about meetings and events at: www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

The Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Ukip candidates’ election campaigns involved no canvassing, half-hearted attempts to leaflet and no public meetings. During Roger’s campaign, one resident requested support with their own campaign to fight cuts in local learning disability services and provisions. We also met people who want to be involved in future anti-cuts work in the ward.

Johnny Heartbreaker
Aylesbury Socialist Party

North Devon

The two TUSC candidates in North Devon for the town and district council elections, Paul Dyer and Doug Lowe, both received votes far higher than we expected, including Paul’s 285 votes for the town council. Standing in wards in Barnstaple we worked hard to get our message across about the cuts and how they can be opposed. We also took the opportunity to listen to what people were telling us, deepening our belief that the shortage of quality affordable housing in North Devon is an absolute scandal.

Jim Lowe

