

# A delegate's guide to Labour party conference 2017

## Introduction

Many thanks for downloading Labour First and Progress' 'A delegate's guide to Labour party conference'. This document is intended as an aid for moderate and modernising delegates attending conference 2017.

Please think of these pages as a rough guide, not a roadmap, nor instruction – you are your own person and should vote how you see fit. We do, however, think it is vital that delegates attend both Labour First and Progress rallies and events throughout the week; read and distribute our daily briefings; and sign up to email updates to stay informed during conference week.

Signing up could not be more easy – do it now:

- Labour First: <https://labourfirst.wordpress.com/join-our-mailing-list/>
- Progress: <http://prog.rs/signup/>

For many years Pete Willsman from our rivals at Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has produced his own delegate's guide. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery so we acknowledge that we are belatedly mirroring Pete's publication and emulating its spirit of demystifying conference for delegates, whilst our political objective is obviously for conference to take Labour in a different direction to the one Pete would want.

This guide can be downloaded at [www.labourfirst.org/conference\\_guide](http://www.labourfirst.org/conference_guide) and <http://prog.rs/conf17guide>

# At conference

## The Conference Agenda

The conference timetable will include the following:

- The National Executive Committee (NEC) Report and any late NEC statements that can be issued to delegates during conference.
- The conference National Policy Forum (NPF) Report, including reports from the seven policy commissions of the NPF.
- Contemporary Motions and Emergency Motions.
- Proposed rule changes from the NEC and from CLPs – rule change proposals from CLPs are those submitted in the previous year (The ‘three year rule’ does not apply to rule change proposals from the NEC).

The election of two CLP reps to the National Constitutional Committee (NCC).

## Reports from the seven Policy Commissions

There are now seven policy commissions, which draw up policy reports for discussion by the NPF.

The seven policy commissions (each made up of 16-20 members representing the shadow cabinet, the NEC and the NPF) are:

- Economy (Building a productive economy);
- International (Britain’s security and defence priorities);
- Communities (housing policy);
- Health and Care (Mental Health);
- Children and Education (Early years);
- Home Affairs (Crime and policing);
- Transport.

Reports from each of these policy commissions need to be approved by conference and the relevant sessions are usually held on Monday and Tuesday.

## Contemporary Motions (CMs) from CLPs/affiliated organisations

The closing date for submission of a ‘contemporary motion’ was 12 noon on 14 September 2017. Each CLP can send one Contemporary Motion provided that they have not already submitted a rule amendment in 2016. The Contemporary Motion must be no more than 250 words and cover a topic that has arisen since 1 August 2017. CLPs need to ensure that the subject has not been substantively addressed by the NPF or NEC and it must be on one subject only. Contemporary motions will be selected at the ‘priorities ballot’ on the Sunday morning of conference. The Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) meets on Monday

18 September to rule on which of the motions selected are valid and can go forward to the priorities ballot.

### **Emergency Motions**

Emergency resolutions may be submitted on matters that arise after the final date for submitting Contemporary Motions. To be valid, the CAC must determine whether Emergency Motion:

- Could not reasonably have been the subject of a Contemporary Motion.
- Should not appear elsewhere on the Conference agenda
- Should cover an issue of urgent and immediate importance to the discussions of the whole party at annual conference

It is up to the CAC to rule whether or not Emergency Motions are 'in order'. The hard-left tend to lobby heavily for as many Emergency Motions as possible in an attempt to push their own agenda and disrupt the business of conference.

### **Rule changes from the NEC**

These are set out in the **Delegates Report** issued to delegates just before conference. Advice in relation to these rule changes will be given to delegates in Labour First's Daily Briefing – as well as by emails from both parties. The NEC only decides what rule changes to submit on Tuesday 19 September (potentially later), so there may be some nasty surprises.

It can even add in new rule changes at its meeting on Saturday 24 September!

### **Voting for the National Constitutional Committee (NCC)**

The NCC is the committee which deals with serious compliance cases and disciplinary procedures within the Labour party. Sadly, this has become an increasingly important body in recent years.

Labour First and Progress are supporting the incumbent chair of the NCC **Rose Burley** and former committee member **Kevin Hepworth**.

Please let us know if you can help distribute campaign literature at the regional receptions, briefings or outside the conference hall.

# Before conference starts, please remember...

## Pre-Conference Regional Briefings

Before conference delegates are usually called to at least one briefing meeting in their region. In the last few years the practice has developed of handing delegates who attend these meetings their conference credentials and other conference material (rail tickets through the pooled fare scheme, will be sent to home addresses). Any delegates unable to attend these briefings must contact their regional office to make alternative arrangements for obtaining their credentials – any delegate without a credential is denied entry to conference. Every CLP delegate (including women and youth delegates) should have their own card vote booklet. But when voting for the NCC and in the priorities ballot only one delegate votes on behalf of the whole delegation, and who this is should be agreed collectively. Card vote booklets are given to delegates by regional officials before conference starts on Sunday. Otherwise they can be collected from the Ballot Area, probably from 12 noon.

There have been reports in recent years of hard-left activists using the regional briefings to manipulate first-time delegates by pushing CLPD campaign material (The Yellow Pages) as if it is the official Labour party line – by definition this not one yet!

They have also been known to use these meetings to push the fallacy that most delegates are ‘mandated’ by their CLPs. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING IN THE PARTY RULES AS ‘MANDATING’ OF DELEGATES.**

There is no need to argue this case directly with those pushing this line, just be confident in the knowledge that you are there to represent your CLP as you see fit and there is nothing in the rulebook about mandating. Please pass this information on to other delegates who are unsure on the issue of mandating.

The reason that the hard-left get so exercised over this issue is that they know the only sanction against a delegate who does not abide by a so-called ‘mandate’ is that they will not elect them as a conference delegate again. Which – seeing as they do not vote for moderate delegates anyway – is not really much of a threat.

Please use the regional briefings and receptions to get to know your fellow delegates. Conference votes will be incredibly close this year, so any bonds you can form or swing delegates you can win over to your side could be the difference between winning and losing crucial votes.

## Labour First and Progress Rallies

Rallies are the best bit of conference we have not one, but two:

- The Labour First rally will be held at 12.30pm on Sunday 24 September at the Queens Hotel, Kings Road, Brighton (turn left as you leave conference and go along the seafront towards the town centre).

- The Progress rally will be at 6pm on Sunday 24 September at The Odeon on Brighton Seafront, next door to the conference centre.

Arrive early, they have been packed in previous years and some people have been left disappointed.

## **Volunteering**

Labour First publishes a daily briefing sheet on behalf of all the moderate organisations – as conference can be fast moving and full of surprises, this is vital.

Labour First relies almost exclusively on volunteers (we have only one paid member of staff). We are always on the lookout for people to distribute our daily briefings, sign up new subscribers and communicate our recommendations on conference floor.

If you can volunteer at any point over conference weekend, please let Matt Pound from Labour First know (07727 606999).

## **Conference Times – Arrive Promptly to Avoid Surprises**

Conference starts at:

- 10.30am on Sunday;
- 9.30am on Monday and Tuesday; and
- 9.00am on Wednesday.

Delegates should arrive early each day as the security arrangements involve long delays and on the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday there is almost invariably an attempt by the hard-left to move 'reference back' on the CAC report – this means to challenge the agenda or the procedure under which votes are being taken.

**Please look after your documentation carefully, as any delegate who misplaces documentation will need to report to the CAC for replacements** (before conference opens, the secretary of the CAC can be contacted at the NEC hotel). Delegates need to be in conference from the start of each session – this is when the CAC gives its very important reports.

Make sure you take the time to plan where you are going to be and what time you have to be there every day. Particularly if you are a first-time delegate, aim to arrive at everything 20-30 minutes early. You will never be penalised for being early!

## **Speaking in the debates**

During the debates there will be a platform introductory speech and a platform reply. During policy debates members of policy commissions will move reports. Ordinary delegates are invited to speak but usually limited to three minutes on the platform. We will need moderate delegates to put themselves forward to speak out in favour of our position.

If you are planning on speaking in a debate, please let someone at Labour First or Progress know (contact details on the final page). We can provide you with top tips on how to get noticed by the chair and hopefully increase the likelihood of getting picked. We can also help with the speech itself.

As always, our position on various votes will be laid out in our daily conference briefing.

When speaking on the platform, please remember to keep it concise, making one or two clear points. Please try to stick to the allotted time and bear in mind you will be trying to win over swing delegations, not rile Momentum activists or preach only to the converted.

### **Voting at Conference**

Voting takes place at the end of a conference session and is normally by show of hands **unless a card vote is requested by a delegate** or by the chair. **VOTING ON RULE CHANGES IS ALWAYS BY CARD VOTE.** A card vote means that each CLP or affiliate casts one vote, equal in value to its membership size, these are then counted in two sections, 50 per cent of the vote is allocated to CLPs and 50 per cent to affiliates.

# Important Debates, Reports, Votes

## Sunday Morning – CAC Report 1

CAC Report No 1 (and the Delegates Report) is moved by the chair of the CAC. CAC Report 1 gives details of the definitively agreed timetable for the week. The hard-left will undoubtedly look to ‘reference back’ on the CACs decisions regarding contemporary motions and rule change amendments which have been ruled out of order.

Each day there is at least one report from the CAC, some are written, some are verbal. Momentum and other hard-left groups actively encourage their members to challenge CAC decisions, regardless of their legitimacy. We will need delegates in the conference hall to be ready to speak against referencing back – if these tactics are being attempted – and keep conference business moving along.

## Sunday Morning - The Priorities Ballot

Contemporary Motions ruled in order by the CAC will be grouped into subjects and published in CAC Report 1 available on Sunday morning at delegation meetings, from the party stand and when delegates enter the conference hall. These subject headings then go into the Priorities Ballot, which will be held on Sunday, probably between 10.30am and 3pm. Our Priorities Ballot recommendations on which four topics to vote for will be widely available in advance through social media and our daily briefings.

Due to the way the Priorities Ballot is conducted – through a ‘four and four’ formula – it is guaranteed that the top four motion subjects voted on by the unions and the top four subjects voted on by the CLPs, will be debated. **It is very important that moderate delegates look out for our recommendations and vote accordingly.**

The unions use a block vote format to ensure their topics get on to the conference agenda. Therefore, a vote for the topics that the unions are already choosing is a wasted vote.

## Sunday evening – Contemporary Motion compositing meetings

The delegates involved with the successful CM topics emerging from the Priority Ballot (announced at the end of the Sunday afternoon session) will be requested to attend compositing meetings, on Sunday evening. Every delegate must attend, unless they are given permission by the CAC to be absent and in this case the words of their motion can be used.

If you do not do this your text disappears and cannot be used.

At these meetings delegates will meet the relevant NEC policy commission co-convenor and shadow ministers to discuss how the subject could be taken forward. If there are multiple motions on the same topic the text is composited (merged) into one motion (if everyone agrees) or more than one if there is text that is taking opposing political positions.

Speakers to propose and second the subject on the conference floor will also be chosen at this point. There is where a fair share of dirty-tricks has been deployed by the hard-left over the year. Conference is not just for those who shout loudest at compositing.

If you are invited to the compositing meeting – it is more exciting than it sounds and one of the more important parts of conference – please immediately let us know by calling Matt Pound, Luke Akehurst, Matthew Faulding or Richard Angell (contact details below).

### **Monday/Tuesday - Reports from the seven Policy Commissions**

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### **Morning Sessions - Reference back sections of the CAC reports and NEC reports**

As already mentioned, we will need people in the hall first thing on most days to prevent disruptive attempts by the hard left to 'reference back' the daily CAC report if the CAC has taken decisions they disagree with.

### **Tuesday – NCC Ballot**

As already mentioned we are supporting **Rose Burley** and **Kevin Hepworth** for NCC.

Each CLP can vote for two candidates as there are two vacancies. Remember, the vote on this ballot cannot be split between delegates, so do your best to reach a compromise with your fellow delegates if your delegation is politically split – but make voting for both of the two Momentum backed candidates a red line.

Despite all the talk of unity, Momentum wants nothing of the sort. They want control of conference, the NCC, the NEC, the lot. Do not be bullied into positions you are not happy with.

## **Tuesday Morning – Rule Changes**

Whilst we are still waiting for the full list of rule changes to be debated at conference, we are sure that the following topics will be discussed as they were submitted in 2016:

- Reduction of the nomination requirement for leadership and deputy elections from 15 per cent of the parliamentary Labour party to five per cent – known as the ‘McDonnell amendment’.
- Incumbent leaders and deputies automatically getting on the ballot in the event of a challenge.
- Abolition of ‘registered supporters’ (the £3 voters in the 2015 leadership election) or, more controversially ‘affiliated supporters’ from the unions too.
- Four different proposals about antisemitism and how it should be dealt with in disciplinary cases, including one from the Jewish Labour Movement.
- Abolition of the 1995 Clause IV of Labour’s constitution and its replacement with ‘Labour is a democratic socialist party working for a fairer, healthier and more equal society’.
- Enabling CLPs and affiliates to submit a rule change and a contemporary policy motion each year, rather than having to choose one or the other.
- Abolition of the concept of ‘contemporary motions’ so that any policy motion can be submitted, as before the mid-1990s ‘partnership in power’ changes.
- Abolition of the one year delay in rule changes from CLPs and affiliates being debated.
- Young Labour, rather than conference, to have control of its own rulebook.
- Going back from local campaign forums to local government committees.

Please, look out for our daily briefing for our recommended position on these issues and any other rule changes put forward by the NEC.

## **Tuesday, 5pm – Deputy Leaders Speech**

After a very long day of debates on rule changes on Tuesday, Deputy Leader Tom Watson will give his address to conference.

## **Wednesday, 12.15pm – Leader’s Speech**

To close the conference, Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn will give his address.

# Key Contacts/Information

**Matt Pound** - National Organiser, Labour First

[matt@labourfirst.org](mailto:matt@labourfirst.org)

07727 606999

**Matthew Faulding** - Deputy Director, Progress

[matthew@progressonline.org.uk](mailto:matthew@progressonline.org.uk)

07872 448700

**Luke Akehurst** - Secretary, Labour First

[AkehurstLuke@googlemail.com](mailto:AkehurstLuke@googlemail.com)

07949 152562

**Richard Angell** - Director, Progress

[richard@progressonline.org.uk](mailto:richard@progressonline.org.uk)

07966 161444

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