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

**HELD ON 15 APRIL 2021**

**ON ZOOM**

**In attendance**: Chris Brooks (Anglia); Tony Garner (Eastern); Barry Todman (Greater London); Martin Dent (Northern); Stephen Rennie (North West); John Martin (Northern Ireland); John Paine (Thames Valley); Dereck Roberts (Wales); Gareth Parsons (Wales); Sandra Durkin (West Midlands); Marion Wilson; Ellen Lebethe; Peter Rayner; Ron Douglas; Bev Morrison; Jonathan Safir; Jan Shortt

**Apologies:** Paul Russel (Yorkshire/Humberside); Don Harper/Pat Turner (Wessex); Freda Gray (Home Counties) Ralph Moses (North West – Stephen Rennie substituting); John Lean (South West)

Ron welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Minutes of meeting held on 18 February 2021:**

Agreed

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

* Tony Garner: Census. Cannot have proof of posting as there is no post code. Has had two reminders.
* Marion: Has had four reminders and there have been people knocking on doors as late as 8.00pm.
* Barry: Takeover of GP Surgeries in London, Trades Councils are campaigning (*Doctors in Unite are leading campaign)*
* Gareth: what about the health service unions and TUC?
* John: NHS Health Unions and Keep our NHS Public (KONP)
* Martin: Northern Region working closely with local KONP

We will write to ONS raising issues.

1. **Update from General Secretary:**

There were no additional items to add to the update.

Points raised:

* John P: Is the fact the BBC are raising issues of pension credit etc down to the involvement with the NPC? *Not entirely, they were already looking at some issues, but the meeting we had with them gave extra evidence. Their engagement so far has been with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). Negotiations are at very low level looking towards later in the year.*
* John also offered his experience on constitutions as part of his role with the Structure Working Party and asked if any information had gone out. *(Each member of the Structure Working Party has received in the post a copy of the constitution as modified by the 2019 BDC and a copy of the NPC Guidelines booklet. A paper is being written for the first meeting looking at the content and process. Will go out shortly).*

Jan referred members to her report on the NPC working with We Own It! and other health campaigners on the NHS White Paper. KONP are set up in regions and we should be making contact with the local branches supporting their work and vice versa.

The role of the NPC within the campaign is around messaging – to the general public and to the rank and file NHS workers who have no idea that there is a white paper. Ours is the generation that knows what life would be like without an NHS. Therefore, I am asking that the regions set about collecting comments from members of that age group about their experiences of not being able to pay for health treatments. The window is short, so please start now and send them in over the next week or so.

**Report agreed.**

1. **Annual Convention:**

Jan thanked the regions for submitting their preferences for sessions. Unsurprisingly the two with the most votes were Pensions and NHS/Social Care. There will be a rally and perhaps one other session.

We have found some dates not available because of Trade Union Conferences so we will work around them. Members raised other dates; i.e. PCS conference 13/14 June; Unite elections for General Secretary closes end of July so June will be busy in the run up.

Staff team is meeting on Monday and will bear these things in mind when looking at dates and programme.

1. **Update on Campaigns:**

Bev presented her report.

A lot of issues presenting themselves, some of which we are already working on. There are many links between our working parties and these will be looked at when the working party chairs meet later in the month.

Points raised:

* John P: all reports indicate a huge amount of work.
* Tony G: Milk & More – on BBC Essex radio – rural areas – an issue with alternatives. Not just older people.
* Peter: Had no choice as a customer. The offer of help from Good Things Foundation – rang but didn’t seem interested.
* Derek: Milk & More bought out in Wales, can still order by phone etc.
* Bev: there are a huge number of reasons why people do not go online; i.e. scams, scared of online stuff.

Jan informed the meeting that a dossier is being put together of our correspondence with Milk & More and will be sent as a follow up to Oliver Dowden, Caroline Dinenage and Jo Stevens (Shadow Minister). It will also be sent to the Commission for Equality & Human Rights and the Competitions Markets Authority as well as in a press release.

Ron thanked Bev for her report and hard work.

1. **Information Officers Report:**

We are developing and on-line shop. Three new members since we have an online payment system – doesn’t sound a lot, but they came on board very quickly. Good levels of hits and shares on social media, growing our profile.

Day to day admin and office duties, working with GS and Bev.

Points raised:

* Barry: affiliations – 8 regions have already affiliated. We are aware of problems in some regions.
* Sandra: should the new members be referred to regions.
* Peter: Individual members are for regions; individual supporters are nationally affiliated.
* Gareth: Individual members in regions have rights.

Jan clarified the process. If an individual signs up from the website, we ask if they just want information (in which case they are an individual supporter), or if they wish to be active (in which case they are referred to the relevant region). In most cases, people sign up for information only.

This is the group that under normal circumstances would receive two bulk mailings a year.

Ron thanked Jonathan for his report and hard work.

1. **Regional Reports:**

**Northern:**  The Better Buses campaign is gathering momentum. Meeting with Tyne & Wear Transport Passenger Users Group. Smart phones – not everyone has one or wants one. Need to keep all accesses.

**North West:** Supporting drivers striking re: fire and re-hire contracts. Care home closures in Trafford, but council stepped in and purchased.

**Thames Valley:** Affiliations have been affected by no meetings held. Campaign in Didcot, Oxfordshire – increased population – need the right sort of services. NHS Minor Injuries Unit. New house building – older people less included. AGM will be on 28 April. Concern not heard from smaller groups – suspect they will not survive. Still on campaign for increasing groups. Increase in scam phone calls. Is it possible to provide guidance on what people can do?

*Several members raised that there are BT and other facilities that will screen telephone calls for the user.*

**Wales:** COVID vaccines for care staff (new consultation). To meet the new TUC secretary for Wales. Annual report goes out to all groups and organisations. Elections in May for Welsh parliament – no local elections. Conservatives are retaining free prescriptions in Wales.

Social Care – time bomb for the future as retirement age going up meaning people are caring into later life.

**West Midlands:** Using Zoom, getting 15-19 attendees and recognise some are not able. Affiliations have dipped. Had a speaker from the Workers Education Association on learning and older people. Funded from the Education budget, emphasis on skills for work. Course free for IT and Zoom.

**Eastern:** E-scooter problems. There are 60 in trial areas although not the same process as London. Users have to have a provisional or full licence and have to register. But users are getting the Apps and passing on. Often run out of power and are left. Not worthwhile to have zoom meetings and the AGM is delayed again. Looking to July to get face-to-face meeting.

Other regions have the same problem with e-scooters, parked on street corners, lying in the middle of the pavement, so quiet you don’t know they are behind you. Dangerous to older and young people. Privately owned e-scooters can only be used on private land with a £1,000 fine for using in a public place.

**Anglia:** Campaigning on NHS pay rise and National Care Service. Issues with concrete buildings – late 80’s with time limits. Freedom of Information request about risk assessments and funds in

reserves. Old Grey Matter newsletter still circulated.

**Northern Ireland:** Programme with government – age discrimination, warm homes scheme – no legislation like England. We were looking for a Development Officer to engage with bus pass issues for Age Sector Platform – takes too long to get status agreed.

**London:** AGM held by Zoom end of March. New job-share for Assistant Regional Secretary. Steve Turner (Unite candidate for General Secretary) impressed members with his talk on a range of issues. NPC website recording. Two motions to next EC; concerns about local activists and groups. Mayoral elections – sent out manifesto, only one reply! September meeting is booked as a ‘live’ meeting. Monthly mail out, weekly newsletter for those on email.

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

John Paine raised the issue of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in relation to large distribution lists. Individuals forward the mail without taking care to delete the previous recipients. The NPC uses the Bcc option when sending out all its information. The problem lies with the server provider who has raised it with John. Perhaps a note on each communication to say ‘not to be forwarded.’

1. **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be on 1st July 2021 at 10.30 am on zoom unless otherwise informed.