

To:

David Evans, General Secretary; Margaret Beckett, Chair, NEC;
Wendy Nicholls, Chair, Organisation Sub-Committee, NEC

24th February 2021

Dear David, Margaret and Wendy,

We hope you are all very well.

We are writing to express our disappointment about the removal of all three women shortlisted to be the Labour Party candidate for Mayor of Liverpool without adequate explanation.

Whilst we realise that this was not an official All Women Shortlist, for which there is no legal provision for directly elected mayors, it brought great encouragement to women throughout the Labour Party to see a shortlist for a high profile local government position comprise exclusively of women. As you will appreciate, this is rare, and felt like progress.

We ask therefore for written reassurance that the new shortlist will include, at a bare minimum, at least fifty percent women. We are publishing this letter and therefore also take the opportunity to ask our male allies in Liverpool to step aside from putting themselves forward for the new shortlist. The dismay and anger felt by women across the Labour Party would be palpable if three women were removed from a shortlist only for a man to be elected in their place. One way to ensure this does not happen is for any brothers thinking of putting themselves forward to rethink and step aside. It is time to fix the systematic biases that make it harder for women to be elected, rather than to fix the women, and to show feminist allyship in actions, not words. It is time to #AskHimNOTtoStand.

We also ask, for the sake of the three women involved and their supporters, that as full an explanation as possible be provided for the almost unprecedented handling of this situation. For women Party Members with no knowledge of the reasons behind the Party's brief statement, it is perplexing and maddening in equal measure to see such a positive step forward for women's representation be so dramatically reversed. We know that none of you would wish to deter the abundance of well qualified Labour women from continuing to put themselves forward for every level of public office.

Finally, a reminder that whilst we are exceptionally proud that our use of positive action in line with the law has now taken us to 51% Labour women MPs, we have a marathon to complete to achieve parity in local and regionally devolved governance. Only 3 out of 10 of Labour's directly elected local mayors are women (in Doncaster, North Tyneside and Newham). Zero percent of Labour's directly elected Metro Mayors are women (although we are proud that both Labour's woman candidates for Metro Mayoral office in May are graduates of LWN training programmes). Only 24% of Labour's council leaders are currently women. Only 1 in 10 Labour Police and Crime Commissioners are women (again, we are proud of the LWN training graduates hoping to improve this in May). What, please, is Labour's plan to correct these failings as quickly as possible? The pace of change has been frustratingly slow, and we urge that the Labour Party agrees and takes the actions necessary changes to Labour's procedures and culture to fast forward it.

It is 2021, and these statistics are simply not good enough.

In sisterhood and solidarity,

Labour Women's Network

www.lwn.org.uk