

Minutes of the Executive Committee 23rd August 2014

Attendance: Felicity D, Pete G, Bianca T, Kate H, Chris H, Tom W, Terry C, Oliver N, Andrew B, Kerry A, Toby A, Gioia C, Jon D, Guy H, Sharon McC, Karen M, Liz S, Eve T, Lynn G, Ruth S, Ed P.

Apologies: Salman S, Tim N, Merry C, Liz D, Stephen H, Barbara S, Pip T, Susan P

Chairs: Jon D and Felicity D; **Minutes:** Andrew B

1. Matters arising from previous minutes:

- 1) Liz S noted that apologies had not been included in the July minutes. Agreed to include apologies.
- 2) Kate H reported that the group to draft EC standing orders had not yet met because of the holiday period.
- 3) FD reported on the progress of the campaign against the abuse of children. After discussion it was agreed to organise a protest at Elm House.
Vote unanimous in favour.
- 4) Agreed that the venue for the branch organising day on October 4th be decided by the organisers of the event. The treasurer proposed allocating £ 500 towards the expenses. Other costs if any to be met collectively through the branches. Agreed. Following requests for support it was agreed to take a report on the Branches at the next NC and noted that when the additional staff person is in place they should be in regular phone contact with branches.
- 5) 999 NHS march. Reported that a LU save our NHS banner had been made for the march and that 10,000 leaflets had been produced for distribution. A donation towards the cost of the march for £ 250 had been sent to the March organisers.
- 6) Reported that over the three national Gaza demos 25,000 postcards had been distributed and that LU had a good presence on all marches.
- 7) Social media worker. Agreed that Guy H, Kate H and Andrew B would assess how to implement the NC decision and proceed if in agreement. If no agreement then discussion to return to NC.
- 8) Tom W reported that a new direct debit system through Go Cardless was now in operation.
- 9) Unofficial facebook group: Bianca T had contacted the admin and the group now clearly stated it was unofficial. Further discussions to take place with PM, Bianca T and Andrew B.
- 10) Merry C, Tom W and Kate H have had initial discussion on progressing the online branch.
- 11) Kate H reported that Eduardo Maura will be coming from Podemos for the tour which is in preparation for 13th to 18th October.
- 12) Kate H reported on preparations for November policy conference. She submitted proposed deadlines which had been agreed by Standing Orders Committee and should be sent out to the branches in advance of NC so branches had time to schedule meetings. Noted that foreign policy and international solidarity are being merged, that education and environment drafts are both ready, that social security is being drafted and that crime will be the subject of a motion rather than a commission draft.

Agreed that as a policy conference it would not take amendments to the constitution and would be open to all members. It was agreed that the next national conference in 2015 would take constitutional amendments and subject to NC agreement, branches would be notified to this effect. It was agreed to propose to the NC that this should be in the second half of 2015 owing to the general election and our campaigning work for that in the first half. It was also agreed to look into bringing the LU annual national conference into the main party conference season (i.e. September/October).

It was further agreed that reasonable expenses for outstanding commissions would be paid. Kate H proposed that there be a weekend political conference in February organised by Left Unity but open to non-members and other organisations.

Vote unanimous in favour.

2) Disputes Committee matters:

Scotland: Agreed that EC members Terry C, Bianca T and Jon D would form an EC sub-committee to liaise with Scottish Left Unity to assist in overcoming recent difficulties in structure and organisation. The EC agreed that planning the structure of Scotland Left Unity was not in the remit of the DC.

Process form: It was agreed, following a submission by an LU member that the brevity of the Disputes Committee process form was problematic and that the EC sub-committee would look

at it in detail and contact the Disputes Committee with a recommendation to change it if appropriate.

Vote on DC process form: FOR 12, AGAINST 2, ABSTENTIONS 4.

Kate H reported that JT had stood down as chair of the appeals sub-committee in the case of A. Confidentiality noted.

3) Elections sub-committee Report: Chris H reported on the work of the sub-committee and presented the committee's report. After discussion this was amended as below. Vote FOR 18 Against 1

It was noted that Kate H had received a message from TUSC asking for discussions re election and that she had replied that the NC would be in touch with TUSC and others after its September meeting which would confirm LU election strategy.

It was agreed that the elections sub-committee would choose a number of seats to propose to the NC, based on the criteria in the strategy paper and branch feedback.

Left Unity election strategy - progress so far

Submitted by: Left Unity elections sub committee

Proposal and timing:

That our working draft strategy goes to the EC meeting on 23 August for discussion and amendment and is then submitted to the September NC meeting as required by the June NC.

Election Strategy:

National overview

As the new party of the left in Britain, Left Unity is committed to standing in local and national elections. Indeed, we have already dipped our toe in the water by standing a few candidates in the local elections in May 2014. Feedback and lessons learned from the candidates who stood is being collected. An intention of standing in elections is to increase our local profile and highlight key local issues. The next focus will be local elections and the General Election to be held on 7 May 2015. The latter is the remit of this body.

Our remit from the NC is as follows:

“To establish an elections sub-committee, reporting to the September NC, comprising NC volunteers (where possible with electoral experience) led by Chris Hurley (Nominating Officer), with the remit to draw up a general election strategy. It may take interim reports for discussion to the Executive Committee. Its terms of reference will include:

1. Taking a national overview
2. Consultation with regions
3. Establishing political and economic criteria for constituency selection
4. Assessing the political impact of standing in a particular constituency
5. Making proposals on discussions with other parties e.g. Greens, TUSC, Respect
6. Liaising with Treasurer on financial viability of election campaign
7. Drawing up procedures for candidate selection
8. Other items as agreed by NC”

The discussions of the sub-committee so far have included:

a) Standing Left Unity candidates in the General Election - key criteria

- We should identify key constituencies where we have a strong local identity e.g. as part of local campaigns, by consulting branches and regions.
- We should avoid standing in Labour/Conservative marginals.
- We should avoid standing against anyone who publicly commits to neither support nor implement a cuts programme.
- We should stand in primarily working class constituencies and where there are low voter turn outs.
- We must consider the cost implications of standing any candidates. Each candidate's deposit currently costs £500.

- We could stand around a dozen candidates in the general election. We should stand a larger number of candidates in the local elections.

b) Relationships with other left parties and coalitions:

- We should try to avoid clashes with other parties of the left. This applies not only to TUSC but also Class War, Respect, CPB, NHA Party and the SLP and others planning to stand and discussions with all these parties including the Green Party should be held to make sure we are not just one of a long list of Left Parties on the ballot paper.
- The March Conference decision that: *“Left Unity should open discussions with other left groups, coalitions and parties 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”* needs to be taken into account when considering discussions with other parties/groups.
- We note the recent email from TUSC requesting discussions about next year’s elections. Some of us feel that no discussions should take place until we have decided a clear strategy for LU (i.e. after the September NC). Others feel that immediate discussions with TUSC (and other parties) should be held to clarify any plans, offers or proposals that they already have, so that the September NC can meet and make decisions on this matter. We therefore ask for the EC’s steer on this matter, particularly whether the EC wishes to nominate some people to begin a dialogue with any other parties.

(c) Other issues to consider:

- We need a funding drive, which could also act as a tool for publicity, particularly if we ran it both for us as a party and for any local "celebrities" we are standing.
- We should consider training for candidates and agents.

(d) Ongoing

- Branches are being consulted for their assessment of their local situation and whether they would wish to stand candidates in the General Election and/or local elections.
- An assessment of the cost of each candidacy and how many candidates we can afford is currently being prepared. The finances will be a key determining factor in our decision on numbers of candidates. We will have to consider how to share out the available national funding once it is clear how many branches want to stand general election candidates. There will need to be a cut-off date for this.
- Tim Nelson's guidance notes will be sent out to branches to assist their deliberations
- The role of Regional committees (where they exist) is also being assessed for potential to co-ordinate support from branches in the region.

4) Model Standing Orders query

Following a query from Stockport Left Unity, their quorum application was agreed and it was noted that the model standing orders are advisory not compulsory.

5) Wigan Diggers and Eco-Socialist event

Terry C gave a verbal report on the preparations for the Wigan Diggers and Eco-Socialist event.

6) Michael Brown protest

It was agreed to support this protest.

7) Correspondence

The new Hungarian Left Party has been in touch and we will continue to be in contact.

Next meeting dates

Next EC 11th October; following NC 13th December.