

# **STUC SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNANCE (SCOTLAND) BILL**

The STUC welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Scottish Executive consultation on the draft Local Governance (Scotland) Bill.

The STUC is Scotland's Trade Union Centre. Its purpose is to co-ordinate, develop and articulate the views and policies of the Trade Union Movement in Scotland, reflecting the aspirations of trades unionists as workers and citizens.

The STUC is a representative and democratic organisation, comprising 43 affiliated Trade Unions with a collective membership of 630,000. The STUC's affiliated Unions represent working people in all occupations, industrial sectors and geographical areas within Scotland. As such, the STUC and our public sector affiliates are uniquely placed to comment on the consultation proposals as they affect local government workers in Scotland and of our members in their wider role as citizens and electors.

The policies of the STUC are determined by its Annual Congress, attended by delegates from all of its affiliated Unions and from Trades Union Councils, which are community based collective Trade Union organisations.

## **PART 1 – Local government elections**

### **Sections 1 – 12**

The STUC believes that the following principles should inform the decisions on the choice and implementation of a voting system for local government.

- i) The need to maintain ward-councillor links.
- ii) The importance under electoral reorganisation of maintaining boundaries with clear local relevance.
- iii) The need to encourage participation from groups which are currently under-represented such as women, young people, people from ethnic minorities, lesbians and gay men, people with disabilities.
- iv) Emphasis on the best possible explanation of any new voting system. Implementation should minimise confusion among the electorate. Consideration should be given to whether it would be appropriate under a new electoral system to hold local government and Scottish Parliament elections on different days.

There are a variety of differing views among STUC affiliates on the specific proposal to introduce the Single Transferable Voting system for local government. These views will be expressed separately in the responses of individual unions to this consultation. The STUC General Council will be giving further consideration to the issue of STV in due course.

## **PART 2 – Membership of local authorities**

The STUC broadly welcomes the proposals contained within Part 2. It has long been the view of the STUC that current restrictions on standing for local government elections are unnecessary and unfair.

### **Section 13**

The STUC welcomes the proposals in Section 13, which lift the requirement for local authority employees to resign at the time of nomination and its replacement with the requirement to resign at the time of election.

### **Section 14**

The STUC welcomes the proposal to reduce the age limit for local government candidates from 21 to 18. However, in line with our view that the voting age should be reduced to 16, we believe that a reduction from 21 to 16 is more appropriate.

### **Section 16**

The STUC is in favour of the narrowest possible interpretation of “politically restricted” posts and that such restrictions as will exist should apply equally across all public sector bodies. Councils now have strong mechanisms in place to prevent conflicts of interest arising.

The STUC welcomes the reduction in the “time-bar” for former councillors seeking employment in the local authority previously represented. However, we believe that serious consideration should be given to the complete removal of time bars for the majority of posts. Where appropriate, safeguards should be introduced to prevent conflicts of interest.

### **Section 17**

The STUC welcomes the proposals for fair remuneration of councillors including access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The STUC supports severance payments for councillors on the same basis as those paid to Members of the Scottish and United Kingdom parliaments.

In the light of the aim of greater inclusion, the STUC is in support of previous proposals relating to child-care provision for councillors and would urge that these are placed back on the agenda.