Democracy Review Report - Your Local Party and Building a Mass Movement

* Meetings:

Accessibility and inclusivity needs to be more explicitly considered e.g. for people with hearing disabilities, and people with childcare responsibilities. Time and venue should be varied to allow a wider range of people to attend. In small meetings, a circle layout should be used where possible to reflect equality of members.

* Branches:

They should be small units (one or two wards). Meetings should not replicate All Member or GC meetings, but should mainly focus on campaigning, and political education and policy discussions. Small units would enable more in depth discussions, and campaigning to focus more easily on local issues.

* Local party officers

Officer structure should reflect the jobs which need to be done, and not just the traditional posts of secretary, chair etc.. New officer roles could include political education, social media/communications, campaigning, new member liaison. Job sharing and splitting jobs into smaller roles would make it easier to recruit volunteers.

* Training:

New officers/post holders should be offered locally based training and support.

* Engaging new and non-active members:

New members should be visited or phoned up and welcomed. There could be a 'new member secretary' as a branch officer to carry this out. New members should all receive a ‘new member pack’. Non-active members should be asked how they would like to be involved/ what barriers they are aware of that stop them getting involved

* Communication:

Local party website could host a forum for sharing good practice, and developing policy ideas.

* Activities:

Examples are

* + Celebrate national and cultural days with events
  + More social activities
  + Attend meetings in community groups/ mosques/ churches as Labour members
  + Participate in Community Associations as Labour members
  + Increase educational role: sessions on 'what are our rights as workers/ as citizens etc'
* Campaigning:

Where we do not hold power we should actively campaign as the local party for improvements (eg a campaign to get Oxfordshire County Council to increase its funding for homelessness services).

Street stalls are an alternative means of a) recruiting members, b) engaging members in activity who may be put off by door-knocking.

Days of Action on specific policy issues need more advance notice to allow them to be worked on by an alliance of local groups

These ideas are more likely to be implemented if there is support, both practical and financial, from the National and Regional Parties. In particular, there is a need for help with training, and with the production of resources e.g. new members’ pack, and setting up a local online forum. There is also a need for more help for ordinary members with messaging e.g. information for members on how to counter current attacks on the party from the Tories/ the media, and to support people when having conversations with neighbours/ colleagues etc.

Finally, there is the issue of membership subscriptions. Nobody should be excluded from membership of the Labour Party because they can’t afford the subscription. There needs to be a way for local parties to assist members in financial difficulty, and to make it easier for people without bank accounts to become members.

*Report of a meeting of members of Oxford & District Labour Party, 19 March 2018, drawn up by Jane Stockton*