

2014

HAVING FABIAN NEWSLETTER

July 2014

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Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. We reflect on a mixed bag of election results as Labour candidate's feedback on the Euro elections and campaigns in Havering, Thurrock and Barking and Dagenham.

With the 2014 Council elections over, the local Labour Parties have selected candidates and are campaigning hard for 2015 – keep up to date at our twitter site [@haveringfabians](#) for the latest news. We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties, and will do all we can to support their campaigns.

Both Romford and the Hornchurch and Upminster Labour parties have upgraded their websites and are active on Twitter – no doubt both will be used to keep you up to date as the campaigns take shape.

Paul McGeary, now the Labour PPC for Hornchurch and Upminster will be speaking to the Society later in the year

We look forward to working Paul, Jon Cruddas, Margaret Hodge and Sam Gould in the run up to the General Election

We will also be supporting the Labour candidates in South Essex – Polly Billington and Mike Le Surf have both been guest speakers and we have Basildon PPC Gavin Callaghan as speaker at our November meeting.

We also pass on fraternal congratulations to comrades in Redbridge Labour Party on taking control of the Council for the first time. Labour Leader Jas Athwal is believed to be the first Sikh to lead a Council in the United Kingdom, a great achievement. It was particularly pleasing to see long term Labour Councillor Roy Emmett returned, reward for many years in opposition fighting the Labour cause.

As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond

the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement as a whole are welcome.

Attendances at recent meetings have remained excellent and the quality of speakers remains exceptional. We are glad to see a number of new people attending the meetings, and have an ever increasing number of followers on Face book and Twitter.



Our main Face book site is a closed group, please contact David Marshall to be added to the site or e-mail Haveringfabians@outlook.com and we will add you to the growing list of followers. We now have a public site as well, so follow us on whichever media suits.

Havering Council elections – Not good news for Labour – an understatement?

As we predicted in the last newsletter Havering’s “natural” state of no overall control returned, sadly with local Fabians Chair Keith Darvill the only Labour Councillor. So Labour ended with one seat out of 54, with 17% of the vote, down from 42% in 1994. The Party held the three Havering parliamentary seats in 1997. The decline has been rapid and deep.

This is a bad result for Labour in Havering, with little upside. The local activists worked hard but the party gained next to no extra support, a very different result to the rest of London. Even in Bromley the Labour group increased from three to seven.

The difference is partly explained by the Residents vote – they have had a significant vote right back to the Hornchurch Urban District Council days (pre Havering), and gained more Councillors. Their failure to take any power was interesting – they will however have to take responsibility now as many decisions will need their support

The Independent Residents contain some “unusual” individuals with a dubious political history, and the UKIP councillors remain an unknown quantity.

Labour need to regroup for 2018 (*#thefightbackcontinues*)- we will do all we can to support this, as a Labour presence on Havering Council is essential if we are to provide better public services, a free at point of use National Health Service and a tax system that supports those in need.

Finally it was particularly sad to see the defeat of Denis O’Flynn (first elected in 1971) Paul McGeary and Pat Murray who, together with Denis Breeding had all been excellent Councillors facing an uphill battle against a large Tory majority. Former Havering Councillor Dave Burn (first elected in 1968) lost in Brentwood, in what was an expected result.

Election experiences in 2014

Our editorial sets a gloomy picture – however other views exist, and the next section of the newsletter allows three candidates in different elections in May to give their views, while Carole reviews the impact across Europe.

Sam Gould looks for the good news in Havering...

Reasons to Be Cheerful – Why the Local Elections were far from a disaster for Labour

The local elections in Havering were nothing if not eventful. The Tories went into full meltdown and couldn’t even agree on a joint manifesto. UKIP, as an unknown quantity, looked as though they could make significant gains. We in the Labour Party mobilised scores of activists across the borough and were also hopeful of making a number of gains.

It didn’t work out that way. In Romford the Tories took 20 of the 21 Council seats. In Havering we lost 4 of our 5 Councillors. People in the Labour camp were disheartened and looking at the results at a glance it is easy to see why.

As the Labour Parliamentary candidate for Romford the first thing I did the morning after the night before was calculate the vote share for each of the main parties in the Romford constituency. A word of caution, people do vote differently in local and general elections, but the figures are still very useful for gauging the popularity of the parties.

Despite the Tories taking almost every seat in Romford their share of the vote was just 41.5%. Compared to the 2010 election where they received 56.0% this is a very significant drop. In fact the last time the Tories did anywhere near that badly in Romford was in 1997 where they took just 41.6% of the vote and Romford returned a Labour MP.

Now, we are under no illusions, we still have a massive fight on our hands in Romford. However the Labour vote share also shows that we are moving in the right direction. In 2010 we got 19.5% of the vote. In 2014 this rose to 23.6%. Whilst we are still a way off of the Tories this 4% increase shows that the local elections weren't a disaster for us and that the campaign we ran was not in vain. Also, for those who are curious, UKIP finished on 19.8%.

We have just over 10 months until the next election (I know, another one). Looking at these figures the election in Romford may be the closest in a long time. The Tories know this, during the local election campaign they put out constant smears and lies about both Labour and UKIP. I'm doubtless that we will see more of the same in the run up to 2015.

During the local elections in Romford we didn't have the numbers to effectively combat the Tories lies. In places like Pettits ward the Tories were able to deliver multiple leaflets every week. It did help that the Romford Recorder exposed some of the Tories lies but the Recorder still has a limited circulation.

If we are going to be able to give the Tories a run for their (vast amounts of) money then we need to increase our numbers. The Tories have always been the party of the wealthy few. We in the Labour Party have always been the party of the many. Now we need to convert those many into activists.

We don't have long to do this. That's why over the next few months we will be running some big campaigns in Romford on a variety of issues from public ownership of the railways, women's representation in the media and green energy. We want to show the people of Romford that the Labour Party is here to represent them and that we are welcoming to anyone who wants to help make positive change in Romford.

After over 18,000 votes were cast for Labour in Romford in May it appears there are many people who would want to help to do that.

Sam Gould is Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Romford.

If you are interested in Sam's campaign please feel free to contact him at Samuelcgould@gmail.com

Roisin Hewitt gives a view from Thurrock as Labour lose to No Overall Control

It is no coincidence that Ed Miliband came to Thurrock in the aftermath of the 2014 local and euro elections. Thurrock is a key seat for the Labour party next year and with an excellent candidate it would be devastating for Labour to lose after many years of hard work in campaigning etc.

Thurrock Unitary Authority now has 6 UKIP councillors (5 gained on the 22nd May and one from the previous local elections in 2012) and the Labour Party lost two very experienced and much liked councillors, Wendy Herd in Belhus and Angie Gaywood in Stifford Clays.

UKIP also gained 3 of the conservative seats and took the leader of the opposition seat in Stanford East and Corringham Town (the seat I used to be a councillor in). So all in all, not a very good night for either of the main political parties.

I canvassed with Wendy Herd in Belhus quite a bit over the election period and we had an excellent message to get out to the public. The administrations Homes Transformation programme which is being rolled out across the borough gave us a real opportunity to tell people the good work that the Labour run council were doing and people seemed to be pleased to hear that news.

However people did talk (in quite a calm and concise manner) about how they felt the cost of living and housing in general was affecting them and their families. Discussions about rapid changes to the population of the local area whilst people whose children lived in the area being squeezed out and unable to buy or even rent without large fees being involved.

The cost of living also came up time and time again and peoples anger at working but still living on very tight incomes (i.e. the what's the point attitude) all in all pointing to the idea of the working poor feeling like there was very little room to breathe. All this against a changing population backdrop means that this was ripe breeding ground for UKIP

and come Election Day it seemed like some of the aggressive tactics worked.

Local candidates spoke to me of a real aggression coming over on election day and that there were examples of Labour flag's being torn down in one ward (thankfully Labour did not lose this seat). To my memory this is similar to the few years when the BNP were canvassing and getting people to voice their frustration at the national issues through the local elections which is a shame as the Labour run authority were really doing some excellent work under some of the most trying times for local government whilst still delivering a pretty decent service to residents. Another candidate told me that she saw people she knew had never voted before walking to polling stations and she knew they would be voting UKIP.

I asked Ed the final question in his question and answer session which was Labour need to enable local government to build more homes. The question got a big clap and that's because for every campaigner in the room it was an issue which we had heard time and time again.

Gavin Callaghan (Councillor for Pitsea and PPC for Basildon and Billericay) said on Labour list "In Basildon we have a council house waiting list of more than 5,500 people. Right now British-born Basildonians waiting for a council house, genuinely believe that the other 5,499 on the waiting list are all immigrants. Further, they believe that the immigrants on the list have priority over British families. We need to ensure this myth is debunked." And he is absolutely right but we also need to think about what those 5,000 people on that list need to feel safe and secure and are given the option to feel that society is giving them something back. At the moment I don't feel as a party we are doing that. I said to Ed I don't want labour to lurch to the right and talk too much about immigration and quotas. I want them to make people feel safe, secure and give them the option of decent social housing which will stop blaming and scare mongering from UKIP and other one issue parties. I don't genuinely believe that people are racists but I do believe people are fed up of living in poor overpriced cramped conditions on low incomes and insecure contracts. Change that and we may not have to talk about immigration because it won't be in people's minds.

Roisin Hewitt is a former Thurrock Councillor and was an unsuccessful candidate for Orsett Ward in May's elections.



Sanchia Alasia gives a view after standing in the European and Council elections - Can Labour win in 2015?

It's been one month since the local and European elections in the UK and an opportune time to reflect on the results and how this bodes for Labour's success in the general election in less than a year's time.

I was privileged to be one of the MEP candidates for the London region for Labour and spent the past year campaigning with the London Labour across the region. The memories of meeting with party members and talking to voters across the capital is one's I will never forget. Whilst campaigning with Labour party members, I was frequently asked my predictions for which party would win the Euro elections in the UK overall. It became clearer to me, especially during the short campaign where I worked full time on the campaign during the last month that Labour would have good results in London but that UKIP would beat us nationally and so I stated as such. The media coverage that was given to Nigel Farage and the euro-scepticism that was in the air all boosted his campaign. Turnout was disappointingly low at 36%.

Labour did exceptionally well in London and we had good results in the West Midlands, North West and North East. However it was a disappointment that we did not pick up more than one seat in the largest region in the South East, East of England, East Midlands or Wales. Gaining these seats would have ensured Labour's win in both the Euro and local elections last month and given a strong boost for the campaign next year.

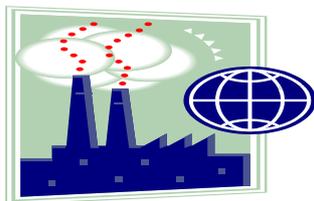
The European parliament has an opportunity going forward to strengthen its legitimacy and develop more openness and transparency in how its primary institutions the European Council and Commission operate. Labour MEP's will need to work hard to counter the Eurosceptic groups in the parliament and reach out to its constituents about the work they do and how it makes a difference to ordinary people's lives. This will certainly be easier in London where Labour now has half the MEP's.

Labour's results were the best since 1971 and in order to win next year, the target seats in London should get the necessary support from the London Labour party and its local activists, as it's here that we are most likely to gain the seats needed to have Ed Miliband as our prime minister next year. Labour had 37% of the vote in London, gained 203 new councillors, controls 20 out of the 32 London boroughs and is now in control of the Local Government Association for the first time in a decade.

In Barking and Dagenham, where I re-stood as a councillor, even I was a little surprised that we took all 51 seats of the council again, as we did in 2010. We have been a strong campaigning force and realised after winning in 2010, that there was no room for complacency. We kept our Labour doorstep sessions every two weeks, which allowed us to keep that connection with our voters, hear their concerns and deal with them over the past four years, which gave the Barking Labour party a credible record of listening and acting on the priorities that mattered to our residents.

Labour needs to talk about the issues that will resonate with people including, jobs, growth and wage freezes. They also need to tackle the difficult issues such as immigration, but in the grounding that diversity is a source of our strength to us as a nation and with solutions to tackle the Labour makes effects of increased pressures on housing and school places. Labour can win just after one term out of power, if we keep working hard on the doorstep and show that we take a real interest into finding sustainable solutions that will make a real difference to people's lives.

Sanchia was 7th on the Labour list for the London European elections, and was reelected for Alibon ward in Barking in the Council elections.



Carole Tongue reflects on the European Elections On Our Europe Not Theirs

Introduction

Thanks for inviting me. It is a real pleasure to see you all again. I am so sad about the outcome of the last elections where fine Labour Councillors lost their seats. At least we gained 2 more London MEPs, Lucy Anderson and Seb Dance. They are good experienced people who will serve Londoners well.

First a word on Prime Minister Cameron and his latest idea of negotiation with our allies or should I say outright bullying. He would have been better off with a man who is now likely to be behind bars shortly. When you listen to Cameron, it's clear he's been radicalized by his right-wing and by Farage. Gove should send in the Ofsted inspectors to No 10. Our EU friends and allies, surprising they still are, want us in the EU working for reform. We should not buy into this false debate and argument. We should put forward a real reform agenda and say clearly that only we have any hope of advancing it.

Outcome of the EU elections

European Parliament Elections: Winners and Losers ¹

1) The **WINNER** was the European Parliament. Its composition is hardly changed. A few less EPP MEPs, a few more oddball outsiders but 569 MEPs out of 751 come from the pro European parties – the EPP, Socialists, Liberals and Greens.

2) The **LOSER** was the European Parliament. It failed to generate new enthusiasm even with the Spitzenkandidaten system that sought to portray a presidential contest between Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schulz. The EPP lost MEPs and share of vote but remain the biggest party. Schulz and the Socialists maintained their 25 per cent of EU wide votes but have fewer MEPs than in 2009. In addition, the turn-out means six out of ten EU citizens did not vote.

3) The **WINNER** is incumbent governments. While headlines rage about Marine le Pen and other Europhobes, the real result is how well incumbents governments in Germany, Italy, Romania, Austria, Poland

¹ Thanks to Denis Macshane, former MP/Minister for some of this acute analysis

and elsewhere performed.

Yes there are some fringe MEPs elected on the EP's pure proportional representation system and some of these are mad, bad and dangerous to know. But there was no mass vote Europe-wide against austerity politics or challenges to existing political power.

4) The **LOSER** is also incumbent governments. The European Parliament election proved again as so often in the past that its elections are about national political angsts and anger. So in Britain, France, Spain, Greece and Sweden where there is disenchantment, if not worse, with national political performance the EP election allowed voters to give a kicking to F Hollande, Messrs Cameron and Reinfeldt but neither Ukip nor the FN are about to win national power.

5) The **WINNER** is Marine Le Pen. She now boasts of leading the first party in France. That is an old boast. It was made regularly by French communist leaders after 1945 when the PCF, like the FN, regularly came top of legislative or municipal elections. Mme Le Pen also hammered the ruling socialists in municipal elections in March. Luckily she has not been able to form a political group in the EP so will lose out on speaking time and resources.

6) The **LOSER** is Marine Le Pen. She has 25 MEPs out of 751. Her main ally the Dutch PVV, headed by Geert Wilders, lost seats. UKIP's Nigel Farage refuses any alliance with her in the European Parliament because he regards the Front National as 'toxic' with 'anti-Semitism embedded' in it. Mme le Pen dare not link up fascistic racist MEPs from the NPD in Germany, Jobbik in Hungary or Golden Dawn in Greece. Her father caused a much bigger political earthquake in France in 2002 by defeating the Socialist Lionel Jospin in the presidential election. His triumph was short-lived. Once the French mainstream right gets its act together Mme Le Pen's bluster will fade.

7) The **WINNER** is Nigel Farage and Ukip. His party came top in the polls and even won a seat in Scotland where Ukip has no presence. It followed a Ukip breakthrough in municipal elections. In two safe Labour constituencies in South Yorkshire (Rother Valley and Rotherham) Ukip got more votes than Labour. Overall Ukip only got 9 per cent of the total electorate. 57 per cent of voters stayed at home. They will vote in the general election and despite Ukip statements they will win Commons seats this remains a long shot and even if one or two seats are won Ukip will not be a full-presence national political party. Ukip won 150 out of 4,500 council seats so it has a long way to go to be a proper party.

8) The **WINNER** is Nigel Farage. His main demand since 1999 has been for a referendum on staying in or leaving the EU. He has won this demand as Prime Minister Cameron conceded an In-Out Referendum in 2013 and has been emphasizing that pledge constantly ever since. Farage and Ukip are now co-joined with the Tory Party on the issue of a referendum and many senior Tories are calling for a pact or formal or informal alliance with Ukip to maximize the pro-referendum and anti-EU vote in contrast to the current Labour and LibDem position of opposing an In-Out referendum ahead of any full-blown new EU Treaty. Farage now has 24 MEPs drawing up to €5 million in expenses each to campaign non-stop in support of a referendum and then if Cameron is re-elected as Prime Minister in May 2015 to campaign for an Out vote.

9) The **LOSER** is the European Commission. Barroso 1 and more especially Barroso 2 have not been able to generate enthusiasm or support for Europe. The Commission with its 28 Commissioners is seen as unwieldy. It retains considerable power and the competition or energy Directorates are at the heart of decisions that can make or break companies. There are serious proposals afoot to reform the Commission but these depend on

10) The **WINNER**, namely, the European Council. The heads of government remain in charge. If they are able to unite they can get things done as, for example, over the creation of an embryonic Euro zone within the wider EU with its banking union, its common fiscal policy, and its central bank. Given that the EPP and its *Spitzenkandidat*, Jean Claude Juncker, lost seats and vote share and the Socialists under Schulz still have fewer than 200 MEPs this was thought to undermine obligation on Council to choose Juncker or Schulz. The Council has to take into consideration under the Lisbon Treaty the outcome of the European Parliament election. EP played this very well and German media held Merkel to a democratic obligation to choose Juncker.

11) The **LOSERS** are most national governments at home if not when gathered as the EU Council in Brussels. They will be looking over their shoulders at any obligations of EU membership which now provokes opposition in domestic politics. The most obvious problem in most pre 2004 enlargement states is that of free movement of European immigrant workers especially when they claim benefits that are sent back as remittances to families back home. Obeying Eurozone austerity rules has damaged governments in southern EU member states. After that there are nation specific EU issues like criminal justice in the UK, take-over decisions in France, joining the Euro in Denmark, Poland, Sweden or separatism in Flanders and Catalonia. In short, the EU is now seen by

national administrations as generating problems rather than providing solutions.

12) Nevertheless the EU will continue to function.

It will continue to impact on thousands of business and investment decision from the issue of Gazprom's South Stream pipe line planned to go through Bulgaria and up to deliver gas directly to central Europe and Italy without crossing Ukraine to the unbundling of telecoms companies.

It is too early to identify the new movers and shaker in the EU. The existing Commission is in power until October and the tradition is that it continues to take major decisions.

The problem of Brexit – Britain leaving the EU is even higher on the UK political agenda after the good showing by Ukip and Nigel Farage. Overseas firms need advice on the politics of Brexit.

It will be harder to advocate liberal economic policies after the clear rejection by voters for the orthodox austerity policies that may have suited German-speaking Europe but have led to 26 million unemployed and the rise of Pikettyism (the belief that unacceptable and destructive inequality is on the rise in Europe).

The TTIP will face new challenges as the anti-system MEPs who have been elected can make common cause across a left-right divide and in alliance with mainstream MEPs against a transatlantic trade agreement predicated on eliminating protections in national customs and practices in sensitive areas like health care or cultural and creative industries.

There will be demands for more power for national parliaments. Mr Sarkozy has said the EU should focus on ten core competences. The Dutch PM Rutte has said just five core areas of policy should be handled at EU level. However the French and Dutch will not be ready to give up their right to a Commissioner and the moment there is an emergency like national flooding, oil tanker spills, faulty breast implants or economic migrants being drowned in the Mediterranean there is a demand for tough European action.

The EU has not taken over and nation states cannot live without it. So the next five years will see not a reduction of Europe in the lives of Europeans.

Our Europe Not Theirs

Glyn Ford who edited this book will provide copies to anyone interested via Carole – please get in touch with us (details below) and we will arrange.

This book is important as it lays out what different policies could be pursued at EU level if the manifesto of the Party of European Socialists was put into action and beyond.

In this respect it makes up for the deficit in media reporting in this country. Sadly the BBC failed to cover the individual party manifestos and only put the lead candidate debate on the Parliament channel so few saw it.

The analysis of the economic crisis and why Conservative governments across EU got it wrong is brilliantly laid out by **Derek Reed**, Deputy Secretary General of EP S&D Group. He makes very interesting visionary proposals like an EU minimum wage, adjusted according to each country's wealth. EU corporation tax band; large R&D budget; EU unemployment benefit; energy efficiency and renewable policy for jobs and climate change. This is no time for cautious thinking when 50% of Spain's young people are out of work and a million of ours as well.

Nick Costello argues for social investment which contributes to reductions in inequality and increases competitiveness ...a larger EU social fund to support education/training; better unemployment benefit to keep up purchasing power.

Some of Ed Milibands's proposals can be seen in this light. It is important to argue for them at EU level as well where added value can be had.

Linda McAvan MEP argues cogently for a low carbon economy with more renewables, energy efficiency and resource efficiency. All makes sound sense and is completely achievable and where EU can add value. Uk can play a leading role in green growth. A lot of the green technologies are developed here.

David Martin MEP argues for trade deals that create jobs at home and aid development abroad. Human rights, worker's rights and environmental protection should be at the heart of trade policy.

Patrick Costello argues for an EU foreign/security policy that would mirror what we wish to achieve as a nation state. Defence of equality at home means defence of it abroad for example.

Glyn Ford talks of the Mad, the Bad and the Sad and describes the rise of the Far Right with how to tackle them.

On immigration:

Also let's be clear: EU policy is that any Member State can prevent anyone being here longer than 3 months. They have to be in work; actively seeking work or able to provide for themselves. 97% of immigrants from C/E Europe came to work and do work adding 1% to UK GDP. Only 3% of EU population works outside nation of origin.

Policy Answers: Comprehensive policy across EU on legal immigration; reform of EU Arrest Warrant; police EU's external borders. Plus we need to build more homes; allocation of some more resources to those areas in need; change definition of habitual; tighten Gang Master's regulation; rigorous enforcement of minimum wage; EU wide minimum wage !!! Decent Jobs for Workers' in Britain should be our cry !

Don't fall for repatriation of powers argument of Tories: what they want is a bonfire of social provision and rights of workers protected by 20 EU directives.

If you only have time to read one chapter then do read what former Sec Gen of S&D Group Julian Priestly has written.

He outlines what a programme for reform would look like:

Programme for Jobs and Growth

Leader of S&D Group Martin Schulz and President of the EP has prioritized some of Julian's agenda:

- Programme for Jobs and Growth
- Large Youth Guarantee Fund
- EIB lending to SMEs
- Financial Transaction Tax and other action on tax avoidance
- More banking regulation

It remains to be seen how much of this will be in the programme of the next EU Commission which is still not appointed as we speak. President Schulz and socialist MEPs will be doing all they can to get these issues into the Commission's programme.

CONCLUSION

Brexit is unthinkable and could lead to UK break-up and isolation and little influence for the UK. Returning to the Book Our Europe Not Theirs, these are the EU policies that Labour should be arguing for and not falling into trap of being negative about the EU. It has a clear role to improve our lives and its guiding principles are social democratic that we would all wish to sign up to.

As the dust settles on the ephemeral election result excitement and most EU citizens are swept away by the Brazil World Cup the EU will still be taking decisions and impact on business, government and citizens and it will be essential to understand the new contours of the EU, its policies and its decision-makers.

It is so important that we differentiate between advocating change as Socialists and Social Democrats and allowing UK media just to refer to EU reform as if all reform were equal.

Most important is a programme for jobs and growth that really tackles youth unemployment, running at least 24% in Spain.

It is not about Us and Them but about Our Europe, A social democratic Europe and the alternative which is Conservative and more of the same which has failed many people.

Another kind of EU is possible and we should campaign and fight for it.

Remember Jacques Delors' famous vision for the EU:

- Competition for stimulus
- Cooperation for strength
- Solidarity for unity and fairness

We should be working for policies that make this a reality.

Carole Tongue is the former MEP for London East from 1984-1999, and a regular visitor to the Society – this article is based on the speech she delivered at the July meeting.

Jennette Arnold on Education

The last newsletter contained an excellent article by Jennette on the recession and the BME community. At the April meeting Jennette gave an inspiring talk on Education which stimulated what many have described as the best set of contributions from the floor since the Society was formed in 1974.

Jennette was the first speaker to use an i-pad rather than written notes, as we continue to embrace technology.

She began with a recap of her political history. Discussions make politics richer. She had experience as a Mother, Grandmother, Politician and professional, and enjoyed looking at the full perspective on issues. You can never know enough, and she was nosey and always asked why.

While the subject was Academies, Jennette began with a history of how she became an Assembly Member. The Act creating the Assembly had many weaknesses. The GLA was not the GLC reincarnated, but a Mayoral model based on the American and European models, with a Scrutiny body added. The Assembly has 25 members and began in 2000 with a near blank sheet of paper as to what its objectives should be.

The Act appears not to anticipate Party groups at all – these are inevitable as candidates are elected on a Party ticket and will act along Party lines. This can mean the Assembly struggles to find a role – the voting method used means an overall majority on the Assembly is very difficult to achieve and the two thirds majority required to block the Mayor even more so.

Jennette had worked with Ken Livingstone, who does not understand the word “can’t”. This meant work was exciting with clear direction – Ken has a vision and love of London. Jennette started as a campaigner and wanted to ensure there was diverse representation on the GLA. This led to 9 months of campaigning to get selected; however she then lost by 40,000 votes at the GLA election on the Additional Member list.

She then went on holiday when a sad event changed things– Bernie Grant MP for Tottenham died. David Lammy was returned as the new MP, and two months later Jennette was on the assembly. She served four years as a London wide member. She worked on issues such as Smoke Free places, where her experience as a nurse proved helpful. She Chaired the Cultural Strategy group, one of several charged with coming up with a big idea.

Jennette served on the Metropolitan Police Authority, now very different to that in 2000. There had been no democratic accountability for 160 years, the budget was not transparent. Having elected Members has made a difference. She also Chaired the Cultural Strategy group, one of several charged with coming up with a big idea.

The Mayor was charged to get engaged in any issue relevant to London

- A Transport group chose the Congestion charge;
- Environment looked at ideas from 40 cities;
- Housing – to build houses...

So the Culture group had to come up with a big idea to establish itself, and there is no bigger idea than the Olympics!

Discussions started with the Sport England, Police and Government Departments- the critical meeting being where the stadium should be located, with a strong preference for East London ahead of Wembley.

The second Mayor also used this role to look at wider issues – for example, the proposal to build an airport in the Thames Estuary.

He had also created a London (free) Schools unit, and to give it clout had created a commission of the great and good which had 60 recommendations. This happened even though the Mayor has no powers in this area, and is not illogical as clearly education is important.

Jennette saw it as important to establish some openness as to the units remit and what was being done – the Assembly has the powers to “follow the money” and make the Mayor accountable. The Department for Education part funds this unit, which has plans for setting up 10 Academies.

These would have extended days (8am to 6pm) – the GLA will pay for the extra hours. Only three have got underway- in part as business consortia are ahead of the Mayor in the queue for government funding.

The £300k the GLA has made available to each of the schools has made a difference, ensuring resources matched those in top performing schools elsewhere. Support had been given to two faith based schools.

As you may gather, this led to a wide debate on Labour Education policy and the priorities when contributions from the meeting were sought later in the meeting...

The Assembly is still striving to get more information – this is important as a new Mayor could take different views and leave the schools under resourced. The schools were therefore not on a sound footing which was a risk.

Jennette was now Assembly Member for Hackney, which had some Academies with good and bad schools, and where parents saw the later, they sent their children to Enfield. Getting children the best Education they can is understandable.

On a positive note, improvements in standards had led to many students from Hackney getting to red brick Universities where 10 years ago this was unheard of. Academies had made a difference.

The issue is about policies – the Maintained Sector, Academies and Free Schools are all funded from the public purse. The last two are free of accountability, while the maintained sector is hemmed in by rules and regulations in respect of the curriculum – Academies can set their own.

Choice in Education is always debateable – certain groups have none. In Havering 85% of parents get their 1st preference of school. For those who don't get their first three preferences, the choice can be to go out borough with all the related travel issues.

So this is not a level playing field and it can be hard for parents to track down the good schools.

Issues for Havering include a large increase in demand for school places.

Three wards in Havering have a near 30% growth in primary school students

- Brooklands 40% ,
- Romford Town 38%,
- Harold Wood 29%

While in the Secondary sector Brooklands and Romford Town both face a 23% increase.

This is going to be a big issue for the Borough with the Council sidelined (Councillor Pat Murray was able to support this – despite being on the relevant committee proposals for new schools in Havering were not being raised with the Council – for example the CEME school in Rainham)

With the Building Schools for the Future programme among the first tranche of coalition reductions, there is even more pressure on school places and the GLA is in theory in a position to assist via the London Schools Unit – it can use the GLA land bank to provide property to transfer to free schools.

So where did the Mayor look? Former Fire and Police Stations – often not located where the need is so not addressing the areas with the need for places (which include Barking and Dagenham). The GLA sites have value –one in Clerkenwell is estimated at £70 million – so if the demand is not present locally use for free schools that are not needed is not good use of public assets.

The threat of a bad OFSTED inspection leading to a change of status adds stress to the Maintained sector.

Labour should come to a clear view – as the new Shadow Education Minister Stephen Twigg had visited Havering Fabians in 2010 with the intention of listening and developing policy, while being in favour of public funding and accountability.

Replacement Tristan Hunt was now talking about Parent led schools not free schools – the Party was less than impressed and needs something positive to offer.

Jennette takes the GLA scrutiny role seriously and thrives on the detail – and the current position means there is a lot to look at. As the Mayor has taken an active role in Education, the Assembly has a key role holding him to account and in doing so can look at education across London in detail.

There were lots of contributions from the meeting in response, proving Jennette's original point – discussions do indeed make politics richer.



Wolmar for London?

Well known transport journalist and the only declared Labour candidate for Mayor in 2016 was the guest speaker in June as we tried to recover from the election. A number of defeated candidates could not keep away, and Denis O’Flynn gave apologies for the unlikely reason of being at a Royal Garden Party – reward for years of public service.

His talk covered three areas

- Why he is standing
- Housing
- Transport

Christian is well known transport journalist, and has been a Labour member for many years, although he left over Iraq and then rejoined. He was disappointed at the lack of debate between Boris Johnson and Ken Livingstone and “dead cat” tax debates – he wrote to the Evening Standard and got a letter back from a member of the public suggesting he should stand.

He has entered the race early – at present the only Labour figure declared as a candidate. This has enabled him to meet people and raise and test ideas.

The current Mayor had done little in six years, and has his eye on becoming Tory Leader and Prime Minister. This creates a vacuum into which the Labour candidate should step.

There is a Wolmer for London website <http://www.wolmarforlondon.co.uk/> and a desire to ensure London is affordable, viable and sustainable. A campaign team is in place and developing policy ideas.

Housing

Affordable Housing in London is in crisis. Decent homes are unaffordable. There had been an economic cleansing in Central London. Help to buy and overseas investors had made the matter worse with a 16% increase last year. Rents were also increasing. Average rents were now 55% of an average Londoners income. The current Mayor had £1.25

billion available for Housing, but was targeting “Affordable” rents – around 80% of Market rents – about £250/300 per week.

There is a Housing crisis with a lack of safe, comfortable and secure homes. This gives no chance to create long term communities and sustainability is therefore an issue. This is particularly the case with luxury developments such as the skyscrapers available to the rich and well off – there has been enormous concern about the housing waiting lists and has been for 30 years or so. There are now 800,000 on the social housing waiting list, double the number of 10 years ago.

This is beginning to “hollow out” central London, and only the rich can live there. The younger (20/30) element are priced out. Homes not investment opportunities are what is required. It is interesting that 30/40% of build cost is tax in some form – VAT, income tax and National Insurance of the workforce etc.

There is a vicious circle of housing benefit payments which rise with rent- so tackling rents has the potential to divert resources from housing benefit to bricks and mortar.

Allowing Local Authorities to borrow in order to build may have some impact, although a new Housing Agency could give more momentum. Help to buy is not helping, and there is a need to clampdown on foreign investors, who drive up prices and give little in return. Increasing empty property Council tax rates may address this.

The private rented sector covers around a third of all Londoners and is now a long term offer. This prevents stable communities. Improvements could include longer term tenancies, protection from rent increases and eviction and security of tenure- all a possible function of a Mayor’s Housing Agency.

Transport

Affordability and sustainability are common issues with Housing, with many people priced out. Thinking in London has moved from cars to other forms of transport – for example cross rail is an important development. Buses were important for Livingstone and left alone by Johnson.

Changes to London’s transport model began in the 1960’s with a ring road and three proposed inner ring roads (which did not happen) –

Westway was the only part of the proposed network built. The proposals would have demolished 30/40,000 homes and was scrapped by the new Labour GLC in 1973. This began to reverse the idea that all transport improvements should be car related.

Christian welcomed the congestion charge, but failure to expand further had limited progress on congestion and pollution. Cyclists had not been favoured enough, and public transport for the masses remains an ambition rather than reality. Pedestrianisation of Oxford Street would signal a big cultural change. Clean air is a big London issue but is not matched by an active policy.

Mayor Johnson has done little in this area to make a difference.

Diesel engines are a big issue – the UK has a greater percentage than the USA. This is an issue with taxis, and the taxi drivers are vocal on this- they are currently limited to diesels when alternatives would be less polluting.

There have been proposals for tram schemes- Livingstone had supported the wrong scheme in West London (Uxbridge to Ealing) and a practical one that did not happen between Camden and Elephant and Castle. The Outer London network in Croydon has worked well. In Paris trams are used to link the outer suburbs to the centre, with economic benefits as a result. This could be a future model for London. Mayor Johnson is not working up schemes so this is going to take a long time to happen.

Christian then summarised the process of selection for the Labour Candidate.

He is so far the only declared candidate – any MPs who are interested will not declare until after the election. The Labour Party selection process starts in May 2015, with nominations invited from

- 74 Constituency Parties
- 13 Trade Unions
- 17 Socialist Societies

The Labour NEC will shortlist with the London Labour party and then the party will proceed to a Primary. There will be three groups eligible

1. Labour Party Members
2. Trade Union Members who have signed up to the Party

3. Labour Party supporters who will have to pay a nominal amount to be part of the electorate (around £3.50)

Others who could declare include Andrew Adonis and Tessa Jowell although both are unlikely to declare before May 2015. Press coverage on the MPs who may be involved is on-going.

Christian then took a range of questions from a lively audience who were glad to put the May elections behind them. We wish Christian well with his campaign, and will no doubt be visited by more of the potential candidates as the selection moves forward.

Future Meetings

The autumn meetings are being arranged and will include visits from the local prospective Candidates Sam Gould and Paul McGeary.

The next meeting we have arranged is with Gavin Callaghan, venue to follow, on Thursday 6th November.

The following is taken from Gavin's website,

"I am enormously proud to be Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Basildon and Billericay in the 2015 General Election and a Labour councillor on Basildon Borough Council where I represent the people of Pitsea North West.

Now more than ever, people need strong Labour voices speaking up for ordinary hardworking and vulnerable people in Basildon who are being badly let down by the Conservatives locally, regionally and nationally.

Since my election in May 2012, I have been actively campaigning on the issues that you tell me, matter most to you. From the Felmores fires, to the Bail Hostel, to the Pitsea regeneration and anti-social behaviour - Labour's team in Pitsea has been standing up for you across Essex.

My aim is to continue to be a visible and accessible local Labour politician so if you have any issues or ideas that you would like to talk to me about, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me."

Details of other speakers in the lead up to May 2015 will be updated on social media once arrangements have been finalised.



If you go to the Bekash in Romford mention you are a Havering Fabian and get 10% discount off your food bill.



We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige.

The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the Borough; if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues we could use, contact David Marshall.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

		Contact
Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	David Marshall
Membership Secretary		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Mike Flynn	Treasurer Dave Baldock	
Committee Members		
Cecile Duerinckx	Ed Glasson	Sanchia Alasia
Wilf Mills	Ian Carnochan	

Future Editions

The next edition will be published in the autumn and focus on the run up to the General Election in May 2015.

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement.

As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos, but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material which falls outside of this parameter.

Links

The following links should be useful in keeping up with the debate in the Labour movement

National Fabian Society www.fabian-society.org.uk

The Labour Party www.labour.org.uk

Jon Cruddas MP for Dagenham www.joncruddas.org.uk

Twitter @joncrudasmp

Barking Labour Party www.barkinglabour.org.uk/

Twitter @barkinglabour

Romford Labour Party www.romford-labour-party.org.uk/

Twitter @romforlabour

Hornchurch and Upminster Labour Party

Website <http://hornchurchandupminsterlabour.org.uk/>

Facebook Hornchurch-Upminster-Constituency-Labour-Party

Twitter @HULabour

Tribune www.tribunemagazine.org

Twitter @Tribunemagazine

Hope not Hate www.hopenothate.org.uk

Twitter @hopenothate

Thames Chase Community Forest

Twitter @Thames_Chase

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/recreation.nsf/LUWebDocsByKey/EnglandEssexNoForestsThamesChaseCommunityForestTheThamesChaseForestCentre>

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His website is www.johnbiggs.org.uk

Twitter @JohnBiggsAM

Havering Fabian Society is affiliated to

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party



Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally, David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



This is the 18th edition of the newsletter. Previous editions are available, please get in touch if you want a copy; all are available via e-mail.

Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

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.....postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5