

Democracy Review Submission: Reforming BAME Labour

Purpose

The purposes of BAME Labour shall be:

- To empower BAME members to overcome institutional barriers and strengthen their voice within the Party, including by supporting them to stand for elected positions and influence policy.
- To lead on the Party's engagement with ethnic minority voters, and to move beyond the tokenistic culture of clientelism that characterises the Party's interaction with BAME communities.
- To challenge and eradicate institutional racism, including by ensuring the full implementation of the Chakrabarti report.

Membership

- The Labour Party should improve opportunities for members to self-identify as BAME.
- The Party must extend membership of BAME Labour to automatically include all BAME members of the Labour Party, and abolish the extra membership fee.

Structures

- Every CLP must have an Ethnic Minority Officer and an Ethnic Minority Forum (EMF) provided there are BAME party members who request it. Where all-White local Parties exist, support must be given to develop greater diversity in their membership.
- EMFs shall feed directly up into the national structures of BAME Labour through clear, transparent and democratic processes.
- For the development of regional structures to be considered.
- Ethnic Minority Officers shall be elected by BAME members of the CLP only, and must sit on the Executive Committee of their CLP.
- BAME Labour shall hold a delegate based conference every two years, with democratic procedures in place to empower members to shape the direction of the organisation. Policy passed should be fed into the national Labour Party at Annual Conference.
- The Labour Party must provide a minimum of one staff member dedicated uniquely to supporting BAME Labour, who shall be accountable to BAME Labour's democratic structures.

Representation

- The BAME seat on the NEC shall be elected directly through One Member One Vote (OMOV) by all BAME members.
- Additional BAME representation on the NEC and throughout all levels of the Party should be seriously considered during the second and third phases of this Democracy Review.

Funding

- The Party should consider a level of funding for BAME Labour which is appropriate to the organisation's remit and responsibilities to ensure the organisation can function to its full potential.

- Funding should be granted in the form of a salary for a dedicated staff member, and a minimum block grant that is enough to cover a conference every two years as well as an activity fund.
- A proportion of BAME members fees should also be directly allocated to BAME Labour, to guarantee secure funding and ensure buy-in and accountability between BAME party members and BAME Labour.

Autonomy

- BAME Labour shall have meaningful autonomy, with its own constitution, which shall be decided by BAME members and amendable by a BAME Labour conference every two years.
- BAME Labour shall have organisational autonomy, with the committee having direct access to its own membership list and finances, and the ability to organise its own campaigns and events independently.
- BAME Labour shall have political autonomy, allowing it to take political positions that are independent to that of the Party.
- CLP Ethnic Minority Officers must be able to contact all BAME members.

Supporting Argument

The Labour Party has long considered itself as a champion equality and diversity, and relies heavily on support from ethnic minority voters, without which the Conservatives would have won an extra 28 seats in the last election. However, opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members to self-organise within the Party are severely stunted by the current form of BAME Labour, an affiliated society that falsely claims to represent all BAME members of the Labour Party, when in actuality it only had 731 active members eligible to vote in its elections this summer.

This situation, alongside a widespread culture of tokenistic clientelism when interacting with ethnic minority voters, has been incredibly damaging, causing Labour to see its vote share fall amongst ethnic minority voters in the 2015 election. For this reason it is crucial that Labour uses the Democracy Review to fundamentally overhaul its BAME structures and provide the opportunity for all members to get involved, commit significant resources to building and maintaining the reconstituted organisation, and respect its institutional, organisational and political autonomy.