

## SHA Central Council, 7.9.19. The Warehouse , Birmingham

### Action points in bold

**Present:** Chair: Alex Scott-Samuel (ASS), Secretary: Jean Hardiman Smith (JHS), Kathrin Thomas (KT), Nigel James (NJ), Punita Goodfellow (PG), Diane Jones (DJ), Mark Ladbrooke (ML), Nicholas Csergo (NC), Brian Gibbons (BG), Brian Fisher (BF), Vivien Giladi (VG), Corrie Lowry (CL), Irene Leonard (IL), Tony Beddow (TB), Mike Roberts (MR), Peter Mayer (PM), Alison Scouller (AS), John Lipetz (JL), Steve Bedser (SB), Gurinder Josan Singh (GS), Tony Jewell (TJ), Andy Thompson (AT), Judith Varley (JV)

**Observers:** Ken Smith (KS), Vivien Walsh (VW)

**Apologies:** Norma Dudley, Carol Ackroyd, Coral Jones, Jos Bell, Chris Bain, David Maddox, Katrina Murray

1 **Minutes of the last meeting** accepted with the following amendments:

(i) DJ asked that the following section:

6) Report: "Liaison with Labour Movement and Patient Groups

*DJ asked for liaison with various officers, working parties and Labour Party organisations to fill out her report and asked to be contacted by e-mail.*

be deleted and replaced, as 6a, by:

*6a Vice Chair DJ referred to the first draft of a scoping paper on enhancing communication with other relevant organisations, (paper attached) and requested that Central Council members let her know of any further items regarding their own links, and any suggestions they may have.*

DJ also said she had now had further contributions and would pursue matters further in a subsequent meeting.

(ii) With reference to the AoB item on the discussion about the Manchester branch, VW asked if the word 'notional' was a misprint for 'national'. ASS explained it was intentional, since the validity of the membership of the Manchester branch was uncertain at that date. (See agenda item 3)

### 2 Matters arising

JL asked if ASS had had a discussion with John McDonnell about the NHS Reinstatement Bill and Social Care. ASS thought that this was not timely because of the current political situation. JHS said a working party on social care was in progress; it was not linked with the Reclaim Social Care group chaired by BF. TB said Labour Party policy on health and social care was inadequate, no time was given to linking health and social care and Jon Ashworth was only shadow SoS for health. **Could officers write to the Labour Party, since there were no national meetings? ASS asked for advice about whom to approach in the 'Labour Party bureaucracy' – the Chair of the National Health Commission or of the National Policy Forum, or whom? JL suggested the social care motion should go through local SHA and union branches,** since although Central Council had not

prioritised it for Conference, it had been submitted by others and passed. Social care should be free at point of access and paid for through general taxation.

**3 Greater Manchester (GM) branch.** A paper from the officers and vice chairs had been pre-circulated.

The item was introduced with a verbal report from AT. CC had requested an independent investigation of the irregularities in this branch. He had approached two suitable people, both of whom had initially accepted but later had to withdraw. In the meantime, local circumstances had changed in ways which now placed the requirement for an investigation in question.

Membership irregularities have now been resolved, and most 'unpaid memberships' have now lapsed. The relaunched GM branch had met twice and had a further meeting planned for September 14 with an AGM to take place in October so that GM would become a 'normal' SHA branch in time for the SHA AGM.

VG thanked AT and everyone involved in achieving this resolution. GM now had 169 fully paid up members, with the AGM only open to those who were fully paid up, following the unprecedented surge (to 300 notional members) 18 months ago. ASS reassured BF that only *bona fide* fully paid up members will be able to vote, and AT confirmed specific recommendations in the report handing back direct control to the branch.

JL congratulated the Officers for their diligence and hoped they would continue to oversee matters in GM until its AGM. He would like to know why Unison had objected to SHA taking disciplinary action against Martin Rathfelder. ASS said Unison had withdrawn their financial support to SHA a year ago, but had recently agreed to reconsider the situation after the AGM.

TB raised the fraught issue of branch boundaries. In Wales, affiliated bodies who are not Labour Party members can vote on some occasions, but there were times when votes from SHA members can be decisive. Our membership base must be beyond reproach, and SHA paid up members, including non party members, are entitled to have their say. AT explained the boundary situation of the GM membership can be difficult, citing the example of a GM member who lived within the boundary of another branch but whose CCG is more aligned to GM. Precise affiliation had always been somewhat controversial and disputable. JHS suggested such 'grey' areas should come to CC for consideration. GM's natural database had been complicated, necessitating much work to achieve the current resolution. The efforts of the Officers in achieving this resolution were applauded by CC delegates.

KS said the postcode was the only reliable foundation for the database, but AT reminded us that GPs had always had some flexibility. TB spoke of the basic building blocks and suggested that Local Government boundaries would be best. ASS agreed and suggested this be included in the new Constitution, though ML thought the CLP was a better criterion and these were not always coterminous with local government areas.

AT (and KS) asked specifically for advice about members who wished to join GM branch; one living in High Peak (Derbyshire), one in Cheshire and a few in Rossendale. Another member living in Preston had been allocated by SHA's former

director to the West Midlands branch. ML said there was no point in having a vote in another area if you were not able to participate in Labour Party selections for the MP. GS and PM suggested the numbers were small and could be sorted over time. VW (currently not a CC delegate because of GM's situation) asked what would happen about a member from outside the area becoming Chair. Two motions were taken to a vote:

**Vote 1 SHA members living within a local branch area should belong to that branch.** Carried unanimously.

**Vote 2 Where a member has no local branch, (s)he can join the nearest most appropriate branch.** Carried, with 5 against and 1 abstention.

The paper's recommendations (see below) were agreed, with AT's addition that GM's AGM should be held any Saturday after the Labour Party Conference.

Recommendations:

- (i) that Central Council notes this report;
- (ii) that the noting of this report is communicated to the complainants;
- (iii) that aside from (i) and (ii), no further investigation is undertaken;
- (iv) that further reports to Central Council on progress in relaunching the Greater Manchester branch be provided in due course.

**4 Governance Review** TB reminded delegates that the last CC meeting had voted in favour of SHA becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee. Key issues for debate therefore included:

- (i) **Constitution changes** needed to be in place for the AGM;
- (ii) **registered addresses will be needed for the Officers and for the Company;**
- (iii) **Objectives need to be defined.** Should we extend our remit? Care and safeguarding issues? We cover only Great Britain currently, should this become UK?
- (iv) **Categories of membership? Management arrangements, the composition of a Company Board, quorum numbers, representation, devolved policies and financing** need discussion. **Affiliation** – currently to the Labour Party; should this remain? N Ireland situation? Which party might best take our interests forward?
- (v) **Governance - Some key Officers need to be subject to the checks and balances of Company Law.** CC should decide how to take this forward and with whom.

Amongst general approval of all delegates, BG thanked TB for his work and suggested a small working group to circulate their deliberations before the SHA AGM. There were 11 annexes currently; how many needed to be in the Constitution? How many are policy issues? ML emphasised the need to link collaboratively with the members in other countries but perhaps only in the broadest way with N Ireland. We need to build and empower local SHA branches particularly to support their input and influence with local union branches.

ASS commented that SHA will become a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2020; until then, we continue as an unincorporated association. **What are the implications for the AGM in December with respect to the Constitution and other reforms?** TB said the new Constitution is unlikely to be fully worked out

**by December and maybe we should develop a Constitution to be adopted at an Emergency / Special GM in February/March with a view to its amendment later.**

Maybe some delegates will want matters to stay as they are. PG found the document very helpful, a good balance between autonomy and accountability. TB favoured devolution of local politics to branches and regions whilst policies remain a CC matter. This may be a transition proposal from current to future strategies, to include staffing support.

**PG offered to run a small workshop between now and December. ASS suggested inviting additional recruits to the Governance group, to work on the appendices from delegates with particular interests in specific topics, with formal comments to be sent to TB.** There was unanimous agreement to VG's suggestion that TB remain in overall control of the process.

The lively discussion concluded with **CC agreeing that further comments be sent to TB, with copies to ASS and JHS and accepting PG's offer of organising a workshop between now and December, for the officers, vice chairs and Governance Review members.**

**5 Website, Comms and Social Media Task group.** JHS explained this was ongoing and had not been a top priority. The Social Media profile had been assisted by DJ with tweets and a newsletter every few weeks. **JHS suggested convening a short life task group and would be circulating an invitation to join it in a few days. DJ suggested the different areas needed clearer definition and terms of reference.** JHS had a paper with hard facts already prepared to facilitate this process.

**6 Conference and Conference fringe events.** These were detailed on the website and in emails. An SHA fringe session on social care and women's issues was programmed for Saturday 21 September in the Jubilee library. Madeleine Dickens (Sussex Defend the NHS) had been very helpful in making these arrangements. NC asked if the NHS was being debated, and ASS said that both health and social care would feature at the Conference with Jonathan Ashworth's speaking on the 22nd and also at our second fringe session together with Professor Danny Dorling on the Sunday evening.

**7 Chair's Report.** Much had already been discussed. Branch and National AGMs are to take place before the end of the year. The National AGM is on December 7 at Unite HQ, Theobalds Road, London. ASS assured BF that all the usual processes will take place with Auditors present and reporting. JL reminded delegates that **branch AGMs would need to take place before the end of October** to leave an adequate interval (3 – 12 weeks, as per the Constitution) before the National AGM. GS said they had planned the W Midlands AGM for December 7 but would now hold it with the hustings on September 28.

AT thought it would be necessary to write to the branches to clarify the situation emphasising the timing. Asked by ASS if he and James Gill (Auditors) would be scrutineers at the AGM, ML reminded CC that candidates could not be scrutineers, and **ASS said he'd discuss the matter of scrutineers further with the Officers.**

TJ said there were clearly problems with the workload and due process and asked if

anyone was employed to help yet. AT explained that we need to appoint a proper returning officer who understands what this entails. JHS said she'd enquired about using election buddy software but had had no response to date. Jos Bell conducted the London elections. KS said he might be able to act as returning officer. **ASS said the Officers would discuss the matter of a returning officer**, and VW volunteered to be an election scrutineer if required.

**8 Secretary's Report.** JHS said the London database had been complicated but was now up to date. As there is no cut off date, anyone joining SHA the day before an election, is entitled to a vote.

BF thanked KS for his commitment to, and work with, the database issues.

**9 Treasurer's Report.** DJ (Acting Treasurer since Tom Fitzgerald's resignation) agreed to BF's request that a detailed report and balance sheet would be available by the AGM. BF also asked for a financial projection for the following 6 months, and this was seconded by JL. ML reminded delegates that the Auditors had found the finances in good order and KS commented that he too was happy that the accounts were now in a healthy state. Currently, ASS was the sole signatory, but AS and TB had volunteered to join him. The necessary forms had been sent to the Co-op Bank, so there should soon be 3 signatories. GS thanked the Officers for the progress made in the last few months and hoped a regular reporting cycle would be established. PG said the Auditors' report gave a good budget baseline and she looked forward to a fuller Report at the AGM. She asked that a properly defined position for our Finance Report be minuted. TB suggested the **Officers might devise a provisional Budget for the coming year, an agreed plan of action for a defined period along with a reserve for unexpected eventualities, all for approval at the AGM.** GS supported TB's suggestions.

**10 Policy development.** TB went through the list of what has been done since the last CC - TJ's Public Health Policy, and AS's Maternity Policy. The Carers' needs and social policy (BF leading), Mental Health (JV) and Integrated Care (TB) were in progress.

Maternity Policy. AS wants feed-back. CL raised the issue of the Women's Hospital in Liverpool and asked what represented 'choice'. Women were being actively encouraged to have babies out of hospital (citing the 'Pop-up' birthing centre in Seacombe) but this was not choice if it was the only option. Women should always have the choice of a hospital bed. NJ reminded us that women were being steered towards private providers despite the 1:1 maternity service in Wirral folding. We should be wary of 'platforms' – usually established by N American companies – offering another opportunity for privatisation in the name of choice. It's real choice for the few and no choice for the many – very much the Trump agenda. AT commented that the choice had to be fully resourced and thanked AS for her paper.

ML said with an election coming up, we should be producing videos to help prevent another 5 years of Tory government. What are the rules on spending? We need to push on in campaigning mode. IL supported ML's suggestion. VG asked Officers to decide how much can be spent and on what, and **ASS asked for proposals to be sent to him**

**11 Next meeting:** 7 December 2019 Unite HQ, Theobalds Road, London