

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are around 6,500 Labour councillors in England, Scotland and Wales who are often at the heart of the communities they represent and are hugely influential. Labour councillors have a leadership role in our Party as a link to members, leading local campaigning and as a public face of the Labour Party. They perform a demanding role, engaging with local community groups, attending local events, taking up casework, working long and sometimes unsocial hours and often making a real difference to the lives of the people they represent. In some parts of the country the local Labour councillor will be the only Labour elected representative.

Local councils are responsible for spending £1 out of every £4 of public expenditure in the UK and run many of our front-line public services. Most council funding comes from central government. Since 2010, there have been unprecedented cuts of an almost 60% reduction in real terms funding whilst councils and councillors face demands for services increases with an aging population and due to the impact of the Government's other austerity measures. The legislative framework around local government has also become more restrictive so in many situations councillors have fewer options available to them. Councillors and the communities they serve have been at the sharp end of these year on year cuts. Labour members understand these huge pressures on councillors, on council leaderships and the massive challenge the Labour Party faces to defend public services.

### THE LINK BETWEEN LABOUR MEMBERS AND COUNCILLORS

In the submissions we have received from CLPs, members, councillors and the organisations which represent councillors there is an expectation that councillors both regularly report and be accountable to local members. Many Labour councillors and council leaderships already report and communicate regularly with members. We have received and seen many examples of best practice. That best practice needs to become the reality everywhere. It has been suggested that all Labour Groups and local councillors should provide a regular written report by email to all members who wish it and that the Labour Group should provide an annual written report to an Annual Conference of members and affiliates.

All councillors are already subject to an interview to be accepted onto the panel at each selection as well as a selection process at branch meeting. Most councillors have agreed to "councillor contracts" setting out commitments such as attending branch meetings, LCF and regular campaigning.

The recent surge in membership presents huge opportunities for local Parties. Members are looking for a meaningful way of engaging with local councillors on local issues and to feed into local policy.

A substantial number of submissions have been made calling for reform of the Local Campaign Forum (LCF) structure which was created in 2011 and for the return of a Local Government Committees type structure. Members ask for the "City Party", "District Party", "County Party", "Borough Party" or Local Government Committees which historically existed in the Labour Party. They say that the current structure needs opened-up to include more members. CLPs say that the new structures often mean they often have little contact with

neighbouring CLPs which is identified as a real problem. Many back-bench councillors and council leaders have also called for the return of a Local Government Committee structure as they believe a political forum co-terminus with council boundaries is necessary to have meaningful engagement with the wider Party.

The experience of the Review is that the way that LCFs operate vary tremendously in different parts of the country. In some places it continues to operate in a similar way to how the Local Government Committees did previously. However, in other parts of the country the LCF only meets in the lead up to local elections to make decisions relating to the selection of candidates and to organise the “short campaign”. Elsewhere it is an all member structure which meets regularly. The LCF meetings the Review attended tended to be where the all member structure had been adopted and the LCF therefore had regular meetings.

A rule amendment from Leyton CLP was remitted into the Review and a substantial number of submissions have been made in support of the proposal outlined in this proposed rule amendment that the composition of a new local government structure should comprise 75% delegates from branches and CLPs and 25% from affiliates. Councillors would be expected to attend but would not be delegates for conflict of interest reasons. MPs and other representatives would be entitled to attend with speaking but not have voting rights. There seems to be a consensus in the submissions that councillors should not have a role in selection or Party disciplinary processes for potential conflict of interest purposes. There is less consensus as to whether councillors should be allowed to be delegates to a local government structure and the councillor’s representative bodies argue that they should be allowed to stand for positions. Most submissions argue that councillors should not be allowed to be delegates as councillors but should attend the LCF to report as their role is to be accountable and report to the LCF.

We have received many submissions from councillors highlighting that they contribute £1.8 million annually to the Party nationally via the councillor levy. The councillor allowances which councillors receive vary tremendously in different local authority areas. The lowest seem to be in the range of £3,000 per annum. As well as councillors losing wages, they can also lose benefit payments and the level of councillor allowances they receive may not compensate for the reduction in income from other sources. There is real concern that these financial pressures are restricting the pool of those able to become councillors and the difficulties for people of working age taking on this role.

The principle the Review has adopted is that in local and regional government decision making should be devolved down as far as possible. The legislative changes to the structure of local government have often led to a centralisation of power and increased opportunities for patronage. The Review is interested in how we increase the influence of backbench councillors as well as how we give more power to members and affiliates.

The LGA Labour Group have supported new LGC and argue they should comprise 40% councillors, 40% CLPs and 20% trade unions.

The Review is persuaded that LGC's should be member-led local bodies and that the role of councillors is to report and be accountable to that forum so therefore this hybrid structure would not be appropriate.

The Review recommends that Local Government Committees should be reinstated to replace the LCF with 75% of delegates being elected by CLPs and branches and 25% by affiliates. In areas with a large BAME communities there should be dedicated BAME seats in both sections. There should be gender parity in both sections and representation from disabled members again in both sections. Seats should lie empty if they can't be filled.

Where there are currently all member structures this should be allowed to continue.

Whilst it should have the powers of the local government committee and be formed with boundaries co-terminus with local government, the LGC could have a clear wider political remit to include for example city wide non-local government campaigns i.e. NHS, anti-fascist activity etc.

The LGC would oversee all issues relating to local government including policy development, the panel of candidates and candidate selection. It would have a role in working with the Labour Group to ensure the manifesto is delivered if Labour is in control and in ongoing policy if Labour is in opposition. Any coalition agreements would have to be agreed both by the Labour Group and the LGC before seeking final approval from the NEC.

All members should be welcome and have the right to attend the LGC except in circumstances where this is clearly impracticable because of the numbers of members involved. The sitting MP, MSP, AM, MEP, PPC, all councillors along with any other elected Labour representatives such as Mayor and PCC should be entitled to attend ex-officio. Where the Cooperative party sponsor candidates they should be entitled to elect a representative to the LGC.

Each LGC should be required to hold an Annual Conference. Where Labour is in power the Labour Leader should provide a written report outlining what work has been done to implement the manifesto. Branches, CLPs and affiliates should be entitled to send motions. The voting entitlement for motions should reflect the composition of the LGC (75% CLPs and branches and 25% affiliates). There should be opportunities for members to learn about local government structures, the role of the councillor, have access to information, a dialogue with councillors, and engagement to encourage members to be active both in local government issues and their local community.

We need to ensure we have a pipeline of good candidates for local government selections. This work often needs to be done well in advance of the selection cycle. In some areas political education schools for women have led to an increase in the number of women candidates. The LGC should oversee work to ensure there is a wide range of candidates available for selections particularly working-class candidates, candidates who are embedded in their communities, women, BAME, disabled candidates, LGBT+ and candidates from disadvantaged groups. The Annual Conference is an opportunity to focus on this work over a longer period well in advance of the selection timetable. Where Labour has not yet obtained gender parity in the Labour Group an action plan of engagement with women

members to encourage them to consider standing for office including political education schools, shadowing and mentoring should be put in place well before selection processes commence. In areas with high BAME communities where there is under-representation there must be a programme of mentoring and shadowing opportunities, political education and other events which are likely to encourage BAME candidates to come forward.

The LGA Labour Group have set up a Women's Taskforce, to look at the barriers that women in local government face. The outcomes of this taskforce need careful consideration.

All Labour Groups should have parental leave, maternity, paternity and adoption leave policy in place. Detail of the policy should be provided to the Regional Executive Committee or model policy provided to be adopted. There are however other caring responsibilities which also need consideration and Labour Groups also need to have clear policy in relation to this also. What is possible will of course depend on the circumstances on the ground and where for example a Labour administration has a majority of one then less might be possible than where Labour has a healthy majority.

We have had very different views presented about how local government and other local policy should be developed for local councils. It has been put to us that councillors are elected by the wider community, are representatives and not delegates. This is of course true. They are also Labour candidates and would usually not get elected if they were not standing as Labour candidates. In a members-led Party, members and affiliates have every right to develop policy for their local council and community. The implementation of that policy is a matter for elected representatives. At a national level the manifesto is agreed through Clause V which brings together the various component parts of the Party. A similar process needs to be in place in relation to local and regional government. The manifesto should be agreed between the LGC and the Labour Group.

Wherever possible every member should have the opportunity to feed into the manifesto and the final manifesto should be voted on by every member. Many Labour Groups already have extensive consultation and engagement with local members to formulate manifestos.

We have had concerns raised that the application of councillor contracts in some places is reducing the diversity of candidates. Some excellent candidates may not be able to comply with contracts due to being disabled, having caring responsibilities, work responsibilities or other reasons. Whilst it is reasonable to have a robust application of criteria such as campaigning criteria to select candidates and once someone is a candidate, a more lenient approach is often appropriate to ensure that we can select candidates particularly from under-represented groups. In many areas this is already happening. Members need the widest choice available to them when selecting a candidate. Some of the strongest candidates who are deeply embedded in their communities may not have a track record of taking part in regular door to door canvassing. They may however be heavily involved in community organisations, as trade union activists or have a range of other valuable life experience which would make them exceptional candidates. The current criteria should be reviewed to ensure that members receive the maximum possible choice. For existing councillors, it is reasonable to expect a proven record of canvassing and voter ID work where councillors are reasonably able to do this.

In some areas of the country the Local Government panel works very well in that it allows a choice to members. We have however been given many examples of women, BAME candidates and disabled members disproportionately being unable to make it onto the panel. Some of these women are from areas where Labour still stands all male Labour candidates in multi-member wards despite this being clearly against Party policy. More training such as that currently provided by the ALC would no doubt help address this problem. We have also received concerns raised by both CLPs and affiliates that candidates are being excluded from the panel for political reasons which must not happen. A panel needs to operate on the basis that the role of those interviewing is to maximise the choice available to members so that there is a genuine choice. It has been suggested that trade unions should be able to place candidates onto panels adopting the same standards as the LGC. This would potentially help ensure a wider range of potential candidates. This of course happened previously for Parliamentary selections. All affiliated trade unions should be able to add candidates to the panel and Guidance needs to be drafted on how this should be done.

The selection process for council candidates should be an open process and if the sitting councillor is successful at their panel interview they should be automatically shortlisted. The trigger ballot process which was introduced in 2016 is not necessary. There are equalities reasons to remove it.

We have had a small number of representations around the rules relating to declaration of interests. The rules around the declaration of financial interests of candidates need reviewed.

It is recommended that each Region establish a Diversity panel made up of the Regional BAME Officer, Regional Women's Officer, Regional LGBT+ Officer, Regional Disability Officer, Young Labour representative and the Regional Local and Regional Government representatives to oversee an equality action plan. This panel should work closely with Labour Groups, receive regular reports on progress of candidate selection and report to the full Regional Executive Committee.

We have also received submissions from CLPs and trade unions arguing for the election of Council Leaders by the wider membership. Currently only councillors elect the Leader. The proposal is that the Labour candidate for Council Leader should be elected by the wider Party. There are three main models proposed –

That there is an electoral college to elect the Council Leader candidate with one third of votes for councillors, one third of votes for trade union members and one third of votes for Labour Party members.

That there is an election by Labour Party members and affiliated supporters by OMOV ballot.

That there is an OMOV ballot by Labour Party members.

Strong objections have been received to this suggestion from the LGA Labour Group, some Council Leaders and some councillors.

Elections for the Council Leader candidate would only be relevant in areas where there was significant number of Labour councillors in the Labour Group with a threshold of at least 10 councillors suggested. It could that the NEC would wish to allow pilots to be run to elect Council Leaders. If so, it is strongly recommended that restrictions are put in place on candidate selection spending.

It has also been suggested that when there are not Council Leader elections by the wider Party Labour Group Leaders should always be elected by the Labour Groups annually to the extent that is possible within the legislative framework.

A range of other issues relating to the wider functioning of Labour Groups, the LGA Labour Group, the ALC, the councillor levy and the application of the Nolan Principles have been raised which go beyond the terms of reference of this Review which was to look at the relationship between Labour representatives and the Party at local level. It is recommended that a wider piece of work on Local Government structures is undertaken with the opportunity for all parts of the Party to make submissions as to what changes, if any, are required.

#### MAYORAL STRUCTURES AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

There have been far fewer submissions on the Mayoral structures and regional government than were received for Local Government.

The submissions received say that there needs to be a standardisation of the Selection and other processes for all Mayoral and Metro-Mayoral candidates. It is noted that a trigger ballot process has already been agreed in relation to the Mayor of London. The submissions we have received which have come mainly from those heavily involved in CLP and Regional structures and say that there should be an open selection process for both Mayoral and Metro-Mayoral candidates. They ask that this process should commence with nominations being submitted by CLPs and affiliates and that the current system of OMOV system of selection should be maintained with the Selection Panel being the relevant Local Government Committee/Regional Government Committee. They say it should be the Regional Board who ensure a democratically elected Selection Panel is in place and a timetable, set of guidelines and guidance are agreed which should be submitted to the NEC for approval. They also argue that there should be a policy Conference to instigate the process of consultation about the Mayoral/ Metro-Mayoral manifesto process and the equivalent of a Clause V meeting to sign off the Mayoral or Metro-Mayoral process.

There needs to be clear accountability structures for Regional Government and Metro-Mayors. London is unique in that the Mayoral boundaries and those of the London Labour Party Region are co-terminus. The London Regional Conference is therefore clearly the body where London wide Mayoral responsibilities sit. In relation to other parts of the country structures need developed. Each Regional Board/Regional Executive Committee who has a Metro-Mayor should be required to report to the NEC on work undertaken to establish such structure.

The London Regional Conference should be involved in work towards the Manifesto and the equivalent of a Clause V meetings is required to sign off the manifesto. There should be similar provision in relation to the other Metro-Mayors.

Processes, similar to, the Clause V procedure set out in the rule book should be established where they do not exist. The process to agree the manifestos of Mayors and Metro-Mayors should be codified and set out in the rule book.

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