

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD)

Suggested submissions for the Labour Party Democracy Review - Phase Two

Phase Two of the Party's Democracy Review includes the governance of CLPs, the role of socialist societies and strengthening the involvement and participation of members.

The deadline for submissions this phase is 23 March.

The proposals set out in this paper are for consideration and submission to the review

Submissions to the review can be made [here](#) or if longer than 250 words emailed to democracy@labour.org.uk.

Suggested submissions for the Labour Party Democracy Review on the governance of CLPs

Governance structures need to facilitate a democratic inclusive Labour Party in which all members can contribute to:

- Policymaking at all levels (with Annual Conference as sovereign policymaking body)
- Management of local Constituency and Branch Labour Parties
- Election campaigns and selection of candidates at local and national level
- Local campaigning including connecting and working with affiliated Trade Unions

CLPs are diverse. They range from a few hundred members to thousands, cover safe Tory seats with no Labour councillors and safe Labour seats with no opposition councillors, they are rural and urban, and everything in between. Detailed below are recommendations which we anticipate will work for most CLPs. We believe these should be formulated into 'default CLP rules' (to replace the current 'model rules'). Rules should be clear, unambiguous and enforceable *not* open to interpretation. But it must be possible to negotiate exceptions with regional officers. Members' understanding of their own CLP should be respected and supported by Party staff. Our recommendations cover: Branch Labour Parties (BLPs), General Meetings (GMs), Executive Committees (ECs) and wider support for CLPs.

Branches Labour Parties (BLPs)

Active BLPs should be at the heart of internal party democracy. They are the first point of contact for many 'ordinary' members. At their best, they provide a nexus for campaigning, debate, political education and fundraising. Too often they are non-existent, poorly attended and/or talking shops dominated by councillors' reports. There needs to be active support for creating branches where they do not currently exist and for building these, where they do.

The General Meeting (GM)

In the 1980s and the 1990s the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy strongly advocated for CLPs to have a delegate structure. We feel there is no perfect system but now support continuing the current dual system in which CLPs have either delegate GMs or all-member meetings (AMMs), or the two combined (a decision making delegate GM within an AMM). This reflects both the state of the party and the shifting expectations of members. Whichever system is used, it must operate inclusively and accountably. Further, it should be straightforward to switch between systems and the Rule Book should set out a process for doing so including improved mechanisms for consulting members.

In all CLPs leadership nomination meetings should be AMMs. This is so that all members can vote in nominating potential party leaders. All members should be invited to and able to speak at all GMs; but in delegate meetings, only delegates can vote. At least a week's notice of all meetings should be sent to all members and at least two weeks' notice of AGMs.

All CLPs should hold at least 9 GMs per year, normally on a regular day each month. At GMs the Chair and Secretary must be conversant with the Rule Book and standing orders and these should be available for reference, if necessary, including online.

We would like to increase the involvement of the unions and other affiliates in CLPs.

We support maintaining the quorum at 25% of delegates and a number (not a percentage) of members as a quorum for AMMs graduated by total membership e.g. 10 for CLPs below 500 members, 20 for CLPs with 500-1000 members, 25 for 1001-2000 and, 30 for 2001+.

Currently the Rule Book allows voting for elected positions to be by elimination ballot or Single Transferable Vote (STV). Because of the practical difficulties of implementing these, some CLPs use First Past The Post which in politically-divided CLPs can lead to one group of members being disenfranchised. The national party should provide models of good practice for CLPs and resources to support their implementation. For example, they could create model online forms for nominations for various roles and could support the use of STV by creating an Excel Macro to count votes.

The Executive Committee (EC)

The EC is the servant of the GM. The EC should make decisions on administrative and organisational matters to enable the GM to focus on substantive and policy issues. The GM should have the final say over any contentious issues. In particular elections for national and regional conference delegates and nominations for internal elections should always happen in a GM not an EC meeting. The Rule Book should allow anyone challenging an EC decision a chance to explain their reason for doing so and the EC decision should be overturned on a simple majority vote of members present.

All EC meetings should have minutes that go out to all members.

The current officer positions that are common across CLPs are: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Chair Membership, Vice Chair Campaigns and Women's Officer. We would recommend adding to this an Online Communications Officer, a Political Education and Training Officer, and either individual Equalities Officers for BAME, LGBTQ and Disabilities or a combined Diversity Officer. These currently exist as Coordinator positions in many CLPs but we feel that they are strategically key so should be full officers. A 50% gender quota for officers should continue and posts left vacant where this is not met. The EC should include representation from branches where these exist with, at a minimum, branch secretaries attending EC meetings. When branch representatives have voting rights at least 50% should be women.

The aim should be to have grassroots members rather than councillors running CLPs and BLPs. We would welcome radical reform of Local Campaign Forums (LCFs) so that councillors no longer sit on these. If their current form is retained, councillors should not be allowed to stand to represent CLPs on LCFs and should not be eligible for the roles of Chair, Secretary, Vice Chair and Treasurer.

Wider support for CLPs

Currently CLPs receive just £2.50 per member per year and some free/subsidised services. CLPs are entirely volunteer run and coping with large memberships and democracy takes time. CLPs need more support, financial and otherwise, from the regional and national parties. The amount per member given to CLPs should at least double to £5. There should be free fundraising packs, campaign day materials and other resources, and rewards for building membership, for example, giving £6 per member to CLPs in the top 35% of relative membership increases with an additional bonus for being in the top 50% in constituencies where at the last general election, the labour candidate either lost by less than 4000 votes or won by less than 2000. Good notice must be given to CLP secretaries and other relevant officers of all national processes to ensure full democratic participation. All CLPs should get a free delegate space for National Conference including travel and accommodation). Ideally, they should get fully-funded places for Women's Conference and for Regional Conferences as well. CLPs should be financially supported to widen access, for example, with the party covering the costs of childcare for members and of preparing large print mailings.

The Labour Party must improve the system of hearing members complaints. Currently complaints are considered by the GM before going to the NCC, with regional scrutiny. An ombudsperson should be introduced. Members have a right to complain and for their concerns to be heard by a member of Labour Party staff. Complaints against members and against CLPs should follow the principles of natural justice as laid down in the Chakrabarti Inquiry. Over recent decades a large number of CLPs have been suspended or put into special measures often for many years. Suspended CLPs should be reviewed within six months, and special measures should be a last resort and only used when there is a plan to take the CLP back to normal operation within a year.

Selection of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs)

PPC Selection is a central aspect of Labour Party democracy. Each CLP should choose its PPC through an open selection by all its members. Any sitting MP representing a significant geographical part of the constituency should automatically be shortlisted.

Suggested submissions for the Labour Party Democracy Review on the role of socialist societies

1. Some of the affiliated organisations represent a tiny percentage of the relevant interest group in the Party, with self-perpetuating leaderships. So there is a regulatory issue to be addressed.
2. Concern regarding socialist society delegation to CLP GCs (each socialist society can send up to 5 delegates to each CLP GC, as long as they are members of both the socialist society and the relevant CLP). This is both inconsistent (some do, some don't) and non-transparent.
3. Socialist societies should be more welcoming and inclusive of new members
4. The Socialist Societies Executive is London-centric. Meetings are arranged at short notice at times when people from other parts of the country would not be able to attend without staying overnight.
5. Disability, BAME and LGBT Labour should each have a rep on the NEC, a Shadow Minister and an annual conference.
6. All socialist societies should elect their officers on a regular basis, from a ballot of their total membership, not just from those that are able to attend an AGM.
7. The Labour Party should do more to make members aware of the existence and purpose of socialist societies.
8. Socialist societies should have a non-voting right of attendance at National Policy Forum Commissions relevant to their subject.
9. There should be Socialist Society representation in the Regional Labour Party executives - without requiring a separate affiliation fee as at present.

Suggested submissions for the Labour Party Democracy Review on strengthening the involvement and participation of members

Introduction

Our party's membership is our greatest asset but it is under-utilised. In addition to shaping policy - dealt with in a separate section of this review - members' participation fall into the following categories:

- Campaigning in elections
- Selecting candidates
- Community activism and workplace organising
- Participation in Branch and CLP meetings
- Taking on roles within the party

There are a number of specific improvements which can be made to each of these areas. In addition, the conduct of members has been a focus. We believe that a mass membership party needs clear guidelines on members' rights and responsibilities and a mechanism for investigating complaints regarding breaches of either. We conclude with some suggestions regarding those.

Campaigning in elections

Campaigning in elections is one of the key ways in which members can participate in the Labour Party and contribute towards our shared success. But often campaigning can seem inaccessible or unappealing, and its purpose unclear.

- Guidance should be produced and circulated to explain how and why we do 'voter ID' campaigning.
- Guidance and training should be provided for members to ensure that they feel comfortable to go beyond 'voter ID' in their doorstep or phonebank conversations to focus on persuasion when this is appropriate.
- Training and guidance should be provided for all Campaign Organisers to include: how to efficiently run a board, building a welcoming environment for volunteers,

Selecting candidates

Selecting a candidate to represent the Labour Party in local, regional or national elections is one of the most important rights enjoyed by party members. It is vital that barriers to participate in this should be minimal:

- As a general rule all candidates should be ultimately selected by an all-member ballot of the members registered in the relevant area (e.g. CLP members for a parliamentary selections, ward members for councillor selections etc), with the possibility for members to vote by postal or online ballot.
- Where there is a process to produce a shortlist this should prioritise the involvement of members and party units.
- Where a candidate is restanding they should face an open selection contest unless they have the overwhelming support party affiliates and members: for instance in parliamentary selections nominations from $\frac{2}{3}$ of local affiliates **and** from party branches representing $\frac{2}{3}$ of constituency members.

Community activism and workplace organising

While our party was created to form secure working class representation in Parliament, electoral activity is not the only area where we can have an important impact. Local parties should be encouraged and supported to campaign on key local issues, and party members should be supported to participate in this.

- TULO Officers should be supported to link party members up with local trade union disputes and campaigns, including through provision of training.
- The national Labour Party should provide campaign briefings for local parties who want to organise local activity in support of national campaigns e.g. defending the NHS.
- Local parties should be encouraged to include 'community engagement' in one of their officer role descriptions and this officer should work with elected representatives to identify campaign opportunities in the local area.

Participation in branch and CLP meetings

Labour Party meetings are confusing to most new members (and to many longstanding members). The formality and the large number of acronyms and procedures can be off putting. Yet meetings are key to a democratic party and they need as many members as possible to participate. The following measures are recommended to begin to address this:

- A Political Education and Training Officer should be added as a core officer to all CLP executives, part of their role being to help people understand how the party works on a local level.
- The national party should prepare a series of resources (online and offline, printed and video) that can be used shared and adapted locally to help people get to grips with internal processes such as writing and proposing policy motions. A Labour Party wiki would be a great way of drawing on the collective energy and knowledge of party members to produce a resource for all who want to learn more.
- Often meetings with debates with external speakers can be more engaging than those dominated by reports and motions. To encourage branches and CLPs to organise these, national and regional staff should set up an online database of potential speakers organised by topic.
- While motions are a key mechanism for internal democracy, their structured debate with all speakers having to be heard by all members often makes for an un-engaging and uninformative discussion. The Rule Book should allow other ways of debating with motions including allowing small group discussion after an initial speaker for and against the motion.

Taking on roles in the party

Labour Party officers at branch and constituency level are critical to the party. As party membership increases these roles become more demanding and new members can find the thought of taking one on daunting. Here's some suggestions for involving as many members as possible in running our local parties:

- The Rule Book should explicitly allow job shares of all positions. This makes the roles more doable by sharing the workload and makes them feel more accessible to newer members. It also offers an internal system of support from the person with whom you're job sharing.

- There should be increased support at regional level for those with the most demanding officer positions of Secretary, Chair, Vice Chair Membership, Vice Chair Campaigns and Treasurer. This should include mentoring for new CLP secretaries and online forums for each of these officer groups where they can share their experiences and ask questions of and support each other.

Members' Rights, Responsibilities and Complaints

As a democratic socialist party, the Labour Party's ability to deliver depends on its ability to harness the talent, ideas, and commitment of its members. This depends on guaranteeing those members rights to transparency, accountability, participation, training, and disciplinary justice. We would suggest creating a Charter of Members' Rights that sets these out.

Transparency: members should have rights to access key documents on their local and national party including financial records and to know who are their elected representatives at all levels of the party and the elected representatives of affiliates participating in any vote.

Accountability: the Labour Party shall guarantee meaningful mechanisms of accountability between its members, elected representatives and paid staff. As well as providing written reports, elected representatives should take CLP or branch policy into account when voting, and should report any differences in their position to the CLP/branch. Regarding the staffing structure, members should be informed of the specific rights, remits, and responsibilities of staff members, as well as relevant lines of accountability;

Participation: members should have rights to take part in local party governance, policy development, selecting candidates, standing for selection as a candidate for public office, internal elections, and attending and speaking at Labour Party meetings.

Capacity Building and Skills Development: training should be guaranteed for incoming officers on branch and CLP Executives, prospective candidates, identifying and combating all forms of discrimination, campaigning and organising, and broadly in political education.

Disciplinary Justice: In line with the Chakrabarti Inquiry, natural justice must govern all disciplinary matters. Members should have the right to make complaints confidentially to an independent third party. There needs to be a transparent complaints procedure mapping each stage and including guarantees that cases will be dealt with in a timely manner. These assurances should be given to both the complainant and the subject of the complaint. Suspension should be a last resort and there should be an end to so-called auto-exclusions through which people are expelled from the party without any right to appeal. When members are expelled, the time lapse before their readmission should be proportionate to the offence. The outcome of any process should be reported to the complainant and the subject of the complaint before being made public.

Accompanying this, there should be a clear set of ethical guidelines focusing on mutual respect and making clear that all forms of discrimination and harassment are unacceptable. This Code of Ethics shall lay out a set of mutual responsibilities for all party members, elected representatives, paid staff and contractors. These shall include matters relating to discrimination, transparency, and data protection.

Any breaches of the Code of Ethics and the Charter of Members' Rights can be referred to a Ombudsperson appointed by and accountable to the National Executive Committee - and separate

to the usual staffing structure. The current process of dealing with complaints which relies on an investigation by CLP officers is not fit for purpose. Members have a right to complain and for this to be dealt with appropriately and confidentially by a member of Labour Party staff.