

## MAKING POLICY

“Shadow ministers and policy advisers do not have a monopoly on wisdom, so they must interact with party members and supporters. By making policy together we make better policy.”

Jeremy Corbyn MP

June 2015

The engagement we have had with Labour Party members during the Review has shown that members want a meaningful involvement in policy making all at levels of the Party. CLPs are asking for clear ways into policy making. Members are asking for more dedicated discussion of policy at branch and CLP level which feeds directly into the policy making process. Members feel excluded from the current process and the Review was repeatedly told it was a priority to have more transparency and accountability.

We are therefore making recommendation which will –

Increase members and popular engagement in the policy making process

Enhance the Party’s political education work

Help engage and mobilise members to encourage people to join the Party

Feed into the development of policy

Strengthen the trade union link

Ensure the sovereignty of our Annual Conference

In November 2015 Jeremy Corbyn called for a “democratic revolution” in party policy making “opening up decision-making to the hundreds of thousands of new members and supporters that have joined us.”

So, the priority for the Review is how we open-up the policy making process to CLPs and members. To create a members-led policy making process which helps build a mass movement for social change. We need a very clear process where people can chart how their input has made a difference. And a process where the Leadership, the membership, the trade unions, the Co-operative Party and the socialist societies have a way to instigate policy.

We know that the opportunity to participate in making policy has always been one of the top reasons members give as to why they join the Party. Currently policy is made through the National Policy Forum which is intended to work on the next manifesto. There is a huge amount of dissatisfaction with this current system. And many calls for radical change. We have looked carefully at the current process and how it works. On paper it looks like a participatory policy making process which allows a deliberative development of policy and access to experts. But it has never really worked. And the control of the process from the centre has led to a high level of cynicism amongst the wider membership.

The main concerns are -

Accountability – most members do not know who their NPF representatives are and there is lack of reporting structures.

Transparency – CLPs and members repeatedly said that they get no feedback and that they did not know what happened to submissions they make.

Democracy - members get to vote for only a third of representatives on the National Policy Forum.

Expense - it is a costly structure. There have been repeated attempts to reform it and any further reform would add greater expense but still exclude most members from the process.

Effectiveness – the NPF documents are mostly generic and it has been the Shadow Cabinet who have made policy decisions.

We have looked at whether it might be possible to reform the NPF structure to address these concerns. Our priority was to deliver a new process which gives members the power to make policy. A policy making process where members, CLPs, trade unions, the socialist societies and others get the opportunity to input on issues and truly engage; and that works in a way that facilitates close cooperation between members, our new community organising strategy and the policy process. We need a bottom up people powered policy making process which also respects the central role of our Annual Conference as our sovereign policy making body. The priority is to maximise member involvement and engagement with our trade union and socialist society affiliates.

So, we recommend that –

Policy documents on specific issues be prepared nationally and signed off by a new NEC Policy Committee to commence consultations.

Consultations which include on-line engagement, CLPs organising local engagement and giving feedback, the frontbench organising national engagement, affiliates working with CLPs undertaking their own consultations or submitting or commissioning their own work and policy.

Socialist societies and trade unions with specific policy interest would be heavily involved in the process and should always be involved when it is their specialist area.

Third party stakeholders could make submissions and evidence will be taken at both local and national level.

It is important that enough time is given to CLPs to arrange events and approach people locally to get involved.

The policy document resulting from all this work will be put to Annual Conference with the ability to reference back if it does not reflect the will of Conference.

Members, CLPs, affiliates and communities would already have had the opportunity to engage with and influence the proposals before they get to Annual Conference.

A new NEC Policy Committee would have political oversight of the process.

There should be consultation to agree how long CLPs and affiliates need to consider consultation documents as the feedback during the Democracy Review is that longer consultation periods are needed.

This year's consultation on the National Education Service gives an example of how this might work. The Democracy Review received very positive feedback from members who had attended the consultations at various events we held. At the beginning of the process

all members received a set of key principles relating to the National Education Service. Members of the Shadow Education team toured the country meeting with educational professionals and others to get feed-back. CLPs and others were asked to organise their own events and give feedback. This is all now being collated and a policy document drafted to be presented to Annual Conference. Local members, local educational professionals, parent and students are all helping to develop our policies.

We therefore recommend that the National Policy Commission is dismantled. It has failed to engage members. This Review gives the opportunity to enthuse thousands of members with a real opportunity to get involved with policy and to deliver on the commitments which led to Jeremy Corbyn being elected as Leader of the Labour Party.

There will be strengthened strategic oversight of policy making and reporting back to CLPs with a new NEC Policy Committee.

This Committee will have the authority to authorise the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet to commission specific work which is intended to feed into the policy making process and be responsible for ensuring that all members, CLPs and affiliates are able to feed into the Policy making process. They should ensure that there is gender proofing and other equality proofing of all policy. Like other NEC Committees, the role of the Policy Committee should be set out in the rule book. The Chair of the Policy Committee should make a written report to Annual Conference.

There needs to be the flexibility for fast footed rebuttal and announcement of new policy particularly in Opposition. A Policy Committee working with the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet would enable that to happen. It is recognised that processes in Opposition can be very different than in Government.

The Policy Committee would have the responsibility of considering all motions submitted by CLPs on both national policy and all policy passed at Regional Conferences. However only policy passed at Annual Conference would be policy incorporated in the Party Programme.

The Policy Committee would work with the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet to instigate consultations when more detailed work was required on policy passed at Annual Conference and be able to agree to commission work.

We will have pilots in direct democracy and will encourage the use of digital democracy in the policy making process. And we will run pilots on developing regional and local economic plans and local policy maximising the involvement of the local community. A wide range of social media and digital democracy platforms can be used to develop policy. These pilots and all work will feed into the Policy Committee who will have strategic political oversight and be responsible for ensuring that proposals are presented to Annual Conference who will have the power to reference back sections.

We will open-up Annual Conference for our members and affiliates so that all CLPs and affiliates can submit policy motions. The current “contemporary” test for motions will be removed. All CLPs will be entitled to submit a policy motion. Larger affiliates will be entitled to submit a second motion. The criteria for motions will be set out in the rule book.

There will be an enhanced role for regional conference in the policy making process and all policy passed at regional Conferences will be feed into the policy making process.

The Rule Book should be amended so that the NEC, Shadow Cabinet and TULO Contact Group decide which items from the Party Programme shall be included in the manifesto.

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