

# Council meeting 30 June 2020 – the unions have their say

The first virtual council meeting takes place on Tuesday. It will take place online on the Microsoft Teams platform which will allow you to see only about 8 or 9 people in the meeting at any one time.

This is a step up from the meetings of the Policy and Sustainability Committee which allowed us to see about 4 or 5 of the people attending at any one time. So what will be lost is that councillors will not be able to sit together in their political groups, there will be no heckling or asides, often the most interesting part of any council meeting.

You can watch the council meeting on the council's webcast, the first to be held since March under the convenership of the Lord Provost, [here](#).

The list of questions from councillors to various Conveners is now available with the answers.

Councillors are also able to lodge motions for discussion at the meeting and the list of motions includes one by Conservative councillor Jason Rust.

He asked:

Council:

1) Agrees that the contribution of The City of Edinburgh Council employees is vital to the operation of the Council and the Council owes a duty of care to its employees and engagement and consultation, such as in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on working practices, is a key part of that;

2) Notes that based on Council information through deduction from pay as at January 2018: 35.6% of non-teaching employees were members of a non-teaching trade union (Unison; Unite the Union; GMB) and 0.47% of teaching staff were members of a trade union.

3) Accepts that data is incomplete due to some employees paying their trade union subscription directly, and that anecdotally it is anticipated a majority of teachers will be members of a trade union, nevertheless recognises that there is clearly a remaining and potentially sizeable group of employees that are not trade union members.

9.8

4) Recognises that trade unions have a role in the workplace in representing the interests of their members and through national frameworks or partnership agreements will for some purposes have a recognised role, but that a significant number of employees choose not to join a trade union.

5) Therefore calls for a report to Policy and Sustainability Committee in three cycles on Council engagement with its employees, to include

a) details as to the ways in which both non-trade union member and trade union member employees are currently engaged and consulted with:

b) options to improve engagement and consultation such as through the establishment of employee forums in order to give a voice to those employees who choose not to be trade union members; and

c) research /information from other authorities, and unionised sectors of industry as to potential models for ensuring appropriate staff engagement and consultation.”

This has resulted in some attention from the unions who

requested a deputation to the council. As far as we know at the moment the council has not yet put in place the opportunity of any deputations actually 'appearing' at a meeting of the council as usual. The deputations have too be in writing. This is the response to Cllr Rust's motion:

Request for Deputation – UNISON, Unite the Union and the GMB  
Item 9.8 – Motion by Councillor Rust – Engagement with Employees

UNISON, Unite the union and the GMB condemn the Conservative Group for their reprehensible motion to full council, 'Engagement with Employees', and welcome the Labour Group's amendment. The trade unions have been working non-stop with the council and our members to make sure that critical council work can be completed safely. We will not be dragged in to questioning the legitimacy of councillors and whether they are representative depending on the turnout of their elections, as we are above this sort of tawdry tit for tat response. The joint trade unions will continue to work unstintingly to make sure the workforce is represented and are able to work safely while providing services to the most vulnerable. We would advise that the Conservative Group should not use Covid-19 and the unprecedented public health situation as a smoke screen for out-dated political point scoring.

Tom Connolly Staff Side Secretary

Brian Robertson Unite the union

Keir Greenaway GMB