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

**7.30 p.m. on 14 June 2018, Abingdon United Football Club**

1. **Attendance and apologies**

**Present:** Avril Alexander, Lubna Arshad, Nadine Bely-Summers, Marie-Claire Ohsan Berthelson, Ann Black, David Blackman, Chris Bond, John Bond, Becky Boumelha, Jon Bounds, Libby Bounds, Adam Brodie, Caroline Bullock, Madeline Burke, Paul Burton, Peter Cann, Tali Chilson, Marieke Clarke, Michaela Collord, Jane Darke, Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, Marek Drzymalski, Jon Edwards, Paul Flather, Nick Form, Andy Forse, Caroline Glendinning, Julio Gonzales, Julia Goodwin, James Grover, Pauline Hamilton, Hester Hand, Ray Hand, Damian Haywood, Mark Hull, Felicity Irwin (minutes), Sally Joss, Rabyah Khan (Chair), Sue Ledwith, Rob Lemkin. Anne Lyons, Helen Margetts, Stephen Marks, Donal McCay, Cherry Mosteshar, Frank Newhofer, Bobbie Nichols, Pol O Ceallaigh, Simon Ottino, Andrew Peak, Louise Pike, Rosemary Preston, Jane Stockton, Richard Tamplin, Geoff Taylor, Nick Walker, Marc Windmill, Owen Winter, Barry Wooding; Atticus Stonestrom, Mary Southcott

**Apologies:**  Luke Akehurst, Jamila Azad, Jana Bek, Susan Brown, Rip Bulkeley, Steve Curran, Roy Darke, Erica Davis, Anneliese Dodds, Tony Eaude, Stephanie Hobson, Bev Humberstone, Rae Humberstone, Dan Iley-Williamson, Joel Kaye, Gordon Kennedy, Pat Kennedy, Sarah Lasenby, Peter Leary, Bill Mackeith, Michael March, Nikki Marriott, Caroline Morrell, Liz Peretz, Anthony Phillips, Caroline Pinder, Susanna Pressel, Caroline Raine, Dai Richards, Andrew Smith, Linda Smith, Jenny Stanton, John Tanner, Sue Tanner, Janet Warren

1. Agreement of agenda and timings. The motion on Marc Wadsworth, which had been omitted in error, was added to the agenda at 11(b). With this change the timings were agreed.
2. Minutes of the all member meeting on 10 May 2018. These were agreed as a correct record.
3. Matters arising. Party Democracy submission has been sent in. Motion on All Women Short Lists has been sent to the General Secretary.
4. Urgent business, including any other business
5. A moment’s silence was held for the victims of the Grenfell Fire.
6. Stephen Marks – EC agreed to support July 13th protest against Trump Visit. Now been transformed into a day of action on 14th against racism in addition to anti-Trump protest on 13th. Proposed supporting Stand Up To Racism’s day of action.
7. Damian Haywood – Have been leading campaign to proposed cuts to transport for Special Educational Needs children. Please sign petition on www.change.org and come along to the protest at Carfax 11am on Saturday.
8. Rabyah Khan - this Sunday Oxford Labour is supporting the Eid Extravaganza and a picnic next to the Oxford Mela in Blackbird Leys.
9. Labour's Road to Electoral Reform - how close are we today? guest speaker Mary Southcott.

Labour is the only party that can get into government, either by itself or with other parties, that is likely to change the electoral system.

Tories continue to support the First Past the Post electoral system. LP was saved in Scottish parliamentary elections by the PR system that is in place there. FPTP reduced Labour to one MP in Scotland in 2015.

I am anti-binary and I do not support referendums, but they make people feel that their vote counts. The voting system we have lowers the number of people who turn out to vote. The Conservatives are complicit in voter suppression, including through boundary changes linked with reduction to 600 MPs and voter identification. The First Past the Post system suppresses votes.

Jeremy Corbyn talked about “changing the centre of gravity” at last year’s Labour Party conference. He fought for the popular vote not the marginal swing voter. In my view, changing to a PR voting system would be a better strategy, but it’s difficult to fight a PR election when you have a plurality system and to win elections not just votes.

Both Bristol – where I live – and Oxford voted yes in the AV referendum, despite it being the wrong system at the wrong time, and people were voting against Nick Clegg.

Make Votes Matter and Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform – in 2017 we attempted to contact every Labour candidate. Only one of the new intake was brave enough was brave enough to say that they supported AV, but 20 new MPs supported PR.

The EU referendum has changed politics and divides parties. Labour does have a chance of winning the next General Election. OR is attractive to the third-party voters that we need to win in crucial marginal seats. Labour considered putting PR in the 2017 manifesto, but remains equivocal on whether to support PR.

At the last election, electoral reformers did so well because they won over people who were going to vote for third parties.

Robin Cook said – for Labour, democracy cannot be viewed as a means, it is also a value.

Comments and questions included (with responses in brackets):

Simon Ottino – support electoral reform. We should support everyone who lives here and pays taxes having the right to vote. Also should deal with unelected House of Lords. (*Really important issue is about equality. We allow games such as tactical voting to be encouraged*.)

Geoff Taylor – support what you have said about tactical voting. In OxWAb so many people voted for the Lib Dem candidate because they had given up on their vote being counted as a Labour vote (*we need to move on this before the next general election*).

Jane Darke – you use the phrase electoral reform but there are several different forms this could take. (*I have brought a handout which describes all the voting systems in use or suggested. Why should the Labour Party choose the electoral system. We need the constitutional convention which we promised in our manifesto in 2017. We should provide citizenship education in schools*.)

David Blackman – Interested to hear about Bristol West, as I was the previous candidate. The Liberals were clever in having widely known personalities in the 1960s and 1970s. If you are going for STV, there can be a lot of tactical voting around 2nd and 3rd votes. (*Bristol West, I came third, I even experienced tactical voting from Labour members. Additional member system is a hybrid system that is capable of keeping the constituency link, and Labour will probably support a top-up system.*)

Peter Cann – has there been a projection about what would have happened if we had had a PR system in place at the last election. (*I do not believe in projections, I believe that if you want to appeal to voters on the edge of the main parties, you win them over. We should think about how to construct a constitution that allows people to shape their politics.*)

? from Botley Branch – generally in favour of electoral reform, but do you think this would bring more hung parliaments and more coalition governments and lead to dilution of Labour Party policies. (*FPTP has produced coalitions after two of the last three elections. We should change the way we do politics. We need a political culture where people work together to seek solutions and create consensus.)*

Bobbie Nichols – joined LCER years ago. You do not always get what you hope for with coalitions. In Austria the government elected with the PR system includes the Populist and Freedom parties – and the government is pushing other EU countries to introduce anti-immigration policies. (*We have the same problems already with First Past the Post. Populist parties exist in all political systems and need to be dealt with by bringing more people in to politics*.)

Owen Winter – Austria has real problem with Freedom party but they are not the country leading the EU. UKIP managed to grow on the basis of people being disengaged with politics and the Tories followed them. How do you think PR would change things in terms of policy? (*Possibility that it is good to complicate things by having more choice rather than create false, often adversarial, binaries. Currently we get the largest minority in to government, producing anti-consensus policy, and we don’t have the debate. No matter who is in government, why don’t we have cross party discussions at a national level about what to do about our trains, or social care?*)

Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini – Simon’s point about citizenship was a really important point. We do spend a lot of time in meetings and people are surprised that we get anything done because we spend so long in meetings. We should make sure that we are each involved in local groups and campaigns.

Mary was thanked for leading an interesting and stimulating discussion.

1. Motion on electoral reform proposed by North & St Margaret’s branch

“This meeting believes that our archaic electoral system is antidemocratic and not fit for purpose. We need a properly representative and transparent electoral system where no vote is wasted. We need to change to a form of proportional representation for national elections. This should be one which allows M.P.s to keep their local constituency link. The voting age should be lowered to 16. Voting at weekends and the possibility of electronic voting should be investigated.

This meeting calls upon the Labour Party to reject First Past the Post, the current voting system for General Elections, and to launch a consultation to choose a new voting system in which seats will broadly reflect the votes cast.

This meeting also calls on the Labour Party to include proposals for reform in the Party's manifesto for the next general election, with the declared intent that the new electoral changes will be put in place for the following general election.”

The motion was proposed by Sue Ledwith and seconded by Frank Newhofer

Jane Darke spoke against the motion

The motion was carried by 44 to 10 with 9 abstentions.

1. Fundraising collection £115 was collected.
2. Parliamentary Report. Anneliese Dodds MP.

Anneliese was delayed in Parliament because she had obtained an adjournment debate on behalf of a constituent. She sent apologies, and thanked members for their continuing support. She would give a full report at the next meeting, and would welcome feedback on the EU withdrawal bill and anything else. Ann Black will ask her to circulate her written report. [*Anneliese’s first annual report has been posted on the website and also sent directly to all members.*]

1. Oxford city council report

By-election in Headington on 19 July. Simon Ottino will be the Labour candidate and would welcome support from members.

1. Motions

11.1 Anti-semitism proposed by the Rose Hill, Iffley & Littlemore branch incorporating amendments from Rob Lemkin, Michael March, Stephen Marks, Simon Ottino,

“This meeting notes

1. Jeremy Corbyn’s acknowledgement of the anti-semitic content of the East London mural, and his regret in opposing the removal of the mural in 2012

2. The subsequent press statement about anti-semitism in the Labour Party from the Jewish Board of Deputies to Jeremy Corbyn

3. Jeremy Corbyn’s letter of response to the BOD (Appendix 1) in which he acknowledges that forms of anti-semitism do exist in the Labour Party and the Labour Movement

4. While the BOD has been critical of Jeremy Corbyn over this issue other Jewish organisations such as Jewdas and Jewish Voice for Labour have been more supportive.

This meeting believes

1. That anti semitism does exist in the Labour Party, but more widely there is a lack of understanding about what it looks like

2. That anti-semitism is usually not expressed in the form of explicit Jew-hatred or racism, but can manifest in a number of different forms such as:

- Political formulations that blur the clear distinction between criticism of Israel on the one hand, and anti-Semitism on the other; as per the examples specified in Jeremy Corbyn’s letter to the Board of Deputies (paragraph 8):

- Conspiracy theories – such as the Rothschild’s conspiracy – which portray world affairs as being covertly controlled by traditionally Jewish bankers and financiers.

- Similarly conspiratorial political formulas in which “Israel” or a “Zionist lobby” or “Zionists” are expressed as an all-encompassing and uniquely evil global power

“Criticism of Israel, particularly in relation to the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people, cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, comparing Israel or the actions of Israeli governments to the Nazis, attributing criticisms of Israel to Jewish characteristics or to Jewish people in general and using abusive phraseology about supporters of Israel such as "Zio" all constitute aspects of contemporary anti-Semitism. And Jewish people must not be held responsible or accountable for the actions of the Israeli government.”

3. That these forms of anti-semitism exist in the party are a reflection of the level of debate in wider society, and should be primarily combatted through raising the level of political education and debate on these issues inside the party

4. That disputes over anti-Semitism should be resolved through education and mediation in the first instance and should only be resolved by expulsions as a last resort.

5. Allegations of anti-semitism should be taken seriously, and all parts of the diverse Jewish community should be respectfully engaged with, whatever their political views.

6. Our commitment as a party to eliminating anti-semitism in its various forms is no more or less important than our commitment to eliminating all other forms of bigotry and racism.

This meeting resolves

- To support Jeremy Corbyn’s letter of reply to the Board of Deputies (Appendix 1)

- To endorse the the idea of a wider educational programme on the subject of anti-semitism as part of an increase in the resourcing of educational efforts on all forms of racism and bigotry.

*Appendix 1: Jeremy Corbyn’s letter to the Board of Deputies*

*Thank you for your letter to the Labour Party concerning anti-Semitism issued as a press statement last night.*

*First of all, let me acknowledge the anger and upset that provoked it, and repeat my offer of an urgent meeting to discuss the issues you have raised as soon as possible.*

*I stated yesterday, and repeat today, that I will not tolerate any form of anti-Semitism that exists in or around our party and movement. I am committed to eliminating anti-Semitism wherever it exists.*

*As I told the Labour Party conference in 2016, anti-Semitism is an evil that led to the worst crimes of the 20th century. Prejudice and hatred of Jewish people has no place whatsoever in the Labour Party, and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure it is never allowed to fester in our society again.*

*I recognise that anti-Semitism has surfaced within the Labour Party, and has too often been dismissed as simply a matter of a few bad apples. This has caused pain and hurt to Jewish members of our Party and to the wider Jewish community in Britain. I am sincerely sorry for the pain which has been caused, and pledge to redouble my efforts to bring this anxiety to an end.*

*While the forms of anti-Semitism expressed on the far Right of politics are easily detectable, such as Holocaust denial, there needs to be a deeper understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism in the labour movement. Sometimes this evil takes familiar forms - the east London mural which has caused such understandable controversy is an example. The idea of Jewish bankers and capitalists exploiting the workers of the world is an old anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. This was long ago, and rightly, described as "the socialism of fools".*

*I am sorry for not having studied the content of the mural more closely before wrongly questioning its removal in 2012.*

*Newer forms of anti-Semitism have been woven into criticism of Israeli governments. Criticism of Israel, particularly in relation to the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people, cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, comparing Israel or the actions of Israeli governments to the Nazis, attributing criticisms of Israel to Jewish characteristics or to Jewish people in general and using abusive phraseology about supporters of Israel such as "Zio" all constitute aspects of contemporary anti-Semitism. And Jewish people must not be held responsible or accountable for the actions of the Israeli government.*

*The Labour Party has always opposed anti-Semitism, old and new, and always will. We are proud of our deep historical links with Jewish communities, and to have fought alongside generations of Jewish men and women against fascism, prejudice and discrimination. This is a part of our common heritage from which we will never be separated. But I acknowledge that anti-Semitic attitudes have surfaced more often in our ranks in recent years, and that the Party has been too slow in processing some of the cases that have emerged. Early action has nevertheless been taken, and we will work to speed up procedures, to deal with cases of anti-Semitic abuse or attitudes.*

*I am committed to making our Party a welcoming and secure place for Jewish people. Zero tolerance for anti-Semites means what it says, and the Party will proceed in that spirit. That demands among other things the overdue full implementation of the recommendations of the Chakrabarti report, including a programme of political education to increase awareness and understanding of all forms of anti-Semitism.*

*The battle against anti-Semitism should never become a party political issue. It must unite all of us if we are both to honour the memory of the victims of the bestial crimes of the 20th century and build a future of equality and justice for all.*

*In that spirit, I must make it clear that I will never be anything other than a militant opponent of anti-Semitism. In this fight, I am your ally and always will be.”*

The motion was proposed by Andy Forse and seconded by Stephen Marks.

The motion was overwhelmingly carried, with seven abstentions.

11.1(b) Marc Wadsworth motion proposed by Summertown and Wolvercote branch

“This Branch/CLP is not convinced that the expulsion of Marc Wadsworth from the Labour Party is justified, especially since he has already served a suspension of 22 months. Marc’s case was dealt with before the recommendations of the Chakrabarti Inquiry Report have been fully implemented, and so has no right of review.

This branch/CLP calls on the Labour Party NEC:

1. To review the case of Marc Wadsworth (and any other person suspended or expelled from membership without due process) under the grounds of procedure and proportionality as recommended by the Chakrabarti Report.

1. To ensure that all outstanding disciplinary cases are now dealt with in accordance with the recommendations of the Chakrabarti Report. In particular there should be an end to the practice of automatic expulsion or suspension of members, apart from exceptional circumstances, and any member who is the subject of a complaint should be given notice of the nature of the investigation into him or her and the identity of the complainant.”

The motion was proposed by Jane Stockton, and seconded. The motion was overwhelmingly carried, with two against and 15 abstentions.

11.2 Gaza motion proposed by the South West Central branch

“This meeting is appalled at the massacre of over one hundred Palestinian protesters in Gaza, and the wounding of thousands by Israeli snipers using live fire and expanding bullets.

The numbers of unarmed people killed during six weeks of protest, including children and journalists, is now over 100.

This is more than the numbers killed and wounded in the notorious Sharpeville massacre of unarmed protesters in 1960, which started South Africa’s slide into pariah status.

Palestinians were protesting the provocative decision by the US government to mark the 70th anniversary of the Nakba – the uprooting of the Palestinian people as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 – by moving its embassy to illegally-occupied Jerusalem.

We condemn the attempts of Israel and its supporters to place the blame on Hamas and away from the Israeli soldiers who carried out the shooting and their commanders. It compounds murder with the insult of denying the agency of Gazans driven to risk death by the nature of the Israeli siege and the wrecking of their lives.

We believe that these protesters – many of them refugees from areas now inside the state of Israel – have the right to return to their homes and lands. We call for an immediate end to the slaughter, for Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied territories, for an end to all discrimination inside Israel, and for progress towards a just and peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis.

We also thank the Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry for her outspoken condemnation of the Israeli action. Like her we support the UN General Secretary’s call for an independent investigation into these incidents, to determine whether international law has been broken, and hold the Netanyahu government to account for its actions.

We also support her call to “…stop this vicious and utterly avoidable slaughter of peaceful protesters demanding the right to return to their homes” and for “…urgent and concerted international pressure on the Netanyahu government and Egypt to lift the blockade on Gaza, and end Israel’s illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories”.”

The motion was proposed by Stephen Marks and seconded by Pól O’Ceallaigh.

The motion was passed unanimously.

11.3 Israeli Army's unlawful killing and maiming of Palestinian protesters motionproposed by the East Oxford branch

This meeting notes:

* Since 30 March, tens of thousands of Palestinians have engaged in mass and overwhelmingly nonviolent protests in the Gaza Strip.
* The Government of Israel has responded with heavy repression. As of 19 May 2018, well over 100 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces during the demonstrations. The death toll following a single day - 14 May when protesters mobilised against the U.S. embassy move to Jerusalem - has so far reached 64. Still more protestors are critical conditions, battling for their lives.
* Médecins Sans Frontières doctors in Gaza have reported 'receiving patients with devastating injuries of an unusual severity' while Amnesty International has observed that many injuries 'bear the hallmarks of US-manufactured M24 Reminton sniper rifles shooting 7.62mm hunting ammunition, which expand and mushroom inside the body.'
* One Israeli soldier has been reported injured.
* B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, has found that 'Israeli soldiers have been shooting at unarmed demonstrators who pose no danger . . . An order to open live fire at unarmed civilians is manifestly illegal'.
* Amnesty International has renewed its call on governments worldwide to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel following the country's illegal response to the mass demonstrations.
* The nonviolent demonstrations have occurred in the context of Israel's illegal siege of Gaza, which the United Nations warns risks making Gaza literally 'unliveable' by 2020.
* The European Parliament in April 2018 overwhelmingly demanded 'an immediate and unconditional end of the blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip'.
* Labour MP Richard Burden has sponsored an Early Day Motion affirming the right to peaceful protest by Palestinians, calling for an investigation into the killings of Palestinians, and noting the destructive effects of the Israeli siege, notably for Gaza's health system and its ability to cope with the mass casualties.
* Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has condemned Israel's 'slaughter' of 'unarmed protestors' as an 'outrage', called for 'an end to the . . . siege of Gaza' and stressed Labour's commitment to 'reviewing UK arms sales to Israel while these violations continue'.
* Shadow Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Emily Thornberry has condemned Israel's 'vicious and utterly avoidable slaughter' and called for 'urgent and concerted international pressure' on Israel to 'lift the blockade on Gaza' and 'end Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories'.
* The United Kingdom issued export licenses for £216 million worth of arms to Israel in 2017, including sale of sniper rifles, the sort of weapons that have been used to kill Palestinian protesters in past weeks.

This meeting believes:

* Palestinians' right to protest peacefully has been grossly violated.
* We must condemn in the strongest possible terms the use by the armed forces of the State of Israel of lethal force against peaceful protesters as well as Israel's illegal, immoral and inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip.
* Amnesty International is right to warn that: 'The time for symbolic statements of condemnation is now over. The international community must act concretely and stop the delivery of arms and military equipment to Israel. A failure to do so will continue to fuel serious human rights abuses against thousands of men, women and children suffering the consequences of life under Israel's cruel blockade of Gaza.'
* B'Tselem is right to call on the international community to 'do all in its power-and its responsibility-in order to protect Palestinian lives and uphold international norms'.

This meeting resolves to call on Oxford East MP Anneliese Dodds and the Parliamentary Labour Party to:

* Call for an immediate and unconditional end to the illegal blockade and closure of Gaza
* Call for an independent international investigation into Israel's use of force against Palestinian demonstrators
* Call on the UK Government:
  + To suspend all current arms sales to Israel
  + To support international efforts to agree a comprehensive arms embargo to all parties of the conflict
  + To apply the same criteria in licensing components for export as it applies to complete weapon systems, that is scrap guidelines (2002) specific to the export of arms components especially to items destined for incorporation into weapons systems made by foreign manufacturers, to close a loophole which could allow UK components to contribute to the suffering of the Palestinian people and other civilians in other areas of conflict.”

Michaela Collord proposed the motion and it was seconded by Sally Joss. The motion was passed unanimously.

1. Executive committee report. The minutes of the meetings on 16 and 30 May 2018 were accepted.
2. NEC Reports Reports by local NEC members Ann Black and Peter Willsman have been circulated to members.
3. Future meetings. Noted as **Friday 13 July** (St Clements family centre, campaigning on the living wage), **Thursday 6 September** (Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, conference motions and speaker from Oxford co-housing), **Friday 12 October 2018** (Rose Hill community centre, conference reports and member Jamie Tarlton on Palestine), **Friday 9 November 2018** (Dr Dougal Hargreaves on child poverty and health, venue to be arranged), **Thursday 13 / Friday 14 December 2018** (short meeting with refreshments, venue to be arranged)