

# Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform Annual General Meeting 2023

Saturday 25 February 2023, 10.30am – 12.30pm, via Zoom



## MINUTES

LCER's Chair, Sandy Martin, opened the meeting at 10.30am, welcomed those present, and handed the chair over to Abbie Jones.

AJ outlined the arrangements for the meeting: the first hour would be allotted to the guest speakers, who would each speak for about 15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of questions and discussion. Those wishing to take part in the debate should indicate via their yellow Zoom hands.

Andy Burnham told the meeting of his Damascene conversion to PR in 2009, when he realised that the lack of justice for those affected by the Hillsborough stadium tragedy was underpinned by the shortcomings of the FPTP electoral system. He listed four areas which he views as a priority for change: proportional representation for the Commons; a democratically elected House of Lords; an end to the whipping system in Parliament; and devolution.

Ann Black, as a longstanding member of the NEC and NPF, outlined the route via which the forthcoming manifesto will be produced. The process of getting a commitment to PR into the manifesto will not be straightforward, even despite last year's overwhelming vote at Conference; decision-making power is concentrated among a small number of people, and the leadership is disinclined to commit to PR. However, the campaign must continue to think and act optimistically, while preparing for a range of scenarios.

AJ thanked the speakers, a short comfort break took place, and SM resumed the chair for the business section of the meeting.

- 1) **Apologies** had been received from Lewis Colwill and Paul Espley.
- 2) **Minutes of the last AGM** (26 February 2022). These had been made available to members in advance of the meeting, and were agreed as a true record of the last AGM.
- 3) There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 4) **Reports from the Executive:**
  - i) **Chair:** SM drew the meeting's attention to the Executive report which had been made available to members. He reflected on a momentous year for the campaign and thanked all who had been involved, in particular the Labour for a New Democracy staff, whose efforts had raised the campaign to a new level. He confirmed that LCER would be applying for affiliation to the Labour Party as a Socialist Society in the days following the current meeting.
  - ii) **Labour for a New Democracy:** Joe Sousek and Laura Parker [with some disruption from an unstable Zoom link] noted the success of last year's Conference vote, but reminded members that this had only been one stage in the campaign, and an enormous amount of work remained to be done. The focus must now switch to the manifesto-building process, and to work with the Parliamentary Labour Party. All members were urged to ask their branches and CLPs to submit responses to the NPF's current call for responses to the draft manifesto documents, and to support further efforts in the coming months.
  - iii) **Treasurer:** Ken Ritchie presented the audited accounts for the year ending 30 June 2022, explaining that the accounts looked rather different than in previous years, owing to the L4ND campaign now being housed within LCER. He drew the meeting's attention to the contingency funds that had been set aside for support of L4ND, should this become necessary. He thanked the Auditor, Damien Welfare, for his work; the fact that we now have three years' worth of

audited accounts means that we may now apply for affiliation to the Labour Party. KR also presented a supplementary set of accounts made up until the end of 2022, he felt that these would be useful given that the audited accounts were now 9 months old (a problem which will be solved by the proposed changes to the accounting year). Finally, he presented a draft budget for the current financial year.

The Chair thanked the Treasurer and the Auditor for their efforts. He asked any members wishing to question or dispute (a) any aspect of the accounts or (b) the reappointment of Damien Welfare as auditor to indicate this; no members did so, and the Chair therefore declared the accounts for 2021-22 to be agreed by the meeting, and Damien Welfare to be appointed as Auditor for a further year.

- iv) **Parliamentary & Political Officer:** John Doolan spoke on his written report, noting the surge in support for electoral reform within the Labour Party, and giving our best estimates of the views of parliamentarians.
  - v) **Membership Officer:** Maria Iacovou noted that after a period of sustained growth in membership, problems with the online payment system had led to the first fall in membership for several years. LCER has now moved to a new membership system. The meeting agreed to keep the rates of membership subscriptions at last year's level. The Auditor noted that he was reassured that the drop in membership income arising from the problems with the online system was temporary.
  - vi) **Youth Officer:** Reed James gave a brief report on the activities of the newly established LCER Youth group, inviting all members aged under 27 to join the group.
- 5) **Acceptance of Executive Report for the year to February 2022:** the Chair asked any members who wished to object to any aspect of the report, or to vote against it, to indicate. No members did so, and the report was thus accepted *nem con*.
- 6) **Constitutional amendments.** The Chair drew members' attention to the list of amendments to the Constitution and the Financial Standing orders which had been circulated on behalf of the Executive, and briefly outlined the amendments. No motions or proposals for constitutional amendments had been received from any other members.
- i) Clarification on timing of AGM: the first item on the list of proposed amendments clarified that the arrangements set out in the Constitution should revert to those agreed at the AGM of February 2022, namely that the AGM should be held in February each year, or as soon as feasible thereafter.
  - ii) All other proposed amendments to the Constitution related to improving diversity in the organisation. Although advances had been made in encouraging the involvement of young members, the Executive believes that much more should be done to encourage diversity; the proposed amendments not only commit the Executive to do this, but specify that it should report to the AGM.
  - iii) Amendments to Financial Standing Orders: as the AGM is now to be held in February, a financial year ending in June means that the accounts are around 8 months out of date by the time they are seen by the membership. A financial year ending in December would fit much better with a February AGM. It was also proposed that the date by which the Executive should see the proposed budget should be changed.
- All proposed constitutional amendments were passed *nem con*.
- 7) **Announcement of the results of the ballot to elect the LCER Executive.** SM read out the list of names of the successful candidates.
- Five women had stood for election. Under the gender quota in the Constitution these women were elected without contest and had not been included on the ballot paper:
    - Nic Hesper
    - Maria Iacovou
    - Abbie Jones
    - Aileen McLoughlin
    - Mary Southcott

- The remaining 14 candidates competed for the 9 remaining places on the Executive, and the following had been elected:
    - William Bain
    - John Doolan
    - Rick Gaehl
    - Billy Hayes
    - Reed James
    - Pablo John
    - Martin Linton
    - Sandy Martin
    - Ken Ritchie
  - Four members of last year's executive (Stuart Hill; Julie Ward; Lynne Armstrong; Charlotte Cornell); had not stood for re-election; the Chair thanked these members and wished them well.
  - SM also thanked members who had stood for election and not been elected (Joe O'Toole; Duncan Enright; Benjamin Eckford; George Peretz; Matthew Simpson), noting that without members willing to put themselves forward, there would be no election.
- 9) The Chair thanked all those involved in the campaign, including members of the Executive, the Auditor and the Returning Officer. He also welcomed Alex Zur-Clark, who will be starting work as part of the L4ND team next month. There being no other matters of business, the Chair closed the meeting at 12.35pm.