**GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**25 JULY 2023**

1. **Special Delegate Conference:**

The Special Delegate Conference held on 27 June adopted the new Constitution unamended. This will be circulated to all delegates/observers to the Conference along with the minutes from the same. Copies will be sent to all contacts for national affiliates and regions. The Constitution and attendant structure will go on the website for reference.

The NPC now has one accountable body – a National Executive Council (NEC) and letters of invitation to all affiliates and regions to elect delegates to the Council will be sent out along with the Roles and Responsibilities of NEC delegates.

For those affiliates/regions whose schedule of meetings do not allow for delegates to be elected prior to the first meeting of the new Council in November, they have been asked to contact the General Secretary in order to discuss the best way forward for each group.

The Structure Working Party recommended to Officers that the tenure of delegates to the NEC should be from November 2023 to April 2026 in view of the extraordinary events of the NPC review which means NEC delegates will only have 5 months before another selection process. The NPC needs stability and extending the tenure of office by this amount will give us an uninterrupted period of work prior to the 2026 Biennial Delegate Conference.

For clarity, the Executive Committee (EC) will meet for the last time on 27 September and the first meeting of the NEC will take place on 28 November. We will trial a hybrid meeting for the first one and then Council will make a decision on whether we have full in person meetings or stay with hybrid. Much will depend on finances for affiliates, the cost of travel and availability of transport.

1. **Structure Working Party:**

The Structure Working Party has still work to do, particularly around the regional structure once the regions have completed their work on membership databases and those who have (or are working towards) constitutions allowing for individual member’s participation and voting processes.

The work on the internal operation of the NPC Working Parties will be circulated in September and the November National Executive Council will decide on implementation.

Work with the regions will take time as we must ensure that all regions and their members are involved in any changes and that reports are given to the NEC for decision.

1. **Annual Convention:**

There were around 300 attendees at the start of the Convention. A huge range of speakers were heard, each of them feeding back positively on their experience and many wishing to work with the NPC on specific areas. We have had feedback on the venue and in the main members were appreciative of having everything in one place and accessible. However, we can always improve and we are now looking at how we encourage more participation by members. There is a feeling that to move the Convention around the country may access us to different groups of people and help regions recruit. Blackpool has clearly been a favourite for some time and we have had a quote from the Imperial Hotel. The cost of the hire of rooms is the same, but the cost of accommodation has increased for 2024. This is evident across the country. We also need to be asking members to book in advance as numbers are important in terms of the size of the room. For instance, a small increase over this year would not be sustainable at the Imperial Hotel. Larger venues cost more.

Bev and Jonathan will report their experiences. We have also received feedback from members and Regional Secretaries. The last EC heard that we had received 15 responses from 50 eligible voters to our consultation. Coupled with the feedback and experiences in June, holding two events in the same week is difficult given our resources, and consideration to the welfare of staff, officers and participants. Officers are therefore recommending two separate events in 2024.

1. **Voter ID:**

Figures from the Electoral Commission show that 14,000 eligible voters were not able to vote.

The erratic recording and reporting from polling stations does not give a clear picture of the reasons why people were turned away; i.e. having no ID; having the wrong ID; having ID that was out of date. We have contacted the Electoral Commission asking if there is a possibility of showing age groups of those excluded, but we are not hopeful.

1. **Ticket Office Closures:**

We signed 2 joint letters on the issue of the planned closure of ticket offices very short consultation. One was with RMT and a range of disability groups; the other was with the Association of British Commuters with 31 signatories from a range of organisations. These will be on the website shortly.

An Early Day Motion (EDM 1418: Future of railway ticket offices) had only 20 signatures from MPs as at 19 July. It would be helpful if we could all encourage local MPs to sign.

RMT, ASLEF and TSSA are still taking a variety of strike action. I attended Newcastle Central Station on 18 July where RMT members were engaging with the public on the proposed closure of ticket offices. It is a busy station and I was impressed with how the RMT members posed questions to passengers and how they reacted. Very positive in understanding that strikes are not just about pay, but are about preserving quality public services. Also raising a lot of concerns about how they and their family would be able to travel without the facility of ticket office staff. I will be in attendance again on 22 July for the next co-ordinated strike.

1. **Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England:**

Bev and Jonathan will report on the latest meeting and the possibility of Baroness Neville-Rolfe meeting Kemi Badenoch, Equalities Minister.

I was invited to the launch of Colin Smyth’s Private Members Bill on a Commissioner for Older People in Scotland held in the Scottish Parliament. Independent Age led the discussion in Scotland with Age Scotland. The NPC is there as a member of the coalition in England.

1. **68 Too Late:**

The campaign raised it profile at the Annual Convention with an animated presentation from Joe Rollins and Josh Berlyne. Unite have commissioned research on the cost of living connected to the profits of energy companies and other organisations delivering what can be described as a ‘public’ service. We continue to move forward in making the campaign an election issue.

Link to Unite report ‘Unite Investigates Profiteering’: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/unite-investigates/>

1. **Cost of Living/Pensioner Poverty:**

The ONS have published inflation rates for June:

RPI = 10.7% (Down from 11.3% in May)

CPI = 7.9% (Down from 8.7% in May) (

(Gap to RPI = 2.8 percentage points;**up** from 2.6 in May)

CPIH = 7.3% (Down from 7.9% in May)

(Gap to RPI = 3.4 percentage points: no change from May)

Food inflation is at 17.4%

It is going to be a very slow downward turn for inflation. Some energy companies are predicting rises in fuel costs in the Autumn. The two major costs to older people – food and energy are still high and will remain a priority for the NPC. Age UK have published their report ‘Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis for Older People – What the Government Must Do’ – find it on the website and download to share with everyone. Their new project will focus on those people who will retire in the next 10 years.

We supported the launch in parliament of the Energy for All Manifesto with the Fuel Poverty Alliance and are still on the issue of prepayment meters (PPMs) in the courts.

1. **Digital Inclusion/Exclusion**

The Digital Poverty Alliance held a Working Symposium & Round Table, chaired by Helena Herklots with representatives from Loughborough University; NPC; Age UK and Independent Age. Ageing Better were unable to attend. We received a presentation and were asked for feedback on the usefulness of the mission statements. The group did not agree with all of the statements which needed more focus on alternatives to online only; language and jargon. These were dealt with in a short meeting online between Jonathan, Helena and Paul (DPA). This is a closed group at the moment.

End Digital Poverty Day is 12 September – Digital Poverty Alliance. This is about raising awareness in communities.

1. **TUC:**

Unfortunately, our meeting with Paul Nowak for 10 July was cancelled and we are hopeful of getting one on zoom shortly.

1. **Biennial Delegate Conference 2024:**

On the basis of two separate events in 2024, we are attempting to source reasonable venues for the BDC. It is proving difficult either due to the dates (26/27 March 2024) being unavailable, cost of accommodation. Our efforts are ongoing in a range of areas across the country that can be accessed by mainline stations. As the next EC will take place after we need to have the documentation sent out to affiliates, I suggest the decision is left to the Officer team.

1. **Manifesto for Older People:**

We have a second motion on this issue and we could go on and on adding to it. We have an existing Manifesto which can be used as a starting block with the points contained in the two motions added if not already included. I suggest that Officers work on a draft to be circulated to the September EC.

1. **GS Activities:**

* 68 Too Late
* Special Delegate Conference
* Annual Convention
* Age Sector Forum
* Scottish Parliament – Launch of Private Members Bill
* Northern Region event for Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England
* Digital Poverty Alliance Symposium/Round Table
* Yorkshire/Humberside Bus Conference
* Regional Secretaries
* Structure Working Party
* Attendance at pickets for rail, NHS, teachers

**Jan Shortt**

**July 2023**