

Left Unity National Co-ordinating Group

Draft minutes of meeting held on 27 July 2013 in London

Attendance: Delegates: JS (Barnet); SM (Birmingham LU); BW (Birmingham CATC LU); CP (Brighton LU); CS (Bristol LU); KB (Cambridge LU); AH (Cardiff LU); JH (Chester); LC (Crouch End LU); RZ (Hackney); DT (Haringey LU); GK (Hebden Bridge); IA (High Wycombe); CS (Huddersfield LU); MN (Hull LU); SP (Islington LU); SH (Lambeth); SW (Leamington LU); TL (Leicester LU); LC (Liverpool LU); AN (Loughborough LU); BK (Manchester LU); PK (Medway LU); DI (Milton Keynes LU); JJ (Northampton); MS (Nottingham LU); PB (Sheffield LU); MB (Southwark); CG (SW Dorset LU); RB (Tower Hamlets LU); SL (Walsall LU); CC (Waltham Forest LU); MM (Wandsworth LU); MM (West London LU); AB (DES LU); FD (DES LU); GH (DES LU); KH (DES LU); CH (DES LU); SS (DES LU); BT (DES LU); TW (DES LU) (DES means directly-elected section)

Observers: JY (Cambridge); GK (Greenwich and Lewisham); GH (Huddersfield); DH (Medway) (not all observers were asked to sign in)

The meeting was asked to endorse KH and AN as co-chairs and this was agreed. Agreed that observers would be allowed to speak if there was time after delegates had spoken.

1. Minutes: The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

2. Matters arising:

- 4 members of LU had a positive meeting with TUSC. No decisions were made. Any decisions on LU relationship with TUSC to be taken after November conference. Notes on the meeting to be written up and put on the LU website.

3. Dates and arrangements for further NCG meetings:

Doncaster meeting had agreed outline timetable – NCG in September in Birmingham, October in London. Policy workshop conference to be held in Manchester in September and the founding conference in November.

The following were agreed – NCG meeting in Birmingham on 7 September, Policy workshop conference in Manchester on 28 September, NCG meeting in London on either 19 or 26 October and the founding conference to be held in London on 30 November.

Agreed that another NCG meeting could be held in early November in London if necessary. On location, although London was considered easy and cheap for some delegates to get to, we have a commitment to hold meetings in other parts of the country. An invitation to hold a meeting in Wales was made.

4. Arrangements and timetabling for September policy workshop conference:

Various venues had been researched for the Manchester workshops with a provisional booking made for rooms in Methodist Central Hall and Friends Meeting House (both are fully accessible). As it is a 15 min walk across the busy city centre some transport would be required for those with mobility issues. **It was agreed to ask in advance which workshops people wished to attend, so we had an idea of numbers and the number of rooms booked could be decreased if necessary.** As there were lots of other events taking place on the same weekend, we should see about using joint transport to get to Manchester where possible, and support other movement events and not cut across them. In discussion, in response to the argument that by holding the workshops before we have a party or even any principles it was like putting the cart before the horse, it was explained that discussions are ongoing about principles. The policy

discussions have begun from the Doncaster meeting and are an open and ongoing process. Local groups need to make sure that not just those who have the money attend our events. Fund raising may be needed, as inclusion is expensive. A high Left Unity profile is also needed on the demo on 29th. The purpose of the workshops on 28th is to give policy commissions space to debate issues and integrate feedback. The aim is to facilitate open discussions. **The proposals for the policy workshop conference were put to the vote and agreed, with one abstention.**

5. November conference arrangements:

It was proposed to hold the founding conference at the very end of November as the timetable is so tight. Holding it on 30 November would allow as much time as possible to make the arrangements.

The proposed venue is the Royal National Hotel in London, which is close to Euston and Kings Cross stations. The Galleon Suite holds up to 750 people and would cost £2,600 – which is good value for such a venue. It is fully accessible. We could also book other rooms, for example for the young people's meeting.

People can attend if they become a founding member of Left Unity. It will also be open for the press and other observers, but only signed and paid up founder members would be able to vote.

There will be other expenses such as microphones, signing etc. The total budget required would be around £5k. The proposal was £5 conference delegate fee for waged and £2 or £3 for unwaged with the proviso that those who could not afford that amount to be subsidised by their local group.

Details of the conference need to go on the front page of the website and local groups must publicise so that people know about it and attend.

In discussion, there was debate about the delegate fee and whether the conference should be put back to 2014. The date cannot be put back as it was overwhelmingly agreed at the first national meeting in May. The point was also made that austerity won't wait until 2014.

The Doncaster meeting had agreed a small number of policy commissions to report to the November conference. The remainder will continue working until a policy conference is arranged in 2014.

The cost of childcare/crèche was raised. As the cost and bureaucracy attached to organising a crèche on site may be prohibitive, an option to pay for childcare at home will be offered. TC has agreed to report back on the costs to the next NCG.

The organisation working group will put together a conference arrangements group.

Votes – the date and venue were agreed with 1 abstention. The conference delegate fee was agreed as £10 waged, £5 low waged, and £3 unemployed/retired. Observers will be charged the conference rate. The press will be free of charge.

6. Pooled fare: for today's meeting was £26.

7. A proposal to change the agenda by putting motions from local groups higher up the agenda was defeated.

8. Safer Spaces Policy

Draft Safer Spaces Policy document was shared by FD (Liverpool). The document is a draft for local and national discussion, so was not voted on. FD requested that feedback on the document to go to her, MC or TC. Votes were taken on four specific statements relating to Safer Spaces.

An extra motion was proposed (LU Hebden Bridge) that a vote should be taken on whether the statements should be voted on. (Carried that the statements should be voted on, with 5 against and 2 abs)

Statements voted on:

- **Left Unity understands that oppression and violence are part of our society. Such behaviours can be unconscious or unintended. (carried, none against, 3 abs)**
- **We oppose behaviours, not people (carried, none against, 2 abs)**
- **Left Unity actively opposes bullying and harassment (carried, none against, 4 abs)**
- **Stance is active and on-going. We should aim for reconciliation, but recognise that some behaviours are intolerable (carried, none against, 6 abs)**

Passed item will be placed on web-site

9. Working Group Reports

Press Working Group (SS): A press release is being developed to be signed by a selection of high profile supporters.

Trade Unions (BT): Attended Tolpuddle and Dunham Miners' Gala, and distributed 3000 Left Unity broadsheets

Web-team (LC): Discussion forums have just been launched, and instructions circulated as to how to access them.

A question was asked whether these forums will be the process for policy commissions. Another question asked if the commissions working group can give guidance on how commissions should operate. KH explained that the process is deliberately non-prescriptive and commissions can choose to operate in different ways. All 9000+ signatories to the appeal have been invited to participate via the newsletter.

Work of the Organisation Group: covered in morning session

Policy Commissions (AB): 150 people are participating in the policy commissions. Most have a longer timeframe than November for reporting. AB identified policy commission and convenors, and also appealed for convenors for commissions that had none.

GH suggested policy commissions produce short policy statements (by consensus if possible) from discussions at the September Conference.

10. Founding Members: Rates and Process

The Group Development Working Group put forward a two-part motion:

Motion 1: Founding membership of Left Unity will involve paying a sum of not less than 50p per month for those not in paid work and £2 per month for those that are, to Left Unity nationally. Where members are not in a position to pay the lowest amount they should raise this in their local group who may make an arrangement to pay the sum on their behalf. (Carried, none against, one abs)

Motion 2: The Group development working group shall set up a virtual group or groups of Left Unity covering those founding members who do not have a geographical local group they can attend. A virtual group will function through email and whatever other social

media to allow all founding members of Left Unity access to its democratic structures. Founding members can only be a member of one group, virtual or otherwise for the purposes of voting. (Carried, none against, one abs)

11. Fundraising and Financial Appeal

Left Unity has currently has £728 its bank account, but has liabilities of around £1800 (this includes a £1000 deposit for the November founding conference). All postcards and broadsheets have now been distributed. Those unable to make payments online can send cheques to Left Unity, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX. Will McMahon and Chris Hurley from the organisation group have offered to work with others on a finance sub-group.

12. Huddersfield Motion

Part b) Organise a new Policy Commission tasked with drawing up a one page “What we stand for” type statement by the September Conference, written in a lively and accessible way, avoiding traditional leftist label, clichés and stock phrases, that consciously aims to speak to all people who want a fairer society. This can be used by local groups to build interest in the November launch conference.

Points were made that local groups and platforms were developing statements, and **the motion was defeated (none voted for, two abs)**

Part a) Invite suggestions (and supporting statements of up to 150 words) on a possible name for the new party. This list of suggested names should be accessible on the website two weeks before the November founding meeting. These suggestions will form the basis of a debate and vote at the November national meeting that uses a Single Transferable Vote method to allow members to rank their choices. This is in order to achieve the maximum consensus as practically possible.

A vote was taken on the first part of this motion (italicised), as it was thought inappropriate to decide upon the voting system without further consideration. **This first part was carried (3 against, 2 abs)**

It was unanimously agreed that the next NCG meeting should address the voting method.

13. Cambridge Motion (with amendments included below)

The Doncaster meeting came to positive agreement about allowing the presence and activities of platforms until the November Founding Conference when this matter will be re-discussed. Cambridge Left Unity would like to confirm and extend this agreement. The confirmation part is that these platforms should be open and transparent. The extension part is to ask that the source of these platforms be clear and a point of contact provided to allow anyone to debate/support/find out more. The Left Unity web-site should be used to facilitate this transparency and inter-platform dialogue with a clear non-preferential presentation of these platforms, taking care not to favour one or the other platform in its presentation of them. Cambridge Left Unity welcomes and thanks those continuing the work of the national organisation to deepen its commitment to transparency and internal democracy.

Carried (none against, one abs)

14. Tower Hamlets Motion

Tower Hamlets Left Unity notes that the oppression of women in society is regularly replicated in its organisations, which can result in the under-representation of women in political structures.

The first national meeting of Left Unity had a majority of women attendees due in part to the requirement that each local group send at least one woman out of a possible two attendees.

However it was notable at the first National Coordinating Group meeting, at which no such requirement was imposed, that over two thirds of delegates were male.

Whilst it is not within the remit of this body (the NCG) to make any decisions regarding the structure of the organisation as it is founded in November, it is crucial that women are fairly reflected in the current process of organisation. In light of this, Tower Hamlets Left Unity proposes the following:

Local group delegates to the National Coordinating Group be expanded to two delegates per group, with at least one of those being a woman.

- The meeting questioned whether the NCG has the right to overturn the decision of the first national meeting to have one delegate per group at the NCG. In light of this, GH amended the proposal to:

Local groups sending delegates to the two remaining National Coordinating Group meetings should send a woman on at least one occasion.

The motion was narrowly defeated (For 17, Against 19, Abs 6)

15. Live Streaming

Request that Left Unity investigate live streaming of future meetings. Concerns were raised that some persons might wish not to be shown and that it might be inappropriate to live stream all parts of meetings. BT said from experience those concerns can be adequately met.

Carried (one against, no abs)