

Labour Party Socialist Societies Executive

Minutes of Meeting Monday 29 January 2007

1. Introductions and Apologies.

Present: Jacky Peacock (Chair & Labour Housing Group), Simon Wright (LCLGR & Secretary), Martin Rathfelder (SHA), Malcolm Horne (SEA), Nigel Spearing (SEA), Lawrie Nerva (JLM), Jim Moher (LPIMG), Emma Burnell (SERA), Gareth Davies (LPDMG), Bill Thomas (Labour Clubs).

Apologies: Dianne Hayter, Janet Seymour Kirk, Huw Davies, Pete Moorey (Christian Socialist, Treasurer), Carlie Newman (SLL), Judith Blakeman, Nicholas Russell.

2. Minutes of last meeting.

Approved.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Guest Speaker: Patrick Loughran, Labour Party Director of Policy

Partnership in Power process has ensured party members more involved than when Labour was last in government. Now in the third cycle, PiP has grown and developed, such as NPF being able to discuss contemporary policies. Now facing a possible fourth term in government, it needs to develop further. It is still too top-down in style and does not connect to ordinary members. We need a year-round process, reaching out to members with Local Policy Forums. The Big Conversation was successful before the 2005 election at drawing in other stakeholders. NPF reps need to develop their communication with the members they represent, Head Office can help them do newsletters and website.

Comments from SocSoc Exec included: Many members feel disempowered from this process. Replacing the old way of policy making was wrong. Whether Labour Supporters Network undermines membership? Regional for a tried did not work – not enough support from Regional Office. People leading it need to do more to make it bottom-up. Socialist Societies can be experts to connect the Policy Commissions with the relevant sectors. Policy staff do not seem to know much about the Socialist Societies. Online tools offer a way to engage people – look at labourhome.org etc.

Patrick's responses: Important not to go back to the bad old days of the government not listening to the party – NPF is the way to do this. Policy Commissions should link with you and offer you the chance to give evidence. Your NPF reps and Dianne Hayter can help to push this. Patrick will send the Roles and Responsibilities of NPF members.

5. NEC Report

Dianne send a short written report: My apologies for not being with you this evening – I'm in New Zealand (visiting, amongst others, the Labour Party, the Pensions Commissioner and health services down here). It also means I will miss Tuesday's NEC, where one of the main items will be a report from the Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett. The NEC will also agree

revised Governance arrangements for the NEC and its sub-committees, which I've helped to draft. It will receive a financial report – the finances remaining difficult, despite the recent donation. The party has now lost half its staff since the 2005 election, which is putting considerable demands on the remaining staff. As colleagues know, I chair the Party's Superannuation Scheme, and am now also Vice Chair of the Business Board (as well as of the NEC). Over the last couple of months, I have been particularly involved in our dialogue with Hayden Phillips over his review of party funding. Our priority has been to preserve the ability of unions to contribute to the party (which the Tories are very keen to undermine) and to see EFFECTIVE restrictions on expenditure, rather than unrealistic limits on donations. The last NEC – in November – agreed the venues for future annual conferences, as follows: 2008 Manchester, 2009 Brighton, 2010 Manchester, (2007 was already arranged for Bournemouth). The party is currently involved in a number of selections and re-selections of parliamentary candidates, with various seats being allocated to All-Women-Shortlists. Procedures have also been discussed for handling the election of a new Leader and Deputy Leader, a separate note on which was circulated to the socialist society executive mailing list towards the end of last year. Hopefully, this note has now been discussed by all the various societies' Executives, and any queries followed up with the party or with Anne Hock from Popularis. A meeting will be set up with the party within the next month or two, so it would be helpful to know who is acting as the Lead for each society. (Please pass this information to either myself or Simon Wright.)

Gareth noted that Bournemouth is less disabled-friendly than other locations.

6. National Policy Forum

Agreed that most Societies do not set policy outside their own areas. SERA view to be represented by our NPF reps.

7. Officers' Reports

Meeting at SERA means that all attenders will have to confirm days in advance if they are coming – we cannot continue people turning up on spec.

Agreed to discuss Bournemouth activities at the next meeting.

Concern whether bills from Manchester have been paid. Treasurer to be asked for a report next meeting (written if he cannot attend).

Question about whether we should organise hustings for Deputy Leadership. Agreed not but we will write some questions to all candidates when underway.

8. Any Other Business

DDA Disability Equality Schemes are getting a low take-up from Public Bodies.

JLM interested in doing joint activities – currently with Labour Arab Group. Possible joint topic might be transport, bringing together environment, health, housing issues.

5. Dates for next meeting.

Monday 19 March 2007.