

Rochford & Southend East Constituency Labour Party

Minutes of all-member meeting held on Saturday 8th October 2016

Apologies for absence (Executive Committee Officers) received from:

Matt Dent (Chair), Anne Jones (Vice Chair, Campaigns) & Gray Sergeant (Vice Chair, Membership)

In the absence of Matt Dent, CLP Chair (because of a last-minute work commitment) the meeting was Chaired by Ashley Dalton, CLP Treasurer. Ashley welcomed everyone to the meeting and the minutes of the last meeting were approved with no changes noted.

Constituency Officers' Reports

Secretary:

Martin Berry drew members' attention to the latest National Executive Committee report, copies of which were made available to members.

Membership stands at 631, with 43 in arrears (15 of those in more than 3 months' arrears). The gender balance is 57% male % 43% female.

Des Heemskerk suggested that those in arrears be sent a local reminder in addition to the one they will have automatically received from the party nationally in the hope that some will realise that we work in their interests locally whether or not they agree with what is happening with the party nationally. The meeting considered that to be a good idea and the Secretary will do that email members in arrears accordingly.

It was felt that a breakdown of membership figures by ward, age & gender would be useful. The Secretary remarked that some people might find that information interesting, but the absence of an active Vice Chair (Membership) from the committee and constraints on his time would not make this a priority. He shall, however, collate that information in due course and will also request the party nationally to provide information on gender balance within the Labour Party membership overall.

Treasurer:

Ashley Dalton circulated a comprehensive report to those present and thanked members for recent donations. Ashley said that we need to continue with fundraising efforts as - even with an increased membership - funding office expenses as well as campaigns and so on is a struggle. A copy of that report is available from the office on request.

Party Conference Delegates' Report

Ashley Dalton (as our Women's Delegate to the conference) made leaflets available regarding women's representation & spoke about the Women's Conference generally. Ashley noted that it was agreed that the national party will make a formal arrangement to give women members more of an input to policies that affect them in particular. Next year's Women's Conference will also be able to make decisions and not just have discussions,

There were some comments about whether it is right for men to be excluded from the Women's Conference (as had been suggested in Liverpool) and it was asked if was still actually necessary to have a separate Women's Conference at all. The Acting Chair ruled that these, while not unwelcome opinions, were not a matter for this meeting.

Regarding the main conference, having collated all of our the delegates' comments Ashley spoke for all of them and reported that it was really useful to have had three delegates this year because they were able to discuss matters between them and work as a team. However, if we send a similar number of delegates next time we will need to fundraise more so that they can, if possible, have some decent accommodation.

The Contemporary Motion relating to housing that we as a CLP supported reached the conference floor and Ashley spoke on the platform in its favour. It was carried. There were eight Contemporary Motions in all and our CLP's delegates voted as mandated by us.

Our delegates also attended several fringe events between them and had useful conversations with party members from elsewhere in the country.

The circulated written report covers all other matters from the National Conference.

The delegates were thanked for attending the conference, for reporting back and for staying in less than ideal accommodation.

Essex County Council elections

Ian Gilbert reported that Matt Dent is organising our CLP's side of these and a Selection Meeting will soon be held to select our candidate from the 'approved' list. Martin Berry (CLP Secretary) will assist in organising that meeting and the formal process. Constituency Party Officers may need to attend in case there are insufficient local Rochford & Wakering ones present to form a quorum.

Boundary Change Proposals

Ian Gilbert had analysed these and said that they only affect us in that our constituency will expand to include Ashingdon & Canewdon. Those are not really Labour-voting areas, but it won't make any great difference to us.

Southend West would, under the proposals, gain two of the current Castle Point Wards, making Southend West even less winnable in a general election.

There are also several proposed changes in the Basildon & Thurrock areas that are unhelpful to Labour.

Nationwide, however, the current proposals are better for Labour than the last set.

The process is ongoing with further draft proposals to come. The final vote will probably not come before Parliament until at least early 2018 and there is, as yet, no published timetable for that decision.

Questions for Councillors:

Mike Smith asked about the Tories' changes to the Queensway Estate plans.

Ian Gilbert - we started it when part of the joint administration and are still broadly in favour of the scheme even with the changes. However, we will strongly oppose any significant watering down or any big changes to - for example - the height of blocks, community centre provision and affordable housing.

Cllr Helen McDonald - we will also make sure that infrastructure (doctors' surgeries, schools & so on) will be at least adequate.

Our member Majzoub Ali asked Councillors what he can do when the Health & wellbeing Board don't give him satisfactory answers to his questions on Healthwatch and why they didn't discuss the Healthwatch Annual Report.

Ian & Helen agreed to follow that up with the Health & Wellbeing Board and suggested that Majzoub could also take it up with the People Scrutiny Committee at its next public meeting.

Motion for discussion

Our member Ian Pope had submitted a motion relating to the administration of the local Labour Facebook page. There was some discussion as to its eligibility for this meeting as well as its content, as that Facebook Group comes within the remit of the Local Campaign Forum (Southend Borough-wide) rather than the Constituency Parties. The Acting Chair ruled it beyond this meeting's power to hold a binding vote on the motion as it stood. A compromise was eventually reached that we should vote:

To put the motion to the next all-member Local Campaign Forum but without any recommendation one way or the other from this CLP.

That vote was carried unanimously, so it was further proposed by Ian Pope (seconded by Martin Berry) that:

We should therefore submit the motion to the next all-member Local Campaign Forum with a recommendation by this CLP that it be accepted. That was carried by majority.

Any other business

Events were announced as follows:

Southend Momentum are hosting Jerry Glazier, General Secretary of the Mid-Essex National Union of Teachers, at the Beecroft Lecture Theatre on 20th October. All welcome.

NHS-related meeting and talk, with lunch provided, at O'Neill's on the 29th October with guest speaker Richard Bourne from the Socialist Health Association as already publicised.

The group Socialist Minds have arranged a talk by Prof. Prem Sikka of the University of Essex on 3rd November. The Socialist Minds group meets on the first Thursday of each month from 7.30pm - 9.30pm at the Utopia Coffee Lounge at The Royals and all are welcome on any of those occasions.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 13th December, venue to be arranged because numbers are now starting to exceed the space available at the office.