**Minutes of NPC Executive Committee**

**25 March 2021 by Zoom**

**In attendance:** Please see appendix

**Apologies:** Pat Turner, Dot Gibson, Roger Darke, Les McDowell, David Robinson (Arthur Bavister in attendance in his place)

Ron welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for a minute’s silence as a mark of respect to our members who are no longer with us.

Barry informed the meeting that Monty Meth, President of Enfield Pensioners Forum and long standing NPC supporter has passed away aged 95 years. He was an active campaigner all his life and will be missed by his family and the Pensioners Forum.

Jan said that she first met Monty at Blackpool and from the first meeting, he has always invited me to Enfield Pensioners Forum. He would sit and wait until the end and pop up with a question for me with a glint in his eye. He did it kindly and we had many good debates.

1. **Minutes of meeting held on 21 January 2021:**

Tony O’Brien raised that there was an omission to the minutes in regard to the Housing report and how he was treated. This will be corrected.

Agreed.

1. **Matters Arising:**

* Issues with vaccinations in Eastern Region; i.e. late notification of appointments, venue closed on the day; problems with public transport.
* Zoom meetings are long; can we please focus.

1. **General Secretary’s Report:**

There are some additions to the report on issues that have recently arisen:

1. The BBC have re-iterated their policy of not visiting and/or enforcing payment of the TV licence in households with a person over 75. A call is booked for this afternoon with Clare Sumner at the BBC to get some clarity around what happens in 2022 to those not paying their licence fee.
2. Also a call booked with Catherine West MP on the closure of the Mary Feilding Guild Home in Haringey. It was sold by the Trustees and the new owner has issued eviction notices and intends to demolish the home and rebuild. The issue with the sale is due diligence by the Trustees and the new owner
3. NHS Reform White Paper. Attended a meeting on Monday night with 16 others to look at the common concerns over the white paper. We meet again in April to look at what amendments can be submitted that would make the Bill (the outcome of the white paper) less harmful. At the same time, I have agreed to work with others on the message we need to get across to the public as part of the campaign. We heard that the recent installation of an Integrated Care Service (ICS) has had problems.
4. We have identified policy issues that ‘cross-over’ between working parties. For example, Health & Social Care are linked to Pensions & Income, Housing, Digital Inclusion, LGBT and Transport. We need to use our finite resources efficiently. Likewise, the Women’s Working Party, LGBT and Minority Elders Committee have interests in all other working parties.

Discussion/comments:

* Arthur Bavister: opted for fortnightly payments, but if forgets, a reminder letter arrives within a few days. Cost of letters.
* Tony Donoghue: Problem with the ICS? Jan said it was not known at the moment, will give an update when information received. It is important that we get the right message out; there are generations who have no idea what life would be like without the NHS.
* Janet Shapiro: Centene campaign and petition – we have circulated and encourage everyone to sign as they are applying for contracts across the country.
* David Briggs: Pension credit cost to the government? Jan replied it is estimated at around £1.6 - £1.8 billion.
* Tony Garner: Government doesn’t pay for letters. Making a commitment to pay by instalments is legally binding, whereas not paying is not.
* Norman Jemison: Has received a number of reminders and will continue to ignore until such time as he receives a court notice.
* There is a difference between reminder letters and enforcement letters.

Jan said that it is an individual perspective about what constitutes harassment and how that individual feels. Everyone is different.

The statement requested at the Regional Secretary’s meeting was agreed.

**Report agreed**

1. **Treasurer’s Report:**

Barry said there is no written report as the Finance Working Party (FWP) has submitted one. The budget sheet is self-explanatory and is an estimate. National affiliations are coming in and we received £12,000 in March. We are also grateful for the donations received from RMT and ASLEF. Steve Whitehead will present a more detailed report at the next EC.

The FWP recommended a staff salary increase of 1% with a review towards the end of the year if finances allow. We know this is not enough, but we must act within our means and not on assumptions.

Questions:

* John Dowdle: We don’t get a balance sheet. Peter responded as Chair of FWP explaining that the audit has been delayed due to the pandemic. Auditors already have our accounts, but want to meet with myself, Barry and Mohammad when it is safe to do so.

**Report agreed**

**Peter Rayner in the Chair**

1. **London Region Motion:**

Barry apologised for submitting the wrong motion. Janet Shapiro moved the motion on behalf of London Region, seconded by Tony O’Brien.

The essence of the motion is that all those shielding should have an income in line with the government furlough scheme. There are people who are forced to work because of low income or their employer refusing to furlough them. Everyone should have financial support.

Tony said that those people ordered by their employer to continue to work puts them at risk from the virus. An example is the WASPI women who have been left without a state pension.

Employers are duty bound to make adjustments, but 1 in 8 of those over 60 are dismissed rather than furloughed or have their work adjusted.

Discussion/debate:

* Marion Wilson: In sympathy but concerned about the age of 60 rather than the retirement age which is 66. Is there any evidence on how many and what trade or profession they are working in?

**Ron Douglas returned to the Chair**

Tony O’Brien responded that these are agency workers, care home staff and others who are intimidated into not asking for furlough in case they lose their job. In the main they are not Trade Union members.

* Sandra Durkin: Confused – understand the motive for the motion but why 60+ furlough? Most on furlough get 80% of wages which is often less than the minimum wage. It is not a gift from the employer – it is paid by the government. I am opposed.
* Rosie McGregor: Agree with Sandra and will vote against.
* John Lean: it rectifies and anomaly in payment.
* Ingrid Caras-Atlas: very confusing, will vote against.

Ron offered the mover the right of reply at which stage a point of order was made about Amendment 2 from TSSA. Steve Whitehead withdrew the amendment.

The poll was taken with the result that the motion was lost: 38% for; 47% against; 10% abstained.

1. **Campaign Officer Report:**

Bev introduced her report which showed the breadth of work the NPC was currently undertaking. She identified that there are links between the policies we are campaigning for which will be the topic of discussion at the joint Chairs of Working Party meeting.

There are lots of issues arising and we have to prioritise what we do with the resources we have so that we can promote our campaigns properly.

Comments/Questions:

* John Dowdle congratulated Bev on dealing with a whole load of issues. Endorsed by Jenny Sims.
* Philip Burgess: The triple lock is urgent as the government will come for pensioners.
* Arthur Bavister: Endorse comments on congratulations to Bev. I have a communication problem with press releases. Jonathan said these are on mail chimp and it is easy to unsubscribe yourself.
* Barry: Endorse reports and they should be circulated as it shows the amount of ‘behind-the-scene’ work.
* Vic Jeffries: standing in for Steve Turner – and interesting and varied meeting.

Bev thanked everyone who helps us, nationally and locally.

1. **Information Officer Report:**

Jonathan introduced his report which was self-explanatory. The bulk of the work recently has been invoicing for affiliation renewals. We now have an online shop. Continuing every day admin and highlighting issues of interest to NPC. Website hits and social media continue to grow.

Comment/Questions:

* Norman Jemison: Thanks to Jonathan for the Zoom guidelines.
* Increasing use of abbreviations – write out in full and bracket the abbreviation.
* Much more information is going out to regions and organisations but often doesn’t go very far. Difficulties with forums picking up from Jonathan direct.
* John Dowdle: Easy to unsubscribe. Explain to members that when forwarding information, they should delete the ‘unsubscribe’ function, otherwise the person receiving it could unsubscribe. In effect they unsubscribe you.

Ron thanked Bev and Jonathan for all their hard work.

1. **Working Party Nominations:**

Nominations for the LGBT and Housing Working Parties were agreed. The ballot result for membership of the Digital Working Party was ratified.

1. **Working Party Reports:**
2. Finance (FWP): Peter introduced the report which included the role the FWP takes in ensuring our business is open and honest

**Report greed**

1. Pensions & Income (PIWP): The report recommendations for the NPC policy to reflect monetary value as well as percentages to give an accurate view of the difference between the increase to pensioners and working people was agreed.

Points from report:

* Norman Jemison: equalising the two pension schemes is necessary.
* Tony Garner: everything is index-linked – motion is going to Unite Conference.
* John Dowdle: Rishi Sunak is revisiting austerity and pensioners are a likely target. Need to form coalitions. On annuities, try Martin Lewis and Money Box.

Jan informed the meeting that whilst currently the new state pension is £40 a week more than the old scheme, research is showing that over time, those on the new state pension will be worse off. Currently the replacement rate is 29%; in the future it will reduce to something like 24%.

The content of the presentation to the TUC General Council will be on Intergenerational Solidarity – their members now – pensioners of the future and how we can all work together to achieve the best.

We will follow up Martin Lewis and Money Box connections.

**Report agreed.**

1. Housing: Tony reported that tenant’s evictions are ongoing; rent arrears are increasing due to the cap on housing benefit. Working party will review priorities. The leaflet needs updating. The government is not listening to anyone. An invitation will be made to the LGBT group to attend a meeting. Need to replace one member.

On the issue of amendment to the January minutes, the General Secretary will undertake to do this. LGBT group is still lacking members, but as we have just completed a round of nominations from National and Regional bodies, we will look to do this again later in the year.

**Report agreed.**

1. Transport: Peter presented the report. Current concern is the operation of e-scooters – safety for people, particularly older people. The government has taken against public transport under cover of the pandemic emergency powers which will have an adverse impact on passengers.

Points from report:

* Tony Donoghue: Public transport is in a vulnerable situation post COVID. The government will use anything to reduce the financial burden.
* Tony Garner: e-scooters can only be accessed through companies licenced to do so. They should be on the road not on pavements. Limited length of battery life. Instances of e-scooters left lying on pavements, running out of power. On buses, locally there is an ‘on-demand’ service that can be booked – these do routes off the main bus timetables.
* Damian Ibison: the government want to stop public transport. They wear too many hats.
* Linda Richards: Is there a licence required to use e-scooters? The pavement is used more than the road. There are areas without e-scooters.
* Paul Russell: Concern about transport immediately after the pandemic. £3billion into national bus strategy recognises that private doesn’t work; promises integrated services, better fares, eco-friendly buses. It can’t be done unless the £3billion is an initial investment. Request that Transport WP look at the document and report to a future EC.
* Gareth Parsons: on e-scooters – police unable or unwilling to act on either being used on road or pavements – masks?
* David Luxton: Transport for London (TfL) have a battle in London with funding on hold until the Mayoral elections. Not sure if this is more sensible funding or to embarrass the current Mayor.
* David Briggs: cashless payments on buses is an issue. Manchester bringing their buses into public ownership.
* Arthur Bavister: mobility scheme/mobility allowance?

Peter responded on the mobility issue – the allowance moves with retirement age as does the bus pass.

**Report agreed.**

1. Digital Working Party: Jenny Sims presented the report, highlighting the two recommendations that the EC need to approve; i.e. (1) The Age UK report calling for investment for older people to be enabled to be connected and (2) research project by Maureen Childs to find out the difficulties encountered in technology.

Points from the report:

* Damian Ibison: the government is forcing us onto computers.
* Paul Russell: All the emphasis is about inclusion, assisting people and not dealing with exclusion. People are being forced to get involved with all kinds of things and they shouldn’t have to. Losing sight of something that incurs other frightening issues. No organisation/government should be allowed to force people online.
* John Dowdle: Census – telephone number to request form in the post as a non-internet alternative at ONS*. (Everyone should have received a letter from Census people with a personal code to access online form, and the telephone number to ring in case of problems or other issues).*
* Ofcom consultation submission end of March. Further phases to this consultation that we can respond to.
* David Briggs: Part B of ‘Connections for All’ is about exclusion.
* Janet Shapiro: providers are not necessarily reliable on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
* Bev: running two sections to the campaign – issues will come through the working party chairs meeting. Huge implications for older people.
* Tony O’Brien: understand the issue of choice, but advancement of technology will continue, so campaign for inclusion is key.

***Amendment:***

Jan commented on the recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: The DWP recommends the NPC writes to Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (and possibly also the minister, Caroline Dinenage) calling for substantial increased funding for older people to acquire digital skills.**

**The DWP also recommends that as part of its digital inclusion campaign*, Connections for All*, the NPC compiles and sends this letter asap.**

A letter to the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) is being constructed, but it will go further than the Age UK report. There are massive areas of exclusion and the Equality 2010 Act lays out how goods and services should be equally delivered to customers.

**Recommendation 2:** **The DWP recommends the NPC sends out Maureen Childs’ letter to members to NPC regions and groups to aid a research project as set out in the working party report.**

A poll taken on the research project – 92% in favour, 4% against, 4% abstained. We will ensure that Maureen’s request is sent to Regions.

**Report agreed.**

1. Women’s Working Party: Rosie McGregor presented the report highlighting the activity on International Women’s Day; the payments to be made to women who have been underpaid their pension for decades; nomination of women into key positions in the NPC; the Census telephone line telling an individual to go online to sign up for a postal census form!

Points from report:

* Meg McDonald: equalities issues growing for women. Women suffered the worst of COVID losing work, having caring responsibilities etc. Look at ourselves and opportunities for women.
* David Briggs: Life expectancy and pension age interlinked *(PIWP are aware and will design a campaign around all relevant issues)*

**Report agreed.**

1. Health & Social Care: Because of time, Jan asked the EC to note the report and agree the recommendations on the Manifesto and White Paper.

**Report agreed.**

1. Minority Elders Committee: We will circulate a written report with these minutes. Ellen spoke of the work the committee undertakes to ensure that Minority Elders have a voice in other organisations to represent their views. She gave members the correct understanding of BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic – identified across race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Issues with BAME and COVID need to be addressed as they are the most disadvantage by income, health, care and housing.

**Report agreed.**

1. **National Pensioners Education and Welfare Centre:**

No report.

1. **A.O.B.:**

* Recruit more BAME and women *(the EC just agreed the General Secretary’s report which contained the Structure Working Party review – recruitment is a big part of the review)*
* Sheffield strikers in the construction industry have won the overturning of their prison sentence. Unfortunately, some have passed away before this case took place.

1. **Next meeting:** 27 May 2021 @ 10.30 am on Zoom. The General Secretary will pilot a prioritised and timed agenda for the upcoming National Council and apply to the next EC meeting.

**Appendix**

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| Group | First name | Surname |
| Co-optee ME | Antonietta Bortone | Tinney |
| UCU | Philip | Burgess |
| NPC Eastern Region | Tony | Garner |
| Treasurer | Barry | Todman |
| NPC Yorkshire & Humber | Paul | Russell |
| NPC President | Ron | Douglas |
| TSSA | Steve | Whitehead |
| UCATT | Tony | O'Brien |
| Vice President | Marion | Wilson |
| Vice President | Norman | Jemison |
| Vice President | Peter | Rayner |
| Deputy General Secretary | Dot | Gibson |
| NPC Anglia | Chris | Brooks |
| UNISON | Rosie | MacGregor |
| General Secretary | Jan | Shortt |
| RMT | Tony | Donaghey |
| NPC West Midlands | Ingrid | Caras-Atlas |
| PCS / ARMS | Sandra | Durkin |
| NUJ | Jenny | Sims |
| co-optee WWP | Meg | McDonald |
| Prospect | Athur | Bavister |
| BTPF | Les | McDowell |
| NPC Wales | Gareth | Parsons |
| NPC Thames Valley | Linda | Richards |
| CWU | Damian | Ibison |
| NASUWT/FRMA | Roger | Darke |
| NPC NW | Ralph | Moses |
| NPC Northern | Roy | Rix |
| NARF | Francis | Byrne |
| Unite | Phil | Wiseman |
| CSPA | David | Luxton |
| NPC Vice President | Ellen | Lebethe |
| RCN | David | Briggs |
| NPC Home Counties North | John | Dowdle |
| NPC London Region | Janet | Shapiro |
| NPC LGBT working party | Yvonne | Washbourne |
| NPC LGBT working party | Brian | Allbutt |
| NPC South East | John | Lean |
| NPC Campaign Officer | Bev | Morrison |
| NPC Information Officer | Jonathan | Safir |