

SOC Circular Early Sept 2021

To all branches, SOGs and 2021 Conference delegates

TSSA Support Services email address:
SupportServices@tssa.org.uk

SOC email address:
SOC@tssa.org.uk

Conference web page:
www.tssa.org.uk/en/Your-union/TSSA-democracy/annual-conference/2021.cfm

TSSA Annual Conference, 18-20 September 2021

Birmingham Conference and Events Centre, Hill St, Birmingham B5 4EW
and online

Accommodation in Holiday Inn Birmingham City,
attached to the Conference Centre

Dear colleagues,

You should have seen Circular 60/21, issued by the EC on 27 August. This note sets out some more details about the arrangements for this Conference

As Circular 60 says, this will be a hybrid Conference with some participants in the Conference Centre in Birmingham and others taking part online. The Circular set out requirements for advising TSSA of delegates' details, including whether participation will be online or at the Centre.

Attendance & registration

We ask all delegates attending to arrive at the Conference Centre by 11 am on Saturday 18 September, to allow time for Covid tests and other administration before the start of Conference at 12 midday. The Centre is less than ten minutes' walk from Birmingham New Street station and about ten minutes from Moor Street or Snow Hill stations.

If you will have any difficulty reaching the Centre on time, contact TSSA Support Services (supportservices@tssa.org.uk) in advance.

The online session will open at 11 am. We ask delegates attending online to sign in early so that you are connected at the start of Conference business. Full login details will be provided shortly.

As Circular 60 says, to manage Covid risks we are asking visitors not to attend in person, and there will be no stalls at the Conference. Please contact TSSA Support Services to register in order to attend online as a visitor. There will be many 'closed sessions' during the Conference to deal with Rule Alterations and other sensitive matters, so we will check the membership status of visitors and those who are not TSSA members will be asked to leave the online call for these sessions.

Needs for equipment & training

All delegates will use an online voting system, and delegates attending the venue are asked to bring a laptop computer, tablet (iPad or similar) or smartphone to facilitate this. Please contact Support Services if you need assistance with this.

The FAQ document published by SOC in April sets out what you will need to participate online. (The Guidance was published in the back of the printed Final Agenda in April, and will shortly be restored to the Conference web page) Please let Support Services know if you need any assistance with this.

Detailed guidance for online participation will be provided to online delegates and visitors.

Test sessions

We will hold at least two test sessions a few days before Conference, to allow online delegates a chance to become familiar with the system. Details of these sessions will be confirmed shortly.

SOC meetings

The normal SOC meeting with delegates before the start of Conference will not take place as this business has been dealt with in correspondence. SOC will attend at the Conference Centre and will be available for phone or online conversations with delegates requiring our assistance.

Participation, speaking and voting arrangements

As Circular 60 states, the Conference experience will differ for delegates depending which format they use, but we and the EC will endeavour to ensure a 'level playing field'. The President will be supported by additional staff who will monitor online participants and draw the Presidents' attention to any questions, points of order or requests to speak from these delegates.

To ensure that vote counts are fair and decisions are valid, all voting will use the ChangeLab 'Democracy' system.

Changes to Regs & Procedures

Revised Regulations & Procedures to reflect the requirements for an online Conference were published with the Final Agenda in April. The only change since then is that the indication of timing of speeches might be different for the hybrid Conference.

Publication & distribution of Final Agenda and Order papers

In order to facilitate the online Conference, we had agreed to republish the Final Agenda as the Conference Order Papers, with accepted amendments incorporated into the options and, as far as possible, seconders listed. This would mean that delegates would need to refer only to this single volume for most debates. The only other documents delegates would need to refer to would be the EC Reports associated with Items 44,46,52 and 56.

We intend to continue with this plan for the hybrid Conference. The difficulty of circulating papers to remote delegates and expecting them to deal with these papers remains, even if most delegates are in the Conference venue. We therefore intend to minimise changes to Conference papers once Conference starts. On 13 September we will publish by email and post the Revised Final Agenda as Order Papers incorporating the EC Reserve motions, the three motions on the Supplementary Agenda and, as far as possible, any Emergency Motions with amendments. The EC Emergency Motion on TSSA Strategic Plan will need to be dealt with separately, as discussed below.

We ask delegates to review the Revised Final Agenda and Order Papers thoroughly and advise SOC as soon as possible of any issues. 'Reference Back' proposals on anything other than minor corrections may not be accepted by the President if these have not been raised with in correspondence beforehand.

Publication of EC Emergency 'TSSA Strategic Plan' and amendments

Circular 60 referred to the EC's proposal to present an Emergency Motion on the TSSA Strategic Plan, which will not be circulated until immediately before Conference. The Conference programme for the Saturday has been revised to allow for debate of this essential issue, and this is indicated on the Skeleton Programme that has been circulated.

The motion will be distributed to delegates at Conference, and emailed to remote delegates, at the earliest opportunity. Conference will start with a presentation by the General Secretary and a question-and-answer session to improve understanding of the issues and threats to the union. There will then be an adjournment to allow delegates to discuss these issues informally and prepare amendments to the EC motion.

Amendments must be submitted to SOC by 14:45 on Saturday. A short Conference session will deal with the formal business (election results etc) and some motions, while SOC consider the valid amendments and prepare a document listing these with the motion.

Conference will be adjourned again at 15:45 to allow the EC to meet to decide policy on the amendments. An SOC session, using the Conference facilities to allow participation by remote delegates, will take place from 16:15. At the end of this session SOC will prepare the Order Paper showing the EC motion (amended as appropriate) and any amendments to be debated. This will be circulated online and by email to remote delegates, and on paper to delegates at the Centre. The debate on this motion will take place when Conference resumes at 17:00.

The background to this Conference presents extraordinary challenges, both in terms of public health and the industrial environment. With the EC, we believe that proceeding with the hybrid Conference is the best way of addressing these challenges. We ask for your goodwill, understanding and support as we meet the further difficulties that will no doubt arise.

Yours in solidarity

Gerry Kennedy, Chair

On behalf of Standing Orders Committee