

HAVERING FABIAN SOCIETY

HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 44 October 2020

**Havering
Fabian Society**
Covering Black
History Month by
Committee
Member Sanchia
Alasia, the
Governance role of
a Councillor, the
Zoom meeting
with Joe Cox from
Labour Unions,
and developments
in housing policy

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VOLUME 2 EDITION 44 October 2020

Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. These are unusual times with the Country on partial lockdown, and we have suspended meetings until some unknown point in the future. The newsletter will continue to provide updates and an opportunity for those of you confined to home to write those articles you always promised us...

This edition contains an article by Sanchia Alasia on Black History Month – pause and reflection, commentary on the governance issues arising from the Council Leader's actions, current issues in Housing and a review of the recent Zoom meeting with Joe Cox.

We are sad to hear about the death of Ron Miller at the age of 92. Ron was a fairly regular attender at Havering Fabian meetings and an active member of Romford Labour Party, featuring in a video used in the last election, A very nice man, who will be missed by all who knew him. RIP.

We now have 1,266 followers on twitter. Keep up to date at our twitter site @haveringfabians for the latest news.

We have a blog now as well as our website

<https://haveringfabians.org/posts/>

You will need to follow us to get updates.

We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties, and will do all we can to support their campaigns. Havering and Dagenham Young Labour are on twitter @HavAndDagYL and hope they reflect a growing interest in Labour politics in Havering.

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

With meetings no longer possible, we have moved discussion online, and have made use of Zoom to host a series of online discussions. Issues with technology have been limited and we have had an interesting range of speakers. We welcomed some interesting visitors from across Europe – Zoom is something we will use in future and is ideal if you cannot get to our meetings.



Our website address is <http://haveringfabians.org>. As you are no doubt aware GDPR means we need to keep our mailing list up to date. If you are not on our mailing list (we use MAILCHIMP – please check your spam folders!) contact us via the website and we will add you in.

Pause and Reflection

The left must become more inclusive to ensure racial equality stays high on the agenda, not only during Black History Month but for the months and years to come, writes Sanchia Alasia.

October is Black History Month, a concept which started in America and is celebrated there in February to mark the birthday of key African American activist, Rosa Parks. But given the significant contribution black Britons make across private and public life, it is vital Black History Month is recognised in the UK, and that attention is drawn to the main policy issues for tackling racial inequality.

The contribution of the black British community is a key part of our history and ultimately should be mainstreamed throughout our curriculum as a core learning point for all students. However, until that happens in a meaningful way, Black History Month is a useful tool to raise awareness

of black British contributions which have largely been erased and forgotten.

The Labour party in the last general election made great strides in black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) representation. However, as the BAME population has increased over the decades, so has the need for greater representation in parliament. The Labour party must consider placing BAME candidates in winnable seats outside of metropolitan areas; something that the Conservative party has already achieved. Bold action around the diversity of our parliamentarians will enable the Labour party to better face the challenges that lie ahead in a post-Covid era.

Think tanks like the Fabian Society have a strong tradition of developing policy and facilitating debate to enhance the work of the Labour Party. Black History Month must now move the dial on formulating more inclusive policies to tackle our social ills. Think tanks like the Fabians should develop rich research into race relations and issues of poverty and inequality specifically centred around race.

A key feature of black British history is the Windrush generation – their story is particularly important today. After the second world war, the United Kingdom needed help to rebuild and to the Caribbean they called. Many immigrated to the UK, seeking new opportunities in jobs that were pivotal to reforming this country, the legacy of which we still see today. The first arrivals docked on 22 June 1948 in Essex aboard the Empire Windrush. They worked in the production of steel, coal, iron, agriculture, public transport, armed forces and in the National Health Service.

However, when the Windrush generation arrived, they faced hostility and overt racism, with signs such as ‘no blacks, no dogs, no Irish’ and often lived in sub-standard accommodation. Although many did gain suitable employment, others, such as teachers, did not have their qualifications from the Caribbean recognised and were belittled. Decades later, under the Conservatives, a hostile environment ensued which meant employers and landlords now had to check passports before allowing employment to commence or continue. Many from the Windrush generation were either wrongly deported or stopped from working for years before the Guardian newspaper, after long investigations, was able to get some traction on their stories which then raised the issue nationally resulting in an apology from the government as well as a review. However, this came too late for

some. Many of the prominent campaigners who were affected by these wrongful deportations have died, including most recently Paulette Wilson from Wolverhampton, and Sarah O'Connor two years' prior who lived in Barking and Dagenham. Many families still await the compensation in any form or in an acceptable settlement.

The stories of both our ancestors and living pioneers need to be told so everyone across Britain is aware of the key role we played in building and shaping the country not just after the second world war or after the arrival of the Empire Windrush but for many centuries prior.

October gives us the opportunity for pause and reflection, but Black History Month should have many eager eyes and ears from all backgrounds, not just those who are black.

For a better, more equal future, change needs to start now, and that means everyone understanding that black history is integral to British history. It will mean that difficult discussions need to be had about the uglier parts of our history: slavery, colonialism and the barriers that our fore parents and we as black people still face. It also means that black history and our contributions should become a part of all the work the Fabians and the Labour party do going forward. In most cases, the black presence has been forgotten. To correct this, we must make a conscious effort to find out what these contributions are and ensure that they are included in our policy work.

The awful murder of George Floyd demonstrates the need for the Black Lives Matter movement. This tragedy has been the catalyst for protest across the globe and has sparked more meaningful conversations with promising action from organisations across the country. Structural racism is real and dismantling it should no longer be an aspiration but a reality for all. The Fabian Society can start by adopting a more inclusive approach to all its practices and research. This will in turn sustain equality, diversity and inclusion not just for Black History Month, not just in October, but for the months and years to come.

*This article first appeared in the Autumn 2020 Fabian Review
Councillor Sanchia Alasia is a Member of Barking and Dagenham
Council, and is a Local Society representative on the National Fabian
Executive Committee.*

Governance is important

The role of a councillor has many aspects. A key part of the role is to ensure good governance and compliance with the Nolan principles.

These are about transparency and honesty in decision making.

A common question for a panel vetting Labour Council candidates is to assess the understanding of these principles- it's not a memory test of the various aspect of the code, more an assessment that the potential candidates understand their wider responsibility.

Public money must be spent wisely and with value for money in mind. The public need to have faith in the integrity of decision making. This means taking decisions based on evidence.

The electoral process must be beyond reproach to maintain public respect. While those running elections will no doubt have views and vote, it is essential that their own preferences are kept out of the administration of elections - integrity is essential.

This absolutely transcends party politics. For elections to be credible the process has to be transparent, and the result respected. Democratic processes require that you will lose elections. While that does not mean the process ends and campaigning cannot continue, the winning Party forms the administration.

They have the right to introduce their manifesto and govern accordingly. They also need to respect that there will be valid criticism from supporters and opponents. At some point, the administration will be defeated and others will take over.

This can happen even within Councils with just one Party. Barking and Dagenham Council saw the transition from the Liam Smith era to Darren Rodwell, Newham the transition from Robin Wales to Rokshana Fiaz. Redbridge saw a change of political control in 2014.

While changes can cause discomfort for those involved, the Councils concerned continue to function and deliver for their residents.

Havering has a minority Conservative administration, kept in place by Harold Wood Residents and defectors from the Residents. Having a majority administration makes decision making easier, so it is understandable that the Conservatives have sought to secure wider support. How they have brought this about, less so. Two of the defections have resulted in the individual becoming Mayor, with an enhanced special responsibility allowance as a result.

The recent revelations about how the Conservative Leader of the Council dealt with the Boundary Commission have been well documented in the local press – a link to the Havering Daily site is below.

<https://thehaveringdaily.co.uk/2020/07/14/breaking-i-have-a-duty-as-an-electoral-member-to-highlight-any-corruption-i-see-councillor-perry-speaks-out/>

The Romford Recorder story is much the same;

<https://www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/politics/what-havering-boundaries-fall-out-means-for-residents-1-6890173>

The mildest way of phrasing this is that the Leader sought to shape the process for Party political advantage. There are other, stronger views.

It's worth considering the Nolan principles in more detail. These are set out below, in full.

The Nolan Principles as set out in the Localism Act Section 28(1)(a), that is:

1. SELFLESSNESS: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. INTEGRITY: Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. OBJECTIVITY: Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. ACCOUNTABILITY: Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. OPENNESS: Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. HONESTY: Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. LEADERSHIP: Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs

Each of these will be considered in turn to establish whether Damien White has complied with the spirit of the Nolan principles in the attempt to shape the Electoral Commission's review of ward boundaries.

Selflessness

The public interest is not the Conservative Party interest, but broader, and served by having boundaries that reflect the local community. Manipulation of the process to secure Party advantage is not acting selflessly.

Integrity

Clearly not- a blatant attempt to manipulate the outcome in Party interest.

Objectivity

Decisions should be taken in the interest of the residents as a whole, not the Conservative Party – the two are not the same even if the Conservatives are the largest group on the Council.

Accountability

Remember the Conservative administration in Havering won 33.2 per cent of the vote in 2018. While the election is on a first past the post winner takes all basis, this is often forgotten. The Council Leadership should be accountable to all Councillors and residents. This is undermined by seeking to alter the election result by changing the ward boundaries not by winning the argument

Openness

The intention was clear - to present the option that best favoured the Conservative party rather than the view of the council overall. This was not to be done in an open way, giving the whole council options and winning the argument, but by manipulating discussion so that no other options would be considered

Honesty

Form your own view on this one!

Leadership

This includes presenting the Borough as a credible organisation that outsiders can rely on and trust. The Council needs to be a respected organisation, irrespective of who is in control of the administration. Attempts at blatant gerrymandering of the ward boundaries for party advantage don't show leadership and risk undermining the credibility of the electoral process; the Borough as a whole suffers reputational damage as a result.

Scrutiny and enquiry

The outcry once the recording was published led to calls for an independent enquiry. This was offered and the Council Monitoring Officer duly appointed...a Director of oneSource, who is effectively their line manager within the Council shared service arrangement.

Wholly inadequate, since everyone is conflicted.

- The officer appointed is a oneSource Director.
- Damien White is on the oneSource Joint committee.
- The subsequent Member panel was re-arranged when a Conservative member was conflicted.
- An adverse finding could damage the oneSource relationship. A favourable finding would attract criticism of self-interest.

While no one questions officer integrity, any decisions and recommendations would be tainted. It is unfair on the individual officers concerned to be put in this position. This is another failure of leadership.

None of this would happen with a third party appointment, which in the circumstances would have been the obvious thing to do.

There was still time to do this and salvage what's left of Havering's reputation.

Instead the Leadership set up a Member panel to consider the matter. This initially stalled by including a conflicted Conservative member who had been at the original meeting, and the reconvened meeting decided that the complaint had "timed out" as 90 days had passed. Even this is dubious as the recording of the meeting was later and only became public at a later date. In any event, the complaint is about integrity and that does not restore over time.

This hardly reflects well on anyone – the Officer report was to be that there was a case to hear.

No one should be able to take governance for granted, least of all the Council Leadership. The public have a right to expect the correct process to be followed. Damien White has overstepped his remit and damaged the Council's reputation.

Political Parties should of course be able to make representation on boundary redistribution. It is legitimate to argue about the need to keep established communities in wards wherever possible. The argument that this favours them electorally is not legitimate at all - elections are won by the strength of argument not by bending the boundaries.

As above the Conservatives got 33.2 % of the vote and 25/54 councillors (46.3%). They do not command a majority and geographical are strong in the west of the Borough and Emerson Park. They have less seats than Labour in the Hornchurch and Upminster constituency and had no councillors elected in the three Dagenham and Rainham wards. Some humility and awareness that their majority is almost an accident would seem appropriate.

Instead they risk damaging the reputation of the Council and the validity of elections. They may look impregnable in the two parliamentary seats they hold - as they once did in the 1980s. Appearances can be deceiving.

There is a significant non-Conservative vote in Havering and MPs are elected to represent all their constituents. The constant reference by Andrew Rosindell about the support he has from his constituents is another example of this arrogance.

Of course, he is selected as a Conservative; he is there to represent all of his constituents even those that did not vote him. Most MPs make this point in their acceptance speech.

This whole saga reflects badly on the Leader and those who support him. Damaging the credibility of elections does untold harm to public confidence in Politicians generally – this benefits no one in the long term including the Council Leadership, who will not be there forever.

Covid and Housing - What comes next?

Covid has come to dominate the political agenda, almost to the exclusion of all else. Economic policy is all about surviving until something like normality returns.

The government housing policy has become a victim of this, and when normality resumes the crisis will be deeper than before. In areas where temporary accommodation¹ is the main provider of new social housing, Covid required emergency measures to

- a) get rough sleepers off the street
- b) get tenants in shared accommodation into separate homes so that they are less vulnerable.
- c) end evictions when alternative accommodation was not available.

Money has been thrown at the problem to ensure a short term crisis is avoided.² This will end and while measures are in place to avoid rough sleepers returning to the streets, it is optimistic to assume there will not be a return once support reduces.

Rough sleepers have a variety of reasons for being homeless. Many are vulnerable, some have dependency issues, suffer or suffered domestic violence, have lost their job or any combination of these. A high proportion are ex- services, a sad indictment of the government commitment to the military covenant that the country should look after its former service men and women,

The solutions are many and varied and require careful management to avoid for example housing vulnerable tenants with those with dependency issues - a potentially dangerous mix for one group to exploit the other.

¹ *There were 280,000 people in Temporary accommodation as at 18 December 2019 – Shelter*

² *For example, £3.2 million was made available in March 2020*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/3-2-million-emergency-support-for-rough-sleepers-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

The long term solution is increased supply and in particular provision of affordable social housing. Social housing requires significant subsidy and can be provided in a number of forms.

- **Via the Planning process** - Private sector developments of ten homes or more are required to make provision for affordable homes, and local planning authorities determine the level. This can be influenced by the subsidy regime where the developers are eligible or provided from the profit on homes built for sale
- -The Greater London Authority, which has strategic planning powers, can call in and decide larger planning applications for developments within the boroughs. The GLA is a key player as it also provides subsidy via grants and sometimes loans to Councils and registered social landlords (housing associations)
- **Via financial subsidy** The GLA favours affordable housing making up 50 per cent of developments and planning applications within their remit will look to make this a condition of any approval. This can cause tension with developers claiming this makes schemes unaffordable (that is they do not make enough profit) and horse trading and negation ensues.

This can be further complicated by other requirements arising from the developments such as schools, roads etc. which require developers to contribute. More scope to negotiate the affordable element down to pay for necessary infrastructure. This is politics and there are trade offs required.

Affordable housing is an emotive phrase and means many different things. The term is used by Government to reflect rented property at 80 per cent of market rents. This gives rents that are distinctly unaffordable for those on low wages, and in areas such as London, often unaffordable for those who would on income earned, be viewed as well paid.

For most of us, affordable rents are rents that can be affordable for those who earnings are reasonable and even below average earnings. Traditionally this would have been council tenants. The benefits system exists to support those whose incomes are less than this and ensure they too can afford housing.

This seemingly benign approach has distorted the market³. The availability of housing benefit and a shortage of supply has over a period of years enabled landlords to raise rents to the level of housing benefit which in turn had to rise to ensure continued supply until government capped the level. This transferred much of the cost to the Councils who have statutory responsibility to provide housing for those who would otherwise be homeless and have to further inflate the market to do so.

Unintended consequences are almost inevitable with housing policy as market intervention causes a reaction - as above housing benefit has distorted the rented sector. Planning policy has had a similar impact, assisted by accounting conventions.

Requiring a higher percentage of affordable properties is a key aim of public policy and embedding this in the planning system seems the best approach.

For a private developer, profit comes from market sales, or rental stream from rented properties. These provide their financial return, and also act as the source of cross subsidy for affordable homes.

Sales on the open market will be driven by where the housing market is, and will vary over the economic cycle. For affordable homes developers will look to sell to a housing provider. Here's where the accountancy does not help. What's the prices you should be paying if you are buying a property let to a secure tenant (or indeed with a sitting secure tenant)?

Well the property cannot be sold on the market without the tenant in situ so the value is in the future rent stream. The future rent stream is often worth less than the cost of construction, so every home is sold at a loss - the developer therefore will seek to minimise the affordable element of a scheme.

³ *The Housing market often moves in strange ways – House prices nationally increased 5% between September 2019 to September 2020 according to a recent BBC survey*

Where the developer is a housing association the same applies - social rent properties are valued at significantly less than construction cost, so for profit focused associations, there is no incentive to build social rent properties. So Housing Associations, set up to provide social housing, now make a loss if they do so. Unintended consequences again. Accounting getting in the way of a socially desirable outcome? You could say that!

One way of addressing this would be to end secure tenancies - this was Tory policy at one point. This means assured short hold tenancies (that is short term with an end) so that the provider does not have a life time or long-term obligation to the tenant, and can if desired sell the property at the end of the tenancy at market value.

Is this really in the long-term interest of tenants of such property? If it's the only game in town, properties will be rented to avoid being homeless but long-term roots in the community will be difficult to establish in such circumstances. Not everyone wants this so there is a place for such housing but for this to become the prime route to new social housing is flawed.

Shared ownership is another approach to deliver low cost housing that provides lower income families a way onto the housing ladder. Schemes can work well in lower cost locations outside of London where a deposit is readily achievable. The higher level of prices in London means potential owners are likely to be unable to raise the deposit without support from parents, so again many are priced out.

Currently the government is preoccupied with Covid and Brexit, so policy developments in other areas have a low profile. This changed recently with proposals to change shared ownership to allow purchase of a lower percentage of the property and end the current practice of repairs and maintenance being a tenant responsibility, the landlord being expected to take this on first ten years. Owners could purchase additional shares one per cent at a time, although as there are legal fees on each purchase it would be more sensible to purchase as much as can be afforded at any point, the logical explanation for the proposed approach.

This is potentially attractive option for the purchaser but for the developer will incur greater costs. So why would they build? The argument will be around greater cost, so, as before, the consequence will be less affordable

housing. There is a need to move towards a different approach. The answer is a range of policies that are cohesive, sadly lacking at present.

Right to buy is at best half a policy and was in the 1959 Labour manifesto. The principle if right to buy is continue is that each sale should lead to a replacement and funding should flow - this can only come from Government if more than a trickle of homes is to be delivered.

The finances of council housing are complicated, which does not help drive effective policy making. Currently right to buy sales are at a discount depending on length of tenancy, and government retains a proportion of the receipt- basically sales are at less than replacement cost and subsidy is needed to bridge the gap. Tempering the policy with other measures risks the unintended consequences identified above

This means easy solutions are impossible. There will also be a need for significant funding on an ongoing basis. Current government policy has led to councils setting up a multitude of different procurement vehicles including housing companies and participation in joint ventures to try and deliver more housing at great expense. The lead in time means this has yet to deliver at a national level although there are exceptions such as Barking and Dagenham where its housing company Be First is producing results.

The answer has to be a move towards council house building that is sustainable. If right to buy is to continue, there has to be a programme for replacement social housing that is adequately funded by Government, rather than the current arrangement that leaves costs with the council. The approach put forward in respect of the new shared ownership proposals shows government have not moved on from this.

Modern methods of construction, basically offsite construction delivered to the site offer potential for increasing the pace of delivery. However, these are still at an early stage and need to reach critical mass to deliver the numbers required. Anything short of a fully funded programme won't deliver. The lead in times are significant so there has to be long term commitment. With interest rates almost at zero, there has never been a better time for borrowing to invest. Long term more public housing will mean lower temporary accommodation costs. It is essential if the crisis is to be dealt with funding from government is required.

Labour Unions – the on-going importance of the Trade unions link

Our September zoom session was with Joe Cox from Labour Unions. Labour Unions co-ordinate the affiliated Trade Unions and the Labour Party to campaign for a Labour government, and Joe is their political officer.



Figure 1 Joe Cox complying with government guidelines

The meeting began with an overview of the current political climate. The December 2019 General Election had been tumultuous and reflected the current instability in politics in the UK. The pandemic has seen an economic recession, with massive numbers dependent on social security and furlough payments, many large companies – British Airways, British Gas, British Telecom – had been firing and re-hiring staff, and thousands are having terms and conditions eroded with little visibility.

Trade union membership before the pandemic was 6.4 million. The pandemic had seen a significant increase, concentrated in areas where union membership had been in decline. While numbers are still increasing, more than one union has indicated an increase of 25,000 in the early months of lockdown, meaning greater participation in unions.

The increased awareness of health and safety, together with a general nervousness about the economic future were both contributory factors. The skills base of trade union organisers had had to adapt as well, which has happened, and trade unions had helped secure the furlough scheme.

At the sharp end of the pandemic, local organisers have been key in securing health and safety measures and social distancing in the workplace. The key role of Trade Unions in securing these measures, often essential to matters of life and death, have given unions an added prominence and at the front and centre of the efforts to deal with the pandemic.

Life for working people had been hard beforehand with years of austerity and economic stagnation. When the furlough scheme ends, there is a fear of mass unemployment. There will be an important role for unions to work politically to secure on going government support, so the trade union link is still important.

The trade unions were important to the creation of the Labour Party and remain so today. Prior to the birth of the Labour Party, some unions had supported the Liberals. With Keir Hardie as Labour Leader this began to change, and there were several key events which secured support.

The Manningham Mills strike⁴ of 1890 in Bradford was a turning point in the history of working-class struggle, not only for the local movement but also having repercussions nationally. It clearly showed the basic class conflict between labour and capital, exposing the sham paternalism of many mill owners, and furthermore highlighted the true class loyalties of the Liberal party.

Trade union funding was essential for working class MP's such as Keir Hardie, as MPs had little or no pay, with the bulk of the Conservative and Liberal Party MPs having independent wealth that meant a salary was unnecessary.

⁴ http://www.bbc.co.uk/bradford/sense_of_place/manningham_mills.shtml

The Labour Representation Committee formed in 1900 and a motion at the TUC special conference provided for sponsoring of Labour MPs.

The Taff Vale judgement of 1901⁵ saw the successful trial of a suit brought by the Taff Vale Railway Company against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) in which the courts held that a union could be sued for damages caused by the actions of its officials in industrial disputes. Opposition to the decision did much to spur the growth of the Labour Party as collectively the need to reverse the judgment grew. Industrial disputes continued.

In February 1905 there was an important meeting at Caxton Hall to coordinate the Trade Union opposition to Taff Vale, and the 1906 election that followed saw 29 Union sponsored Labour MPs elected.

A number of issues relevant then remain so today; workplace organisation is not enough; a collective political voice is needed to drive through change; to do this requires our own representatives in Parliament.

Trade unions are grounded in the workplace and can ensure their voice is heard at every level in society.

There are 12 unions affiliated to the Labour Party, with representatives at local, regional and national level. The National Executive Committee has 13 trade union representatives, so trade union influence remains significant within the Party.

Trade unions meet with the Labour leadership on a formal basis every quarter, and play an important part in the Party National Policy Forums. They have around half the votes at Labour Party Conference, so are hard wired into Party decision making. The political offer from the Labour party is shaped at every level by Unions.

Trade Unions provide significant training opportunities for members, including training to stand for election as local councillors. Leadership training is provided to ensure the unions have a strong base in the Party.

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Taff-Vale-case>

The structures are delegate based to facilitate promotion of the collective union view. Unions provide access to around four million members for the Party, and are crucial – opting into the political fund is an important part of the financing of the Party.

Unions provide an opportunity to build solidarity across the movement outside elections, and there will always be industrial struggles to support.

The Labour movement faces many struggles, starting with the global pandemic, but including climate change, housing etc.

The world of work is changing with many offices now based in front rooms as people work from home, with mental health issues more to the fore and rapid changes in technology.

The gig economy gives unions a potential platform to ensure issues such as health and safety are dealt with – insecurity at work will grow and it is important that the worst aspects are challenged.

Trade Unions' only hope is to work with the Labour Party and strengthen links within the workplace. This will give life chances to working people.

Increasing union membership is seen by many workers as an insurance policy as the fear factor caused by the pandemic increases. Factories in Leicester with poor conditions were key in the spread of the covid pandemic, with almost slave like conditions in clothing factories.

Social distancing and sanitisation are issues of life and death in these circumstances, and union membership has a critical role to play. New members can play a role beyond the workplace and beyond.

Workplace stress and isolation are growing issues – good trade union representatives are key to dealing with this. Mental Health first aid is an important development and is another area where unions can assist.

A good discussion followed, which included recognition that key workers during the pandemic were not just the expected NHS staff, but staff in traditional low paid jobs within care homes and shops, who were having to

potentially face the virus every day, Any economic re-alignment should reflect their value to society.

A good meeting, and we look forward to Joe being able to attend one of our future meetings in person.

Future Meetings -when we resume.

When we are able to resume meetings Wes Streeting has agreed to speak to get us off to a flying start. Many of you would have watched Ilford North MP Wes Streeting launch his Fabian pamphlet via webinar. He has agreed to come and talk when meetings resume.

Newly elected MP for Ilford South Sam Tarry has also agreed to come to a future meeting, and we look forward to being able to welcome Judith Garfield the Labour candidate for the May 2021 Havering and Redbridge seat on the GLA. Barking and Dagenham Cabinet member Samia Ashraf has also agreed to speak. We will arrange dates and venues once the current crisis ends.

Politics in Havering

Many of you will already be aware of the excellent Politics in Havering Blog, which we repost via our twitter feed. This gives a regular update on politics within the borough – a link is below, please follow them (and our blog!) for regular updates!

<https://haverling.blog/>

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
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Vice Chair Sam Gould		



Chair Keith Darvill reports ...

Future Editions

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. Our next edition will be in December 2020 and will hopefully reflect being nearer to a return to something like normality, and we can stop looking at screens all day.

Having 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 and Dagenham Young Labour

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.



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.

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I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

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.....postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5