

Refounding Labour *to win*

Summary report

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A. Building a more open and welcoming party

1. Clause 1 - defining our purpose

There was widespread support for the party expanding our 'mission statement' in the rule that outlines our purpose as a political party. The current definition highlights our primary electoral objective, but is silent on our desire to be a force for change in our local communities. A new Clause 1 should set out our desire to build a party fit for the future; a genuine movement where the connection between the party and the public is strong. Furthermore, we want to invest in our members and for them to have a greater voice in the party and therefore any new Clause 1 should include an overview of our commitment to members and an overview of the rights they hold within our party.

2. Enabling structures and recognition that no one size fits all

Party members want party structures that assist rather than impede their work. They want to build effective local parties that are open and welcoming of members, supporters, and the community. In order to achieve this they want the party to remove layers of bureaucracy that act as barriers to involvement, simplify the rules, and provide options for local decision. There was general recognition that no one organisational pattern would suit all local parties, and that CLPs should be encouraged to innovate, and develop local structures that suit their geography and circumstances. There should be no default structure in the rules - but there should be options for organisation which were appropriate to different circumstances and from which a CLP could choose.

3. A new cross-constituency co-ordination forum

There was support for local parties to be able to replace Local Government Committees and County Parties with smaller functional bodies comprising of officers and/ or CLP and trade union representatives, election agent(s), leader and deputy leader of the Labour group. These

new bodies should concentrate on local election campaign co-ordination, candidate recruitment and candidate selection. CLPs would continue to be responsible for the effective delivery of campaigns by their branches and members.

4. Party meetings that focus upon widening involvement

The submissions were clear that meetings should be more focused on the key purposes of local parties. Members should be actively involved in selecting policy areas for policy debates in meetings. Plans for campaigning and particularly campaigning on local issues should be central, alongside discussion of how to develop community engagement by building stronger relationships with trade unions, supporters, and community groups. Local Party innovation and best practice should be shared more widely reflecting the fact that significant local change can occur without the need for formal rule changes.

5. Effective working at a local level with Trade Unions

Whilst some local Labour Parties and Trade Union branches work well together, in other places there is room for improvement. Many submissions talked about the need for local parties to work more closely with local trade union members, with many suggesting regular joint meetings. This is an area in which recommendations will be made.

6. Officers and roles that match CLP needs

There was a clear desire to build stronger, more flexible officer teams to meet local needs and many local parties were unaware of their existing ability to create local officer posts to meet their needs. While there are certain statutory requirements for Constituency Labour Parties to have a core set of officers (e.g. Chair and Treasurer), parties should be made more aware that they have the freedom to add officers to suit local conditions.

7. A development plan for every CLP

Many submissions highlighted the need for clearer strategic planning by CLPs. This might be achieved by a rule requirement for each CLP to submit a development plan. The development plans should not be overcomplicated but might include targets for membership and registered supporters, targets for voter i/d contacts, plans for leafleting and newsletters, plans for the involvement and recruitment to the party of trade union members and joint campaigning with local trade unions, an outline budget and fund-raising target, and an outline calendar of key campaigns and events. They should also include a review of branch organisation, women's organisation and Young Labour organisation and steps the CLP would take to help overcome shortcomings and build on success. In order to meet widespread concerns that some local parties fail to provide a warm welcome and encouragement to new members, the development of a network of new member mentors should feature prominently in all development plans.

8. New strategic functions for Regional Boards and Welsh and Scottish Executives

Our Regional Boards and Welsh and Scottish Executives are made up of experienced party members whose talent, experience and time should be used as productively as possible. They should be used to help the party organise and support members to be more involved in the party, and to help maximise the resources that go into campaigning where the party needs it most. Regional Board and WEC and SEC members could take more responsibility for the health of Constituency Labour Parties and have strategic oversight of the CLP development plans, being able to intervene as necessary, take appropriate action and offer support in instances where a CLP does not submit a development plan.

B. Connecting with communities

1. Registered Supporters scheme

There was strong support for involving supporters more formally and consistently in the party provided this was not at the expense of the rights of members. A registered supporters scheme would be based on individuals making a positive decision to sign up by completing a paper or on-line form. Supporters would be recruited by local parties, affiliates and elected representatives, registering their details online, or by a Registered Consultee organisation. Around the country there are many excellent examples of individual MPs mobilising support from people in their local community who back Labour but are not members of the party. These supporters can be mobilised to back local campaigns and add to local party efforts at election time; be invited to local events and be consulted on local and national matters by email. Labour can learn from these examples of best practice and develop a network of registered supporters who can take part in our party, improve our organisation on the ground, build our links into communities and, most importantly, help deliver successful election results. In order to safeguard the membership offer, there should be no formal rights for Registered Supporters in CLPs or Branches. However, further consideration should be given to the proposal that registered supporters should be able to vote in the Leadership Elections in the affiliated organisations section of the Electoral College.

2. Increasing involvement of levy-paying members of affiliated Trade Unions and members of Socialist Societies

Together with registered supporters, trade union members represent the wider society that needs to be heard in our party alongside our individual membership. Subject to consultation with trade union colleagues and dealing satisfactorily with issues around data protection legislation, we would want to work towards developing a process whereby our CLPs were able to invite Trade Union levy payers in their area to policy, campaigning and social events, and where our nationally

affiliated Trade Unions were able to invite Labour party members to their events. The party should extend this reciprocal agreement to all affiliated organisations, as socialist societies combine specialist expertise with reach into relevant communities of interest, building alliances with others who share our values but are not party members.

3. Registered Consultees

There was support for involving external voluntary organisations in the party's work, especially for campaigning and policy-making. The party should therefore create the status of 'Registered Consultee' within our rules - so that organisations can acquire new opportunities to be heard by the party without any requirement to show public support. The NEC would reserve the right to refuse or withdraw Registered Consultee status from any organisation whose aims or activities were deemed inconsistent with those of the party.

4. Embedding community organising methods in the way we work

There is wide recognition of the need to learn from the approach to Community Organising in the US and from organisations in the UK such as London Citizens and Trade Unions. Central to our mission to engage with, represent and campaign in our local communities is work to build relationships in communities and work with local people and groups to campaign for change. The party therefore needs to look at how it can learn from the best practice available and embed minimum community organising standards across the Labour Party.

5. Working with Community Organising partners

There is much the party can learn from other organisations who engage in Community Organising and community campaigning such as our affiliated Trade Unions and the Co-operative movement. The party should work with such organisations to develop this work and support members and local parties in developing community engagement.

6. Elected representatives - Candidate Contracts

Labour's elected representatives and candidates must be hard-working, in constant contact with their communities and active as leaders of their local parties, while meeting high standards of conduct in all aspects of their work. Our elected representatives hold a vast array of posts in wide ranging circumstances so a one-size-fits-all model would be inappropriate. However, there is support for the creation of a Candidate Contract with some agreed mandatory elements, which local parties could adapt to suit their needs.

C. Increasing member participation and involvement

1. Training and development

Many submissions have highlighted the need for the party to continue to invest in the talents and skills of its members. In addition to expanding and developing the training currently offered through the Labour Party Training Academy and webinar programme, submissions have highlighted key groups who could be trained to help deliver training to their peers and local parties, and have identified party roles with key responsibilities for which specific training should be made available, maybe compulsory in some instances

2. A better communication infrastructure for party members

It is clear members find Membersnet difficult to navigate and expect more from a party intranet system. There is overwhelming support from party members for a better infrastructure that allows them to form informal groups with each other and communicate with each other - NEC/NPF to members; officer to officer; new member to new member; young member to young member; and so on - as well as gain easy, simple access to local party and national contacts, party resources, sign up to events, discuss policy, share their skills and best practice. In addition, we need to build a communication system that allows staff to deal promptly and effectively with member email communications.

3. Membership subscriptions

Many submissions, while recognising the need for a stable financial base, have commented on the high cost of joining the party. We have therefore taken a critical look at our membership income and are considering a suggestion for an alternative fee structure which would we believe achieve the objectives of a lower join rate, and lower rates for young members, the unwaged, retired and those from working class backgrounds, while crucially maintaining the income level the party needs.

4. Local party finances

The wide range of financial circumstances faced by CLPs has been highlighted by some submissions. In particular some CLPs are burdened with increasing levels of debt, due to the Euro levy and party insurance payments, and are unable to pay for delegates to conference. Submissions have asked us to look at the uneven distribution of wealth amongst our CLPs and make recommendations for action to achieve a basic level of support for all and develop party organisation on the ground. This is a complex issue and further work needs to be done before any final recommendations are made.

D. Party Leader, Leadership election, elected representatives and candidates

1. Party Leader: rights and responsibilities

The Refounding Labour consultation has exposed the fact that the position of the Leader has never been clearly stated in the party's rules. Clause VII.1.A simply says that there shall be a Leader and Deputy Leader and then refers to the election process. The party needs a clear statement in the Constitutional Rules of the role, rights and duties of the party's democratically elected Leader. It has been suggested that a new clause in the Constitutional Rules would pull together existing rules provisions. This would also be required to confirm the PLP's decision that all front bench appointments should be made by the Leader whether the party is in government or opposition.

2. Gender balance within the Leadership Team

Many submissions have called for measures to cement the principle of gender balance within the party's leadership team, perhaps through a gender-balanced Leader/Deputy ticket when the Leader is elected. This would demonstrate our commitment to achieve equality at every level of the party but would require rule changes. Further consideration will be given to this proposal.

3. Leadership election Electoral College

The consultation has raised a number of questions and proposals with regard to the process for electing the Leader of the party. Clear expressions of concern have been made about the ability of party members to cast multiple votes; particularly in respect of MPs and MEPs who already have the ability to nominate candidates in addition to having their own section in the electoral college. While there has been a high degree of consensus on the need to deal with multiple voting, other suggestions for change require further consultation over the summer.

4. Labour MPs: rights and responsibilities

If there is an argument for more clearly defining the rights and responsibilities of the Party Leader, it also extends to the elected representatives who comprise his team in Parliament. It is therefore proposed to include in Labour's constitutional rules, for the first time, clear statements about the role, rights and duties of Labour MPs.

5. Labour Councillors: rights and responsibilities

Labour councillors are the backbone of our organisation, our thermometer for public opinion, and a crucial part of our policy development, as they see the effect of policy implementation on the ground in our communities. The status and support given to Labour councillors therefore needs to be increased. In order to fund improved services for councillors it has been suggested that we replace the ALC subscription which councillors are currently required to pay with a 2 per cent levy in line with levies on other Labour elected representatives. Inspired by the many Labour groups, which operate a Group levy to fund campaigning, there was strong support for a minimum local levy which all groups would raise in order to fund local organisers in partnership with local parties and with strong practical assistance from the national party.

6. Local Government and Parliamentary selection procedures

There is a need to re-examine the party's local government selection procedures. Local party submissions and the LGA are clear early candidate selection should be encouraged in order to allow for more dedicated campaigning in the run up to local elections. A long drawn out selection process, or a late one, can damage chances in local elections and be potentially disruptive.

The NEC will review parliamentary selections procedures in the light of both submissions to this consultation and the practical issues revealed by the pilot procedure being used in twenty-six early selections

E. Equality

1. A party for women

Many submissions talked about the need for the party to change the way it organises to make sure that all women members get to play their part and put their particular skills into practice and that there is a distinct voice for women members in the development of our policy. We must ensure that the party's commitment to equality is put into practice in a strong, effective and well-resourced women's organisation. Recommendations will be brought forward in this area.

There was overwhelming support for the reinstatement of an Annual National Women's Conference to bring women together outside of their local party structures. Many submissions talked about the need to link this conference with the work of the National Policy Forum and Annual Conference, and many women members wanted to ensure that any women's conference wouldn't happen in isolation from established channels where decisions are taken.

Throughout the submissions, it is clear that our commitment to equal representation at every level of our party is applauded. The majority of submissions credit our commitment to using All Women Shortlists (AWS) with the changing face of our party.

2. A party for young members

A number of submissions referenced the crucial role that young members play at every level of our party, and there was a strong feeling that investment should take place in our youth structures - in terms of representation, events, communication, training and policy development - to ensure that our party is always able to rely on an active and motivated youth membership. Many submissions asked for greater clarity as to the role and remit of Young Labour, and there was a clear sense that it should be given rights and responsibilities that other sections and affiliates enjoy.

The desire for an annual youth conference was expressed; where the event should be not just about elections but also give young members the chance to come together and debate policy, agree policy motions and Young Labour campaigns. We agree that the Young Labour National Committee should play a key role in the planning and the execution of the event. It is accepted that the Chair of Young Labour and the NEC Youth Rep should chair Youth Conference, with the help of other members of the committee.

3. A party for ethnic minority members

A number of submissions regarding the structures that we currently have in place for BAME members talked about the need for better defined roles for CLP Ethnic Minority Officers and Ethnic Minority Forums, as well as increased training and representation for BAME members at every level of the party. In BAME Labour's submission, the issue of inclusivity of CLPs with regards to BAME members was raised. BAME Labour sees a need to ask CLPs to develop a race equality strategy for their constituency, as well as to make the existing complaints procedure more accessible to members.

4. A party for members with disabilities

Across all of the consultation events, the issue of double discrimination was raised, particularly with regard to disability. Submissions highlighted a lack of understanding in local parties about accessibility, and quite often a lack of tolerance for access needs that members may have. A lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities that local parties have to make their activities accessible needs to be rectified so that we can build a party that is inclusive of all members.

5. A party for LGBT members

LGBT Labour's submission sought to formalise and extend its representation on party bodies and ask the party do more to ensure that LGBT candidates get selected. LGBT Labour's submission highlighted the issue of LGBT representation not just in terms of the UK Parliament, but also in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. Discrimination against LGBT candidates, and developing a selection process that prevents this from happening should also be considered.

F: A strengthened policy-making process

1. Involving our members in policy-making

Discussions during this consultation have focussed on the need to make a reformed policy making system more accessible and responsive to party members. Members have expressed views that the policy making process could be opened up by harnessing technology to allow for a more inclusive and interactive discussion both in terms of discussion of documents produced for consideration but also in terms of dealing with current issues which arise outside the current cycle of long-term policy development. For those people who do take the time to get involved in the policy making process, issues of transparency and feedback have been a theme in many of the submissions from members.

2. Reaching out to the public

Contributors have discussed the need to build processes which enable the party to reach out to the public, to ensure that we develop policy which is rooted in an understanding of our communities. It has also been argued that the party must do more to reach out to charities, community groups, businesses, NGOs and other elements of civil society.

3. Stronger policy-making institutions

The consultation has revealed both a desire for the various policy-making bodies to be more open, transparent and responsive to members in order to facilitate engagement, and for reform to improve how the various bodies work and interact with one another.

a. The National Policy Forum

The structure of the current policy making cycle - whereby policy is developed via a rolling three year programme - has been an issue of debate; as has the way in which CLPs and members engage with the documents produced. Greater clarity is required in the process. A reformed Partnership in Power process should be accompanied by clear structures and information, with clarity about

how party members can engage with the policy making bodies and what they can expect when they do so. NPF delegates need to be empowered to communicate with each other, and with party members and other stakeholders in their regions. Policy submissions, as well as agendas and minutes of NPF, JPC and Policy Commission meetings, need to be made more accessible

b. The Joint Policy Committee

The Joint Policy Committee is responsible for strategic oversight of the Partnership into Power process. Conversations during the Refounding Labour consultation have recognised that the oversight role is an important one, but there have been views expressed that there needs to be greater clarity in how the JPC carries out this duty and a fresh look at how the Committee can be used to strengthen the policy making process, especially with regard to creating more joined up policies by addressing cross-cutting issues. Submissions to the consultation have expressed a desire for CLPs and others to be provided with clearer guidance in terms of policy areas on which to focus their discussions.

c. Annual Conference

Submissions to the consultation have shown a strong desire for the conference to retain its position at the apex of our internal democracy. However, the consultation has also revealed a widespread sense that the present conference arrangements and structures could be improved. In addition there is a need to tackle the declining attendance by some CLPs, which may be aided by extra financial support. The weighting of votes at conference was another issue to emerge from submissions. The spectrum of views means that further reflection is needed before any clear proposal can be put to the party.

d. Conference Arrangements Committee

The Conference Arrangements Committee has the primary function of organising the party conference agenda. Some have argued that the composition of the CAC should be changed, with competing proposals advocating representation for the socialist societies, the NPF, or for increased representation of the CLPs. It is therefore necessary to give this matter further consideration before a clear proposal can be put to conference.

e. The National Executive Committee

A number of proposals concerning the composition of the NEC were made. One suggestion is that, in the light of devolution, Scotland and Wales should have guaranteed representation on the NEC. Several submissions recommended the removal of the historic ban on members of the TUC General Council joining the NEC. Proposals were also made to add representatives from LGBT Labour and the Labour Party Disabled Members Group when their memberships reached a certain size. Further consideration will be given to all these proposals.