**Draft Minutes of Oxford and District Labour Party All Member Meeting**

**7.30 p.m. on 12 January 2018, Dean Court Community Centre**

1. **Attendance and apologies**

**Present*:*** Lubna Arshad, Jamila Azad, Shaista Aziz, Esmail Babaahmady, Kaven Babaahmady, Nekisa Babaahmady, Lucas Bertholdi-Saad, Ann Black, Phil Bloomer, Bella Bond, Chris Bond, John Bond, Becky Boumelha, Susan Brown, Paul Burton, Peter Cann, Nigel Chapman, Michaela Collard, Tiago Corais, Jane Darke (Chair), Roy Darke, Erica Davis, Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, Tony Eaude, Ibrahim El-Hendi, Helen Evans,Paul Fletcher, Julio Gonzales, Hester Hand, Ray Hand, Damian Haywood, Alex Hollingsworth, Biddy Hudson, Mark Hull, Dan Iley-Williamson, Felicity Irwin (minutes), Sally Joss, Alex Kumar, Mark Ladbrooke, Cath Little, Ben Lloyd-Shogbesan, Anne Lyons,Bee Maidlow, Katy Mansfield, Stephen Marks, David Meredith, Bobbie Nichols, Peter Nowland, Pol O Ceallaigh, Chukwudi Okeke, Simon Ottino,Deb Oxley, Viv Peto, Caroline Pinder, Matthew Rees, Andrew Rimmer, Chris Robins, Jane Stockton, John Tanner, Sue Tanner, Geoff Taylor, Marie Tidball, Anna Wagstaff, Nick Walker, Phil Wilmott, Ray Wright

**Apologies:**  Avril Alexander, Farida Anwar, Jana Bek, David Blackman, Pete Cranston, Anneliese Dodds, Deirdre Flintoff, Ian Flintoff, Bev Humberstone, Gordon Kennedy, Pat Kennedy, Peter Leary, Sue Ledwith, Bill Mackeith, Michael March, Caroline Morrell, Dawn Oliver, Liz Peretz, Anthony Phillips, Andrew Smith, Ed Turner, Janet Warren

1. **Agreement of agenda and timings** These were agreed.
2. **Minutes of the all member meeting on 8 December 2017**

These were agreed as a correct record

1. **Matters arising**
2. **Motion – President Trump and Jerusalem**. This is on the policy forum website at <https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/commissions/international/trump-and-jerusalem>
3. **Urgent business, including any other business**

Helen Evans

We are collecting raffle prizes for the Labour women’s quiz that will be on 26 January - please contribute any leftover Christmas presents. Contact Helen via County Council website. (<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?VW=TABLE&PIC=1&bcr=1>)

1. **Speaker: Sian Errington of Labour Assembly Against Austerity**

How Labour can deliver an economy that works for all

I’m going to start by quoting a key line from Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour 2017 conference speech because I think it is a good way into the discussion around austerity and how we create an economy that delivers for all – because economics is politics – it is about **what** power and **what** wealth is in **whose** hands.

Jeremy said –

*“2017 may be the year when politics finally caught up with the crash of 2008 - because we offered people a clear choice”.*

I want to spend a moment discussing quite how extraordinary the current political situation is and just how catastrophic the last decade has been for the country and all of us.

Since 2010 we have had a government that has pursued a policy of ‘austerity’- the term first popularised by Cameron, Osborne and others, first as a way of attacking the Brown Labour government and then in concert with Clegg, Cable and others to justify the actions of the Coalition and then Conservative governments. To lay the blame of a global financial crash at the door of Labour public spending.

Austerity has not been and never was an economic necessity or inevitability; it used economic language to cloak a very political purpose - the driving down of wages, the skewing the tax system so that it benefits the wealthiest even more and lowering spend on the public services that we all use, privatising these services, cutting benefits and slashing back public investment.

And it has been accompanied by attacks on our civil liberties and the legal rights of organisations that were prepared to stand up against what the government has been doing – restricting the activities of campaigning organisations and crucially the trade unions, alongside the nurturing of insecure working practices (there are now over 3 million or 1 in 10 workers who are in insecure work).

Last year, Cambridge and Oxford academics calculated there were 4.6 million people on ‘flexible’ contracts – mainly in supermarkets/retail and social care mainly women, who were left to beg for hours to make ends meet (contracts that concentrate power in the hands of individual managers).

And the overarching macro economic policy– such as the slashing of investment – matters because it determines the jobs we create, and the ones we don’t, the jobs we keep, and the ones we lose, and the living standards of us all.

The direct result of these political choices has been a historic economic stagnation and the longest squeeze on living standards in history – since 1870s. Only Greece has had larger falls in real wages and we are the only country in the OECD where the economy has expanded but wages have fallen.

In real terms, median wages are worth £1,200 less now than they were in 2008 and they are not expected to get back to 2008 levels until 2021 at least.

To put this in a historical context, wage growth of just 1.6% between 2010 and 2020 compares with an increase of 12.7% in the 2000s and over 20% in every other decade since the 1920s. 86% of ‘savings’ have come from women; Runnymede Trust has found that the hardest hit are Black and Asian women.

Cuts to benefits and public services are an assault on the rights and lives of disabled members.

Even if we disregard the politics, and just consider an economic policy by its own stated terms we can see that it has failed – the previous figures and that net debt has continued to rise as a percentage of GDP demonstrate that. The last 10 years have been an experiment in a theory of economics that have had real human costs. When placed in this context the eye-watering cuts and devastation to living standards carried out by this and previous Conservative led government is extreme.

And we can also see that it has given extra proof to the common sense economics that we have been arguing for the whole time. Multiplier effect of government investment and spending – best illustrated by housing.

Housing has a high multiplier effect – for every £1 spent on housing construction an extra £2.09 is generated in the economy (figures from Shelter and KPMG). Each home built creates 1.5 direct jobs and an estimated 2 to 4 jobs in the wider supply chain. And most of the money generated (56p for every £1) comes back to the Treasury. So if we scale it up, a government investing £1bn, would generate £2.09 bn, £1.1704bn returns to government – a profit of £170.4m on the original investment that can be reinvested or used to resource services. But instead we have the return of widespread homelessness.

And all of this comes after decades of an economy that has not delivered the rewards it should have done to the overwhelming majority of the population and a politics that had increasingly alienated people. [Chronic underinvestment, greater imbalances sectorally and geographically]. The share of our economic wealth that goes to people as wages has steadily declined since the late 1970s.

Part of the development of politics as an elite sport, increasingly the preserve of a small slice of society – and that for the overwhelmingly majority of people political choices can only be marginal, that people are consumers first.

To return to the full quote from Jeremy at the start - the full quote reads – “It is often said that elections can only be won from the centre ground. And in a way that’s not wrong - so long as it’s clear that the political centre of gravity isn’t fixed or unmovable, nor is it where the establishment pundits like to think it is. It shifts as people’s expectations and experiences change and political space is opened up.

Today’s centre ground is certainly not where it was twenty or thirty years ago. A new consensus is emerging from the great economic crash and the years of austerity, when people started to find political voice for their hopes for something different and better. **[2017 may be the year when politics finally caught up with the crash of 2008 - because we offered people a clear choice.]** We need to build a still broader consensus around the priorities we set in the election, making the case for both compassion and collective aspiration. This is the real centre of gravity of British politics.”

And actually this is where the discussion about campaigning really comes in. As activists in our trade unions, in the labour party, in our local communities all of us have been involved in campaigns over many years that have contributed to opening up the political space for progressive ideas, for the voices of ordinary people to be heard and for collective action to be asserted.

And crucially, to shift the political narrative away from one where cuts to our public services and social security and the broader austerity agenda I outlined above were ‘deemed’ necessary and as the only framework in which economic and political choices could be made – where the crucial questions were what should be cut, by how much and over what timescale – to a framework that sees investing to grow the economy, to generate the revenue to properly resource our public services, to make different choices about to run our public services and to decent work and jobs for all as the underpinning foundations to our future.

The People’s Assembly Against Austerity emerged after the 2010 general election as a broad united campaign against austerity, involving trade unions, political organisations and community organisations. The Labour Assembly Against Austerity came together as people and organisations who were involved in the People’s Assembly began to put forward the arguments against austerity within the Labour party, and ensuring there was a visible Labour presence on the People’s Assembly marches and so on and to help provoke discussion about what an alternative economic policy would look like.

And now actually what we have seen is not just a break from austerity, but a break from the economic model of the past few decades that had failed the overwhelming majority of people – and an articulation of a positive politics and a commitment to rebuild and transform Britain so that it does deliver for the many, not the few.

We all know that with Labour £500 billion of investment over 10 years will not for the benefit of a small slice of elite society, not just in the pursuit of a headline GDP growth that feels removed and abstract for millions – but to create and make all jobs good jobs as part of our transition to a sustainable, low carbon green economy; an economy that provides housing – including social housing; good quality public transport, renewable energy, childcare and the public services we deserve – investment that coupled with an advance in employment and trade union rights means that the rewards of the wealth created are shared.

The result has been policies that cut through to millions of voters and have reminded people why politics can be important. There continues to be a need to build and organise such campaigns to win people to these ideas – to build the consensus we need too.

There is no silver bullet and this government is not going to go easily – it is determined to hang on. We need to keep the pressure on them to bring about an election.

We need to bring down the government and win a Jeremy Corbyn Labour government.

Questions and debate

Peter Cann

Find unemployment statistics curious because 1.4 million is a high number of unemployed and this is not acknowledged by the media or by the Labour front bench.

Dan Iley-Williamson

As we start to win argument against austerity and for public investment, what are the prospects for the left to win on this.

Helen Evans

We have Labour city council and Conservative county council – how can we hold government to account.

Jane Darke

Of course the economy cannot improve without investment, austerity will never work.

Ann Black

Has become obvious that even what Labour promised at the last election will not be enough to improve the NHS. Will need to raise taxes.

Hosnieh Marbini

Public discourse not concentrated on poor social mobility. Problem is media is controlled by people who have a lot to lose. Social media positive in moving forwards.

Hester Hand

People are spending on a sea of debt. Employment figures, how is this counted, are part-time jobs counted if people are having to have two jobs.

Tony Eaude

With housing, investment brings a multiplier effect. Are there similar examples in other areas of the economy?

Phil Wilmott

Interested to read rise of corporation tax proposed by shadow cabinet would take us back to where we were under John Major. £5m investment plan is welcomed by parts of the city. Ratings agencies made wrong judgements in 2008, risks making bonds junk bonds.

Sian Errington replying to all

How numbers are portrayed in the media is misleading, for example reporting figures of unemployment as a percentage rather than total number. We are very bad at collecting data in this country.

Wages figures are calculated on income and we don’t collect figures on insecure work.

Media do not question government on unemployment figures. Millions are on flexible contracts, unstable income. This is not reported. Wages being low means people have had to get themselves in to debt – this is unsustainable. We have seen rise in numbers of food banks.

The name of the Assembly against Austerity was defensive and is a product of its time. Mounting defence against coalition government, and we have seen a shift towards a Labour government, from austerity to pro-investment and trying to grow the economy. We are going through a process where we have to work out what our priorities are and how much do we want to spend. We are part of the discussion and no one has all the answers yet.

Different multiplier effects are attached to different areas. Lack of housing is a choice that the government has made, and there is no need for there to be any homelessness. There are also positive benefits of spending on different areas of public spending: transport, communications, infrastructure, and also education and the NHS.

Local government – Association of Public Service Excellence did work a few years ago about benefits of local government increasing wages of own workforce – and this money gets spent in local economy. But we have Tory government, and Labour councils have no money. Labour councils have been hit the hardest and often have the most deprived wards in them, and have to make difficult choices. There are no easy answers on any of these. We should not allow Labour councils to be blamed for what are national government cuts. Can see how impact of cuts will be even worse in the coming years.

Media – it was hard to get basic economic arguments heard because the parameters were so narrowly drawn incredibly quickly. It has been difficult to get these basic and quite mainstream economic arguments heard by the press. When broadcasting election rules kicked in, the media had to give air time to our arguments. We must keep up the pressure not to let them to slip back to their former parameters.

Questions

Stephen Marks

Multiplier effect – in the short run a run on the pound would not be a problem, because there are more people who want to buy bonds than they are selling. Market is very short of long term debt, partly because of quantitative easing. The way to win the argument, is to start from the bottom up, e.g. subcontracting of public sector workers. There is scope for cooperatives of social care workers to save money.

Mark Ladbrooke

Agree we need to organise things from the bottom up, empowering people. We are pushing living wage on city council, to empower people. There is a section of business that is worried that some workers are paid such low wages. Should congratulate county council because they have won battle to bring local workers back into public sector employment. In Barton we are working with Workers’ Educational Association, Ruskin and Brookes – series of course ‘Know your rights’ courses. Trade union colleagues at BMW have just been robbed of their pensions.

Jamila Azad

Want to emphasis rise in homeless that we are seeing. Big issue in Oxford because of rising rents, housing benefit cap and universal credit.

Mark Hull

Yield on 10-year government bonds is 1.5%. This means we can afford to borrow a lot more. Serious economists have been saying this since 2008. British government should be borrowing to fund infrastructure.

Ibrahim El-Hendi

How can we publicise to the masses these messages, to make people more familiar with Labour values and policies. What about having a Labour Party funded newspaper?

Lucas Bertholdi-Saad

Council tax, interesting because valuation bands have not changed since 1991. These valuation bands out of date, takes money away from local community. Should we move towards land value tax.

Damian Haywood

Renationalisation. Carillion is about to go bust we read in papers today, but how much will this cost the tax payer?

Nigel Chapman

Did not really discuss Brexit. By the time the next election comes, we will be further down the road to Brexit. What should we be doing. We talk about Brexit affecting jobs and investment, and this will colour the whole attack on government.

Sian Errington responding to all

Lots of live issues for local campaigning. On council tax, take point on land tax, but there is a discussion about what a Labour government would do for local government, but also current discussion about what local Labour councils should do when Conservative government will not increase funding for local government.

Direct labour organisations have been outsourced in councils, but NHS used to have its own craft and maintenance workers who have all been outsourced. Brings the conversation back to contracting and privatisation, how do we want to run public services, are they holistically run. Cleaners have been outsourced, and this was a disaster. These workers often in quite marginalised position and should be more valued and respected. This should be at centre of policies that we are working up. At the moment work is flexible for the employer who has the power, not the worker.

Need a broader vision of what we should be as country and society.

Brexit will face greater economic shocks, extent of our vision and analysis should not just be about Brexit. We have a vision for the country and about delivering a fairer society. Will continue making arguments. We are not in government and therefore not in the room. TUC also saying we want to protect jobs and workers because it is a defensive stance. Frustrating but difficult because government will not tell us what they were doing. Does present huge challenges. When election comes, it is difficult to tell where in the process we are going to be. Extraordinary political time. References made to Trump. We have president who says the most appalling racist things and operates via Twitter, so far outside range of what we thought could happen.

NHS health campaigns together and People’s Assembly Against Austerity demonstration on 3 February. Demo important and a good opportunity expose what the government is doing.

Also TUC demo later in the year around campaigning for good jobs. Good opportunities to bring people together, reach out and speak to the wider public.

Labour Assembly Against Austerity has a Facebook page, where you can contact us and can email and be added to mailing list:

T: @labourassembly

F: https://www.facebook.com/labourassembly.againstausterity/

E: info@labourassemblyagainstausterity.org.uk

Dan Iley-Williamson

Proposed that we take Oxford Labour Party banner to 3 February and 12 May demonstrations.

This was agreed.

1. **Fundraising collection** £106.60 was collected.
2. **Party democracy review**

The deadline for submissions is 12 January for organisational aspects of Young Labour, BAME Labour and the women’s conference; 23 March for other aspects of diversity and participation, your local party, and building a mass movement; and 28 June for electing our leadership, policy-making and the way we work. Any member can contribute at <https://labour.org.uk/about/democracy-review-2017/> or by mailing [democracy@labour.org.uk](mailto:democracy@labour.org.uk).

Becky Boumelha circulated a paper regarding BAME Labour and invited the meeting to endorse this as a submission to the Democracy Review (paper attached).

Becky Boumelha

Democracy Review is looking at how members engage with it and how its structures work. Today’s deadline is for submissions relating to BAME Labour.

Current structures that are available to BAME members – locally we have ethnic minorities officer, forums, seat on NEC and on Policy Forum. Issue that is paramount is lack of engagement of BAME members. Because we have separate Black Socialist Society that you have to pay £5 to join, in order to vote for these BAME representatives at the top of the party. Only around 700 people had the opportunity to vote for this position on the NEC. There has been outcry about this, and organic networks have sprung up to discuss this and the democracy review. A meeting in South East of around 10 CLPs, including ethnic minority officers and activists. The paper that you have is a list of seven non-contentious proposals that we have put forward to the Democracy Review.

Ann Black

This would be sent in the name of Oxford Labour, so important that maximum number of people can contribute. There are implications for other equalities strands. If there is agreement that there needs to be a way of recording those who identify as BAME, then I am sympathetic to electing BAME representatives with the whole of the membership. But not clear how this would work at a local level. Who could vote for the local ethnic minority representative in the CLP.

Jamila Azad

Have been BAME officer of this Labour Party for long time. Have worked with other equalities strands, we are connected to other parties. Excellent to see so many BAME members here today and congratulate Becky on your work on this.

Becky Boumelha

These questions are the reason that I am asking for support from Oxford Labour.

Shaista Aziz

Congratulate Becky on fantastic work, she has been working tirelessly with Leader’s office. This is very difficult work because there is no list of BAME membership. There is a problem of the left on equalities. The idea that you can put all marginalised groups together under one banner. Concerning that we put all equalities strands in one group. In South East meeting, there was good turnout, and have had submissions from Oxford. Ask that Becky’s paper be taken.

Helen Evans

Thank you for bringing this. Only 1% of members are members of BAME, so clearly there is a problem and we all agree that change needs to happen. Need for accountability, reducing barriers, resources. Also hear Ann’s concerns. Do we need to get this in today? Is there opportunity for further discussion?

Hosnieh Marbini

Thank you to Becky who has worked tirelessly for better representation for BAME community. I am a doctor, I had no idea that I was not allowed to elect Keith Vaz, and am appalled. This is a unique opportunity. The deadline for BAME Labour is today. Intersectionality, is a key issue, because people can be discriminated against on several different fronts. There are many structures in place for engaging women in the Labour Party, this is not the case for BAME community.

Lucas Bertholdi-Saad

Was enthused by the BAME meeting. This is good proposal and if this is the last day we should bring this forward.

John Tanner

We need to be clear about what the deadlines are. If today is the deadline, we should put these ideas forward. It will go to national consultation. Do not agree that we need to treat different minority groups in the same way. We deal with different groups in different ways, it will never work if we try to use the same. Think we should take this paper today, and think we should support it.

Dan Iley-Williamson

BAME is widely acknowledged as not working, it needs reform, the best way is to do what Becky is urging.

Alex Hollingsworth

Agree with John Tanner, situation with Keith Vaz is outrageous. Proposed taking out first part of bullet point 3, to be considered at a later date, so that we can submit the rest of the paper today.

The meeting voted by 28 to 26 to keep the first sentence of bullet point 3.

Document passed by overwhelming majority vote. This will be sent in to Democracy Review by Ann Black.

1. **Parliamentary Report – Anneliese Dodds MP**

Anneliese’s written report was circulated. Anneliese has sent her apologies as she is speaking at a meeting on ‘Oxford 2030 working together on climate change and transport”.

It was reported that the fundraising dinner made £4,000.

1. **Susan Brown – City Council Report**

Housing and growth deal which we have led on in Oxfordshire – this is a big deal that we have done with government to bring investment into Oxfordshire. £150m investment in infrastructure to allow us to build houses that we know we need.

Manifesto Conference taking place on Saturday 20th January.

Universal credit – impact in Oxford. As city council have been trying to minimise impact on local residents and this is having some success. Some impacts that have been seen elsewhere have not been happening in Oxford. People have had access to funding. DWP breakdown of systems. Universal credit is something we don’t want to see happening in the way that it is. Thank Anneliese and colleagues for work on this.

Oxford Living wage – policy that not just those who are employed directly by the council but also those we do business with are paid living wage.

Phil Wilmott

Why did we vote for expansion of park and ride? Not popular.

Alex Hollingsworth

Very unpopular around Botley and North Hinksey. It’s contentious. We pioneered park and ride as a city, expanding park and ride as part of policy of reducing driving in the centre is the right way to go. If there was an alternative carpark further out, but there isn’t.

Julio Gonzalez

Concerned about homeless. Know council is doing a lot about what is a difficult issue, but we are losing publicity war against the Green Party.

Susan Brown

A lot of us share this worry, but a lot of this is untrue and we are trying to put the record straight. We have increased money available for tackling homelessness and are doing everything we can to work with other providers such as churches. It is a complex picture and we have seen a massive increase of numbers of people on streets of Oxford. There are many causes, cuts to mental health services and drug and alcohol agencies have increased numbers on the streets. We as a party agree that everyone has the right to a home. Greens have record of opposing proposals for house building. We can all help win the argument and explain to others that it is Tory government who are making cuts.

Jane Darke

Thank you to members in Botley for arranging new venue.

1. **Future meetings** These were noted as **Friday 9 February 2018** (St Clements Family Centre, discussion on Brexit with Giampi Alhadeff, Chair of the Labour Movement for Europe)**, Friday 9 March 2018** (Rose Hill community centre, AGM and, provisionally, discussion of the party democracy review), **Thursday 10 May** (Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, review of elections), **Thursday 14 June** (Abingdon United Football Club, topic to be arranged), **Thursday 12 / Friday 13 July 2018** (venue and topic to be arranged), **Thursday 6 / Friday 7 September 2018** (first Thursday / Friday to meet deadline for conference motions, venue to be arranged).