

Chair's report



2016-17 has been a tumultuous year in politics, leading to new problems to solve here in Brentwood and Ongar. Pleasingly we have been able to rise to these challenges and have retained a good camaraderie locally in the face of a wholesale re-orientation to match the change in leadership. This culminated in a hugely competent local campaign at the general election in June, in which over 80 members took an active role and we delivered to almost every area of the constituency. The outcome for our candidate Gareth Barrett was a strong second place, recording the highest Labour vote since 1997. Gareth led a business-like and comprehensive campaign, in which we were praised for our newspaper – I received many calls of support and congratulation from all over the constituency. We also campaigned together in Ilford North to help Wes Streeting to improve his majority, showing our solidarity and loyalty to the party, regardless of how some felt about Wes' position on the leadership in the past.

For me, probably the most satisfying background activity has been the political education efforts that are so essential if we are to persuade more voters

to turn to Labour. Discovering historical connections with current conditions and discussing their causes and solutions helps us to debate policy and be more convincing on street stalls and on the doorstep, and at the same time, develops our active members as a potent group of trusting friends. More please!

We continue to encourage young Labour members to take part and they always step up with maturity to be active campaigners. I hope this year we can build an even stronger Young Labour group, as so many are beginning to believe that Labour takes their problems seriously.

Finally, our membership continues to grow. Some are content to simply support Labour with their subscription, others to be active in campaigns and a few who take on officer roles. This last group is all too few – please consider how you could help to manage the party – there is so much more we could do with more helpers.

Thanks to everyone who has worked so hard in the last year!

Richard Millwood, Chair

Secretary's report

1. Meetings – All Members & Supporters

We held 7 meetings during the year at different sites –

- Pilgrim's Hatch Parish Room
- Shenfield Parish Room
- Shenfield Parish Hall
- Kelvedon Hatch Village Hall
- Fryerning Parish Hall

Our meetings schedule was altered due to the Labour Party Leadership Election. The September meeting became a discussion to consider putting a Contemporary motion to the National Conference. The style of our meetings was to be kept informed through regular reporting from our elected Councillors and to have discussions/debates on set topics with the conclusions/resolutions forwarded to relevant interested parties, including the National Policy Forum.

These included:

- Manifesto for the Labour Group on the Brentwood Borough Council
- The draft Labour group manifesto for the ECC elections
- The Parliamentary MPs and Jeremy Corbyn
- The submission of a Contemporary Motion on Nuclear disarmament (see below)
- Re-vitalisation of the Ward Champion role.
- The Boundary Review
- The Local Development Plan
- NHS
- Early Years, Education and Skills
- Adult Social Care – a Working Group led by Marian Jenkins was established.
- The paper produced was submitted to the National Policy Forum and was taken into consideration in the writing of the general election manifesto.

2. Management Committee

At the 2016 AGM the following were nominated and selected:

- Richard Millwood, Chair
- Emma Benson Vice-chair
- Neil McAree, Vice Chair
- Jane Winter, Secretary
- Pat Woods, Treasurer
- Ann Huish, Fundraising
- Tim Barrett, Campaign Co-ordinator
- vacant, Women's Officer
- Liam Preston, Campaign Co-ordinator
- Susan Kortlandt, Political Education
- Toby Blunsten, Youth Officer
- Neil McAree, Membership Secretary
- Vacant, Computer Officer
- Mike Le Surf, Press Officer

In-year, Neil McAree, Liam Preston, and Mike Le Surf resigned as officers.

3. Essex County Council elections 4 May 2017

The 75 seats on the ECC were contested. 56 Conservatives (74.6%) 7 Liberal Democrats (9.33%) 6 Labour (8%) 2 Canvey Island Independence Party (2.67%) 2 Independents (2.67%) 1 Green (1.33%) and 1 Independent Loughton Residents' Association (1.33%) were returned. The Labour group lost the Harlow seat. We had candidates in all 5 seats available to our constituency. We came 3rd in Brentwood South, 4th in Brentwood Rural, 3rd in Brentwood North, 3rd in Brentwood Hutton and 4th in Ongar & Rural. In every case our vote increased.

4. EU Referendum: 23 June 2016

The Campaign Forum included this in their programme for the year, delivering leaflets and joining in the street stalls with other Remainers.

5. Conferences

We sent delegates (Susan Kortlandt and Clarisse Martin) to the National Conference in Liverpool, and (Gareth Barrett, Emma Benson and Toby Blunsten) to the Regional Conference. Our submission of a Contemporary Motion was not accepted. However our delegates were asked to bear in mind its content if a vote was called on the issue.

Our text was:

Conference notes on the 19 August 2016 the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament recommended that the General Assembly convene, in 2017, a conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. Conference condemns the United Kingdom boycott of this Open-Ended Working Group and calls on the government to enter into negotiations in good faith to eliminate weapons around the world.

6. Fundraising and Social Events

- Garden Party and Barbeque at David and Christine Minn's in July.
- Traditional Jazz Night at Shenfield Parish Hall in October.
- Christmas Quiz held at Ingatestone Community Centre in December
- The Century Club draw
- The Socialist Book Club meetings

7. Parish Councils

There are nine PCs with the BBC area. Elections are held every four years. Casual vacancies can occur and these can be filled by a process of co-option if no election is called. Although these councils are non-political, we have 4 of our Members on the Ingatestone & Fryerning PC and one on the Kelvedon Hatch PC. During 2016 a Labour Councillors' Group was formed which also included some officers from the Management Committee and the Campaign Forum. There are some casual vacancies on some of the PCs and Members who might be interested in standing for co-option and election can be supported in their application.

Other matters for consideration at the AGM:

- Election of a Management Committee for the next 12 months.
- Delegates to the National Conference
- Delegates to the Essex Labour Campaign Forum
- Volunteers for Ward Champions for those Wards without one
- Parish Council vacancies
- Brentwood Borough Council election in May 2018

Jane Winter, Secretary

Political Education report

As advocates for the Labour Party in Brentwood, we need to understand and participate in creating party policy if we are to convince voters. To that end, we have continued to develop the Socialist Reading Club. It has sometimes been difficult to devote time to reading for pleasure, with a plethora of elections, but we have read, and discussed a variety of books: Owen Jones: The Establishment; Richard Murphy: The Joy of Tax; Upton Sinclair: The Jungle; Naomi Klein: This Changes Everything and Giles Tremlett: Ghosts of Spain. Reports of our discussions can be found on the webpage. It was agreed to focus on different policy themes at members' meetings. From a meeting on the NHS and Social Care, a small policy group was formed, chaired by Marian Jenkins. The resulting proposals were sent to the Policy Forum, were well-received and some were included in the Labour manifesto. We hope to do more this coming year – unless elections scupper meetings again. We have also agreed to use films as a focus for political discussion. Earlier this year a group of us went to see the film “I, Daniel Blake” - a gritty film about the benefits system. Lively discussion (in a pub) followed. We felt it was very worthwhile and would like to put on film nights for Brentwood Labour members this next year. All members are warmly invited to come along to the Reading Club and/or films.

Sue Kortlandt, Political Education Officer

Youth and Student report

The year has been an interesting year in terms of youth engagement both locally and nationwide.

Myself and Clarisse Martin leafletted the high street and held a number of meetings, building up to a demonstration on the lack of social and affordable housing. The demonstration was successful, receiving attention from the Gazette and we are now seeing the Council building its first homes for decades. However, these new homes will not be enough to fulfil demand and we still see needless luxury homes being built. I hope that we as a CLP will continue to campaign on this issue and achieve the homes desperately needed to keep the young people within the community.

Unfortunately, the leadership campaign prevented us from meeting further, stifling the small movement we had managed to make.

I will be stepping down from my position as Youth Officer and I hope one of our new young members will be able to be successful in the position. However, I will continue to support the creation of a young labour group and have been discussing a wider movement of youth political engagement with a colleague from Chelmsford CLP.

In solidarity, Toby Blunsten, Youth and Student Officer