**MINUTES OF NPC REGIONAL SECRETARY’S MEETING**

**HELD ON 1 JULY 2021**

**ON ZOOM**

**In attendance**: Chris Brooks/Aisha Jermy (Anglia); Tony Garner (Eastern); Barry Todman (Greater London); Martin Dent (Northern); John Martin (Northern Ireland); John Paine (Thames Valley); Brian Albutt (for Sandra Durkin, West Midlands); Paul Russell (Yorkshire/Humberside); Keith Evans (GAS;

Jeff Richards (for Dereck Roberts/Gareth Parsons, Wales); Marion Wilson; Ron Douglas; Bev Morrison; Jonathan Safir; Jan Shortt

**Apologies:** Don Harper/Pat Turner (Wessex); Peter Rayner, Ellen Lebethe; Dot Gibson; Freda Gray (Home Counties North).

Ron welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Minutes of meeting held on 15 April 2021:**
2. Amendment to page 4 under Regional Reports – Northern Ireland. This should now read:

*The Stormont Assembly had put out a consultation document on the Programme for Government 2021-2022 and the region had submitted several items affecting either now or in the future and that AGE DISCRIMINATION, WARM HOMES SCHEME, BUS PASS ETC be included.*

*Since Age Sector Platform folded due to lack of funds, the region was seeking to replicate, albeit on a small scale, a new organisation to take up the cudgels on behalf of older people in Northern Ireland, hence the need for a research and development officer for which we hope to get government funds to enable us to achieve that element of a new organisation.*

*Exploring the possibility of getting charitable status and we have been told that is a difficult objective to achieve.*

**Minutes agreed with amendment.**

1. **Matters Arising not covered on the agenda:**

* Marion – received email from Census about not filling in the form.
* Tony G – They seem to be chasing up paper forms. They are having clearing problems with paper forms.
* Brian – affiliation for West Midlands being sorted. Individual supporters – would be helpful to encourage them to sign up to regions. *This has always been done when an individual asks to become a member. Some choose to receive information only. Those interested in regional activity are passed on to the Regional Secretary as relevant.*
* Chris – update on risk assessments on hospitals in Anglia, some of which are in danger of falling down, without the funding to carry out maintenance and repair work. Issues of patients being shifted to other hospitals for their treatment.

1. **Update from General Secretary:**

There were no additional items to add to the update.

Points raised:

* Barry – Digital Working Party issues are not the only issues for NPC. Concern that to treat other working parties equally, would be a burden on the agenda.
* Tony G – Southport – raised the question of the impact on extra bank holidays on our date for the Annual Convention 2022. Will raise at meeting next week.
* John P – If we could have a single sheet of bullet points that would help and regions could add to the list. Issues around NHS Digital and Digital First
* Paul: Digital Working Party – concerned about approach. Individuals have every right not to be joined up. There are safety issues with scams on the increase. Need to be clear about risks and rights.
* Jeff: Wales would support Digital Working Party on the agenda.
* Aisha: Has been scammed. It is happening to everyone – intelligent people have been scammed – more sophisticated as time goes on. We are being pushed more and more to go online.

*Jan responded to say that equality of treatment is at the heart of what NPC needs to be doing.*

*She explained that the webinar we would be organising would be solely about exclusion and hopefully to get those in power to come along and say how they will make sure that everyone – connected or not – can access information, participate and be heard as is their human right.*

A poll was taken on the inclusion of Digital Working Party on the future agendas of Regional Secretaries:

For inclusion: 23%

Against inclusion: 62%

Abstained 15%

**Report Agreed.**

1. **Structure Working Party Review:**

Jan explained that today was not about discussing the review of the regions, more to gain an understanding of the problems and when and how we start the process with our regions. Many regions are not meeting at all, others are holding zoom meetings with smaller numbers and there is a whole raft of members excluded because of lack of technology or other problems. The Structure Working Party meets next week.

What has happened so far is a report and process was placed before the Executive Committee in May with approval to move forward. Our first issue is barriers to participation and a letter accompanied by a questionnaire will go out to our National Affiliates very shortly with a time frame of 3 months – end of September deadline for responses.

Regions are an extremely important part of the NPC and we need to ensure full participation by regional affiliates.

Points raised:

* Brian – we need to use the lessons learned on communication.
* Jeff – have regular zoom meetings, less attendees
* Chris – without zoom it would have impacted on us more. Issue of continuity of officers

We will feedback from discussions at the Structure Working Party in time for the next Regional Secretaries meeting.

1. **Update on Campaigns:**

Jan reported that several meetings are in the diary. One with the Centre for Ageing Better and another with Independent Age, both of whom we hope will support our campaign for a Commissioner for Older People in England.

Webinar on Digital Exclusion – needs to be high profile and will cover such issues as digital safety and scams.

National Care Service – looking more likely to be a round table with organisations already involved in the care sector, carers, those receiving care etc.

The triple lock issue for 2022 and also a high profile campaign on a decent state pension.

Points raised:

* Barry – London has had two campaign successes – London stations taking credit cards only has been reversed and Premiums Bonds winners only having winnings through a bank account has also been reversed. These are really important issues for older people and others without credit cards and bank accounts.
* Chris – He and Aisha are concerned about the post office card account being closed.

*NB: There is a Payment Exception Service for those who do not or cannot have bank accounts. This is limited and individuals need to contact the Department for Work & Pensions to let them know that once the post office card account closes in November this year, they need an alternative way of receiving payments.*

* John P: The Annual Convention webinars – are they available now and how many participants at each.

*Jonathan explained that the links to all four webinars are on the NPC website. In terms of participants, the figures are:*

*Session 1 – Rally 145 on webinar 137 on YouTube*

*Session 2 – Pensions 179 on webinar 197 on YouTube*

*Session 3 – NHS/Care 211 on webinar 77 on YouTube*

*Session 4 – Uniting the Generations 171 on webinar 34 on YouTube so far*

1. **Regional Reports:**

**Anglia:** Chris had sent a copy of the newsletter. Working with People Before Profit and the People’s Assembly on the hospitals campaign – built in a hurry and now falling down. Investment needed in hospitals, GPs, Doctors and Nurses – difficulties in recruiting is a major issue.

**Eastern:** Tony reported there had been no meetings. Hoped to get back on schedule by August. New treasurer etc has been sorted now.

**Wales:** Jeff reported the Welsh government have spoken about the need to protect and rebuild services for older people and for a flexible, integrated system for people to live their lives. Care workers and apprentices key features. Prepared for a Wales-only policy of care free for all at the point of need. NHS Digital – Welsh NHS records are not included in the data sharing issue and in any case there is an ‘opt in’ system

**GAS (Gloucester, Avon and Somerset):** Keith reported there are joined up transport initiatives for the region and invited the rest of England along with the Combined Authorities Mayor.

**Yorkshire/Humberside:** Paul apologised for no written report. No regional meetings as two of the four officers cannot zoom. Opportunity to get together and plan when everything is open. New West Yorkshire Mayor talked to candidates for Batley by-election on the idea of taking full control of local transport (particularly buses). Various district councils not sure. Will move to central control, but ‘enhanced partnerships’ in the meantime. Complex papers. The South Yorkshire Mayor to do similar exercise to take control, but nothing is happening. Green, democratically controlled public transport should be central government policy on environmental change.

**London:** Barry reported that London has over 110 affiliates, two-thirds of which are Trade Union or Trades Councils. Around two-thirds of affiliations in, but concern about local and Trade Union retired members’ groups. Hoping for a ‘live’ Regional Council meeting in September. The availability of meeting rooms and what restrictions will apply. Guest speakers – London have a number of individuals on working parties and they were asked to update the region on the work of the Women’s Working Party; Health & Social Care and Housing. Extended an invitation to the LGBT Working Party to next meeting. Mail out next week, including opt out forms for NHS Digital.

**Northern:** Martin apologised for the lack of a written report. The region has gained some new members. Local street stall with leaflets on data issue. Local groups working together. Care sector undervalued and stressed. Celebrating NHS birthday at the weekend.

**West Midlands:** Brian reported that Regional Councils had taken place on zoom which has been a life-line with 16-20 delegates (one or two who couldn’t join not on zoom). Rob Johnson from West Midlands TUC highlighted the campaign for better buses, green buses. Andy Gray, North Staffordshire NPC spoke about the campaign for public toilets. The transport group has been very active throughout COVID. Birmingham KONP planning 73rd birthday of NHS with events at Coventry and Stoke on Trent. Biggest concern is reinvigorating local branches. Campaign on recruitment.

**Northern Ireland:** John said meetings are held – three people without access to zoom. Replacement for Age Sector Platform ongoing. Meetings held every fortnight – looking at a full Regional meeting hopefully in September.

**Thames Valley:** John P thanked Jonathan, Bev and Jan for the work put into the successful webinars. Regional Council meeting on 20 July with the next one in October hopefully face to face. Campaigning ongoing although difficulties with being out and about. Lucky that organisations and individual members are affiliating to the region. Progressing towards new groups, locally as well as larger ones. LibDem controlled Oxford alliance with Labour – change of local policies. GP surgeries under threat of privatisation – GPs are not employed by the NHS/ Organising ‘opt out’ forms out in Oxford. GPs meeting with Hancock et al about funding for social care was cancelled. Elder abuse – sharing because information may be useful to others.

On elder abuse, Jeff reported that one of the benefits of a Commissioner for Older People in Wales is that the Commission produces lots of booklets on various issues including elder abuse.

**Wessex:** written report submitted by Pat Turner and Don Harper. Unable to hold Executive meetings but all members of the Committee have been consulted on decisions made. All information sent from NPC is circulated on email and post. Responded to requests from NPC. Hopeful to hold AGM on 7 October and have someone interested in taking the Regional Secretary position. Some affiliations still to come.

*Ron wished to note the appreciation of officers for the work Regional Secretaries are doing under very difficult circumstances.*

Actions:

1. Bev asked that if events are taking place locally if photographs could be sent into the office. It helps with our campaigning and other work to have a stock of different visual material.
2. Jeff to send copies of booklets to Jonathan for circulation to Regional Secretaries.
3. Elder Abuse slides to be shared.
4. **A.O.B.** None
5. **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be on 9 September 2021 at 10.30 am on zoom unless otherwise informed.