

Left Unity Transitional National Council
Minutes of Meeting, Birmingham, Saturday 11th January 2014

Chairs: BT and ST

Minutes: KH and LC

Attendance: TA (Lewisham), AA (Wigan), PB (Sheffield), AB (Directly elected), RC (Lambeth), MC (Leeds), CC (Leeds), LC (Liverpool), LC (Crouch End), TC (Directly elected), KC (Barnet), FD (Directly elected), PD (Waltham Forest), JD (Cambridge), JF (Tower Hamlets), SH (Bolton), GH (Huddersfield), GH (Directly elected), JH (Southwark), KH (Directly elected), RM (Leicester), PM (Rugby), SMc (Birmingham), AM (Worcestershire), ON (West London), YP (Cheshire West), SP (Islington), MS (Nottingham), SS (Directly elected), TS (Hackney), ST (Camden), BT (Directly elected), TW (Directly elected), SW (Manchester), SW (Bristol)

1. National Conference:

A discussion was taken on the date, length and location of conference.

Southwark motion proposing Manchester as location: passed 16 for, 15 against.

The chairs ruled that the conference should take place on the final weekend of March, to comply with constitutional requirements.

It was proposed that the national conference should take place on the 29th March in Manchester followed by another day conference at a later date (possibly June), the exact date and location to be determined subsequently. Agreed: 20 in favour, 13 against.

2. Appointment of acting officers:

To comply with the constitutional transitional arrangements (see appendix at end of minutes), the following acting officers were elected to serve until the national conference in March:

Acting National Secretary: KH – unanimous

Acting National Treasurer: AB – unanimous

Acting Nominating Officer: CH – one abstention

Standing Orders Committee: TR, RG, DT, JH, CR – all elected unanimously

(KH to contact branches for additional SOC nominations as constitution specifies 10 members)

Conference Arrangements Committee: KH, AB, TC, KL, GC, SH, AA (plus two to be elected from Manchester)

It was proposed to elect further acting officers to facilitate effective running of Left Unity, as provided for under the constitution transitional arrangements: carried overwhelmingly with 4 against and 1 abstention.

(All following posts in acting capacity)

Principal national speakers: all elected with 2 abstentions

FD

BT

SS

PG

Press Officer: TW - elected: 2 abstentions

Membership and Internal Communications: GH and TC (job share)
elected: 2 abstentions

Access Officer: MC - elected: 2 abstentions

Trade Unions Officer: ON and TN (job share) elected: 3 abstentions

Disputes Committee:

SM, SMC, SMi, JH, KC and AS.

All elected, no abstentions.

Note: This committee will be opened for more women to join to ensure 50% representation. KH will facilitate this.

Finance and Audit Committee: all elected – 2 abstentions

Acting National Treasurer plus:

CH

BS

RM

Editorial officer: ST to oversee editorial matters on website.

Editorial team to support ST: TW, SS, AB, KH, EF, SW and rep (TBC) from the Bristol branch.

All elected with 1 abstention.

LC elected to manage technical aspects of the website – 1 abstention

3. Ballot Preparations:

KH proposed that the Conference Arrangements Committee and Standing Orders Committee, along with TN, deal with ballot prep rather than electing another committee.

Agreed unanimously.

4. Timetabling:

KH proposed to convene CAC and SOC via email to agree timetable for notice to branches prior to the conference – agreed.

5. Safe Spaces reports:

FD proposed that members of the Directly Elected Section who have not to date been involved in the matters in Manchester write to the parties concerned and express that LU is committed to supporting all persons. A letter to be sent to the original complainant explaining the situation and committing us to work to make it much less likely such a situation could happen again

The persons who have left should be invited to rejoin should they so wish.

It was agreed that we could not:

- a) process a complaint while neither person is a member
- b) Allow leaving and re-joining to end a complaint; if either party re-joins the matter can be taken up again by the original complainant or someone else
- c) No-one has been excluded from membership.

Current drafts of the safe spaces policy to be adjusted to avoid conflicts with the constitution and the new draft circulated for discussion to branches.

i) FD suggested that the Safe Spaces group meet to tie up loose ends re Manchester.

ii) FD suggested that training in Safe Spaces be offered to members of LU convening groups, meetings etc.

iii) TC suggested that the Safe Spaces document be sent back to branches for consideration and comment in time for next conference.

TNC agreed, without formal vote, on points i-iii above.

6. Campaigning priorities:

KH read out MC's statement in support of the Reading resolution.

Reading resubmitted resolution: "The meeting also agreed that an amendment to the

"Austerity proposal" be submitted to the effect that LU will initially prioritise campaigning against cuts to disabled peoples' services and benefits."

Agreed with 4 abstentions

Resolution from Crouch End LU branch:

Campaigning Priorities

“Crouch End Left Unity notes the recent wave of student and trade union militancy. Left Unity will give priority to work in support of trade union struggles and campaigns, such as that of the FBU, and the RMT's Hands Off London Transport initiative. Left Unity will also encourage and support the development of Left Unity's student section and its intervention and participation in broader student campaigns.”

Passed unanimously, amended to include:

- Opposition to fracking
- Defence of the NHS and no charges for maternity services
- Legal Aid protection
- Defence of migrants
- No Glory in War – support this campaign throughout 2014
- LU will support People's Assembly and the development of the recall conference.

Campaigning:

We will produce materials on LU priorities to be used nationally

We will work to support existing campaigns (eg, anti-cuts, bedroom tax, Save the NHS) rather than duplicating activity.

Passed unanimously

7. Electoral Policy:

Electoral Strategy – Crouch End Left Unity

“Electoral support for a new left party will only advance to the extent that it is genuinely representative of working class communities, has no interests separate from theirs, and is an organic part of the campaigns and movements which they generate and support. It will engage in the European, national and local electoral processes as appropriate, offering voters a left alternative, while understanding that elections are not the only arena or even the most important arena in which political struggles are fought.

Candidates should only be fielded where a political base of support exists within the community and where the human and financial resources exist to make a genuine and locally representative campaign viable.” Passed: 1 abstention

Southwark proposal:

"The National Council to discuss position on Euro Elections as to whether Left Unity stands in the elections at all."

Southwark rep (JH) agreed to remit this to the next TNC meeting to allow time for regional discussions on the question.

Rugby resolution:

We would like to see Left Unity develop strategies which, in the long term, help contribute to there being One Party of the Left which can reach out to all the strands of radical and socialist politics in the UK. This will entail:

- a) Discussing methods of involvement including affiliation, whilst not cutting across the principle of OMOV
- b) Taking the lead in opening discussions with the major players on the left, including the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the CPB, Respect and the Alliance for Green Socialism to avoid electoral clashes and move towards electoral pacts – with the initial aim of creating the largest ever left challenge in the 2015 General Election
- c) Seeing it as a priority to initiate debate across the left about building One Party of the Left

Defeated. 5 for; 23 against; 2 abstentions

NL's proposal on electoral work was referred to local branch (Greenwich and Lewisham).

8. Membership development and support:

Membership currently stands at around 1200.

Question of allowing online members to have the same rights as branches was remitted to the next TNC meeting. ST agreed to look into this development in the context of the constitution. MC agreed to assist with branch development work.

Branch matters: TNC agreed that Leeds will operate 2 LU branches and there will be a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire branch. BT will mediate any issues arising between branches operating in these close geographic areas.

9. Southwark branch proposal:

"A launch rally to be held in each region before the policy conference in March to attract and draw in new people. With high profile speakers."

AB proposed amendment – text to read 'as soon as possible' rather than before March conference.

Amendment: TNC to vote on the spirit of the proposal rather than the letter. That is, not all regions are sufficiently developed or networked to make the proposal workable in all areas – but all will aspire to hold such an event/or similar when they are able. Passed: 1 against; 2 abs.

10 Financial Report:

A financial report was given by AB covering the period 9th May 2013 to 2nd January 2014. Copies were distributed to delegates so that branches could receive a full report. JY has resigned as co-treasurer and as a result the following resolutions were passed:

Resolution 1:

Allow PM to act as LU representative and collect LU materials from JY when meeting JY to collect items from other campaigns. Passed unanimously.

Resolution 2:

JY's resignation accepted and him to be removed as signatory from LU bank account. Passed unanimously.

- i) TNC was asked by AB to agree that a part time Administrator be appointed to help with the increasing workload of running the party.
- ii) Delegated a group of people from the TNC to appoint an Admin worker and arrange for temporary office space to March. KH and GH agreed to progress this.

Items i and ii above taken together.

Passed unanimously.

Economic Policy Commission asked for funds to host a workshop (room hire etc).

Passed unanimously.

AB asked that the TNC approve travel funds to allow him to attend the Parti de Gauche Conference.

Passed unanimously.

Note: Due to time, not all items on the agenda were discussed.

Travel reimbursements: in line with constitutional provision, £528 was reimbursed to delegates for travel expenses.

Next meeting: Saturday 8th February in London

APPENDIX 3 - NATIONAL COUNCIL TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS!

a) Upon the adoption of this constitution at the party's founding conference, the existing Left Unity National Coordinating Group shall take on the role of Transitional National Council of the new party. This body shall operate until the next National Conference, which shall take place within four months of the founding conference, when it shall dissolve and Clause 12 of the constitution will come fully into operation."

"b) The Transitional National Council will appoint, from its own number (or in the case of the Standing Orders Committee, from the membership at large), such acting national officers and temporary standing committees as are legally required by the Electoral Commission and as it may deem necessary for the efficient administration of the party. These will include Acting National Secretary, Acting Treasurer, and Acting Nominating Officer and members of Conference Arrangements and Standing Orders Committees, who shall remain in post only until the end of the next National Conference."

"c) The Transitional National Council will organise the election by regional ballot of 40 regional representatives to the incoming National Council, apportioned to the different nations and regions in a manner as proportional to the relative membership of the party as possible, and the election by national ballot of the National Officers and members of the Standing Orders, Disputes and Appeals Committees."