

# Left Unity National Co-ordinating Group

## Draft minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 07 September in Birmingham

It was agreed that Merry Cross (DES) and Terry Conway (DES) would chair

### 1. Attendance

#### a) Present:

KH (DES LU), SW (Manchester central del.), SM (Birmingham del), BR (Oxford del), PB (Sheffield del), JJ (Northampton del), TA (Greenwich and Lewisham del), SW (Bristol del), SE (Lambeth del), TW (DES LU), JR (Southwark del), LW (Leamington del), MS (Nottingham del), CL (Reading del), LC (Leeds del), RM (Huddersfield del), Pete Green (Hackney del), MC (Reading del), TC (DES LU), FL (Barnet del), TG (York del), EK (Manchester del), TB (Manchester south del), RJ (Leicester del), PM (West London del), SS (DES LU), SL (Walsall del), RG (Waltham Forrest del), FD (DES LU and Liverpool del), LH (CATC Birmingham del), PM (Rugby del), CH (DES LU), LB (Walsall del), LB (Wandsworth del), AB (DES LU), BT (DES LU). GB (Bristol obs.), LG (Birmingham obs), DM (Birmingham obs), CO (Bristol obs), SW (Leamington obs), MG (Huddersfield obs), PD (Waltham Forrest obs), RM (Tamworth obs), SG (CATC Birmingham obs), MF (Worcestershire obs), TK (Wandsworth obs),

Note: DES - Directly Elected Section, del – delegate, obs - observer

**b) Apologies:** LC, GH, DI, (Milton Keynes)JP (Worcestershire del), Islington, Tower Hamlets, Cambridge.

**c) Observers:** It was agreed to follow practice at previous meetings that observers could speak if there was time after elected members had spoken.

**2. Welcome :** Sharon McCourt from Birmingham LU welcomed people

**3. Minutes of the previous meeting** (*to be inserted here*).

**a) Minutes:** The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed

#### b) Matters arising:

- Pg 4 section 12. It was noted that no work had been done on the voting method to be used to decide the party name at the November Founding Conference. It was agreed to form a working group to look at this and report back to the next NCG. Volunteers were sought and RM (Huddersfield), PM(Rugby) and FD(Liverpool) volunteered so far (at the meeting).
- Pg 5 In relation to the Tower Hamlets concern about the under-representation in political parties TC informed the meeting that a Women's Caucus has been established and a contact address is on the Left Unity website.
- Pg 5 The progress on the investigation into the feasibility of live streaming future meetings was raised but no-one present was able to say. It was agreed to ask BT (DES ) who may know.

Several delegates raised the issue of more notice of the NCG agenda to give time for local groups to discuss any issues. It was proposed and agreed that the agenda must be available to local groups a week before the NCG meeting and similarly local groups must get motions in to the "centre" a week before. Voting was as follows 17 for, 8 against, 4 abstentions.

## 4. Founding Conference

### a) Timetable for Founding Conference process

28th September:	Policy Workshop Conference
11th October:	Deadline for submission of statements, resolutions etc
16th October:	Send out submissions to local groups <i>period of discussion, amendment and compositing</i>
16th November:	Deadline for submission of amendments
22nd November:	Send out statements, resolutions and amendments to groups and members
30th November:	Founding Conference
Cut off date for membership and registration one week in advance of conference	

The meeting agreed to accept the proposed timetable (see above). It was also accepted that in addition to any information sent to local groups and members by email that the information should also be available on the website. It was agreed that the next NCG will be held on the 19th October

During the discussion it was suggested that information on how to composite be made available. Concern was also raised about organisation of the November conference and it was agreed that the conference/meetings organising group along will work with LU members with experience of this work to write draft standing orders for the founding conference to be discussed and voted on at the next NCG. The October NCG will also decide on the composition and election of a standing orders committee.

### b) Elections at founding conference:

The following proposal was discussed brought by KH on behalf of the organising group:

We need to look at the procedure for elections within the new party itself. If we vote on a process at the conference for the way we wish to elect a leadership then we presumably won't actually be able to carry that out at the conference as that may well involve seeking nominations and supporting statements, circulating those to groups etc in an open and inclusive way.

So we need to think about how that will work. Maybe a temporary leadership body which could be the existing NCG, tasked with carrying out the full leadership election process? We are due to have a full policy conference in the spring to which the bulk of the commissions report, so potentially the election process could work to that?

A decision on continuing with the present steering group after the November conference until the new leadership structure agreed at that conference could be elected was referred to the next NCG (votes for this decision 16, votes against not counted)

### c) Initial agenda for Founding Conference

It was agreed that the main items at Founding Conference will be:

1. Aims (this should include voting on local group statements of aims, platform statements and any aims section that comes from the IPD/constitution commission)
2. Campaigning inc. anti-racism and anti austerity
3. Policy on elections
4. Structures

## 5. Safe Spaces policy

A document was circulated and was introduced verbally by FD (DES LU). It was agreed nem con (with no one against) to circulate the document to local groups through the structures of LU for discussion, and then for a further discussion to be held at the Policy Workshop

Conference in Manchester and at the next NCG.

## **6. Policy Workshop Conference, Manchester**

- a) KH (DES LU) reported on the provisional booking of the two alternative halls, and of the result so far of the on-line survey to establish preference of workshops. Most popular: education; then: internal democracy, economy, foreign policy. There have been approx 60 responses so far. On the basis of the number of responses it was agreed to book the smaller venue.
- b) PG (Hackney) moved a motion from himself and RM regarding the agenda for the Policy Workshop Conference.
- c) It was agreed to approach unions and other organisations to raise funds towards the cost of BSL interpreters for the conference and to confirm the booking. FD and BT (DES) agreed to pursue this.
- d) KH (DES) proposed an amendment to the proposed agenda from RM/PG that the first session of the Policy Workshop Conference should not be a plenary on constitutional matters but should have several workshop sessions running concurrently. This was agreed overwhelmingly.
- e) It was agreed to set up a working party to plan the Policy Workshop Conference. The volunteers from the meeting for this working party were: KH, PG, FD, SW and TC.

## **7. Reconciliation Report**

FD (DES LU) reported on a case she has been dealing with where reconciliation had been rejected by both parties. FD proposed that a small group take the report and take action. The following volunteered: MM, LC and MF.

## **8. Membership**

- a. AB (DES LU) reported approximate figures due to need to find volunteers to work on information received. BS(Bristol) has agreed to deal with membership and conference registration in liaison with AB, JY and BS. RM (Tamworth) also volunteered.
- b. It was agreed that it needs to be made clear on the website that the membership fee and conference registration are separate.
- c. It was agreed to post a message on the website with a reassurance about delay in response to membership and conference registration.

## **9. Financial Report**

- a. Verbal interim report from AB due to apology from JY. Approx balance is £1,900 credit and the deposit has been paid for the conference venue. A full report will be given at the next NCG.
- b. Queries from Manchester:
  - i. How can people with no back account become members? Reply: money has to be collected in cash and transferred to national account
  - ii. Can local LU groups get money from national dues for local activities? Reply: national material (e.g. broadsheet and cards) is also distributed to local groups but other material for local use has to be funded by the local LU group for now – but will be part of debate on constitution at national conference

## **10. Reading proposal**

that the basic principles of the party (e.g. one member one vote) be in place in writing BEFORE the founding conference  
that we have links on the website to web pages (not facebook) for every local group

It was noted that the founding conference will be the body that establishes all policy and that there are different interpretations of some of the policies adopted so far through May 11 and

subsequent NCGs. It was noted that we will put links on our website to local groups in whatever form they send them to us and don't have resources to do more than this..

#### **11. Rugby LU proposals:**

##### **Participation in Policy Commissions**

"We note that the June LU NCG meeting agreed, by 27 votes to 14, to refer to local LU groups the proposal to invite trade unions, anti-cuts groups and left organisations as observers in the policy commissions. Rugby LU has discussed this referral back, and has unanimously agreed that supportive tenants groups, trade union branches, radical community groups and left parties/organisations should all be given opportunities to get involved in the policy making process. We call on the NCG to enable that to happen"

An amendment was agreed to delete the words left parties/organisations. The amended motion was carried 14 for, 9 against, 8 abstentions.

##### **• Inclusivity**

"We are concerned that those not on the internet have not found it easy to be involved in the work of the LU Policy Commissions. We ask that the LU Newsletter be used to encourage all LU local groups to download and print materials from each Commission for distribution by post or hand to those not on the internet who want to be involved. We also ask that postal addresses be published for contributions"

Agreed nem con

#### **12. Joint Tower Hamlets LU & Hackney LU proposal:**

Tower Hamlets & Hackney Left Unity groups propose that articles debating platform statements, as well as those relating to that debate (on the nature of the party) should not appear on the front page of the website, but that these should appear on a separate section of the website for internal debate.

The proposal was agreed nem con.

#### **13. Discussion over working groups organisation/ activity (proposed by Tower Hamlets LU)**

It was agreed to ask all working groups to report to the next NCG.

#### **14. Southwark LU proposals:**

##### **• Organisational proposals that:**

1. All branches be supported to set up Facebook groups and web pages by knowledgeable activists .
2. NCG members to coordinate creation of "speakers list" of all members who have experience and can speak on different topics, to be circulated to all branches so they can contact individuals to speak at public meetings in their area
3. NCG members to coordinate creation of "artists list" of all members involved in or who have skills of art and culture which can be used at public events, film showings, music nights, socials etc

Motion was agreed. TB agreed to help for item 1. MM agreed to help for items 2 and 3

##### **Motion**

This meeting notes that no full and comprehensive report on the numbers involved in Left Unity has been given.

Whilst there are regular updates about number of people who have signed the appeal from Ken Loach, there has been no report given to any of the national meetings or posted on the website or sent out to the Left Unity supporters/members that details the numbers involved

in local groups or the numbers who have paid money and have signed up to become members.

This information is important because it will help to give an accurate picture of the progress being made to create a new party, it may inform the debates in Left Unity, and it protects the democracy of the project.

This meeting therefore agrees:

To instruct the 'membership/group working group' or whichever is the appropriate body or group of individuals with the relevant information to present to the membership/supporters through the newsletter a report by 21 September 2013 which sets out:

1. The number of people who have signed the appeal
2. The number of people who have paid the membership fee and become registered members
3. The number of people who have registered for the Founding Conference in November
4. The number and (geographical) names of groups with details about whether they meet at least monthly, how many have attended the meetings, and whether they fulfil the requirements to send delegates to the NCG.

Further, this meeting agrees that a full financial report, setting out income and expenditure to the period ending 31 August 2013 will be circulated to the membership/supporters through the newsletter by 21 September 2013.

FL (Barnet) moved an amendment that the word "instruct" be replaced by "appeal", and that the date be changed to "as soon as possible". TW (LU DES) proposed that the date for a report is the next NCG. JR who had moved the motion accepted to change of word to appeal and to the date being the next NCG. In point 4, it was also agreed to delete the words "at least" and "how many have attended the meetings". The amended motion was agreed and JR volunteered to help get information described in point 4.

### **15. Any Other Business**

FL (Barnet) proposed that a broadsheet similar to that for the People's Assembly be produced for the demonstration on the 29 September. This was agreed. FL and AB volunteered to help produce it.