**Draft Minutes of Oxford and District Labour Party All Member Meeting**

 **7.30 p.m. on 13 July 2017, Rose Hill Community Centre**

1. **Attendance and apologies**

**Present*:*** Farida Anwar, Suhail Aslam, Amr Aswad, Nils Bartleet, Val Bartleet, Ann Black, David Blackman,Peter Cann, Catherine Chapman, David Clensy, Michaela Collord, Tiago Corais, Jimi Cullen, Steve Curran, Jane Darke (Chair), Roy Darke,Tony Eaude, Anneliese Dodds MP (Skype), Thomas Eden, Marilyn Farr, Guy Fletcher-Wood, Ben French, Deborah Gill, Mashhuda Glencross, Richard Howlett, Katherine Hughes, Stephen Hyde, Felicity Irwin (minutes), Glenn Jones, Sally Joss, Michaela Livingstone-Banks, Anne Lyons, Bill Mackeith,Zaid Marham, Stephen Marks, Peter Nowland,Pol O Ceallaigh, James O’Donoghue, Simon Ottino,Michele Paule, Jennifer Pegg,Liz Peretz,Cassi Perry, Caroline Raine, Jo Richards, Martyn Rush, Caroline Russell, Oliver Spratley, Sue Stewart, John Tanner, Sue Tanner, James Tarlton, Marie Vickers, Nick Walker, Martin Wykes

**Apologies:** Luke Akehurst, Jana Bek, Phil Bloomer, Mariana Bujons, Marieke Clarke, Erica Davis, David Emeny, Helen Evans, Paul Flather, Deirdre Flintoff, Ian Flintoff, Tim Forster, Julia Goodwin, Dorian Hancock, Mark Hull, Bev Humberstone, Dan Iley-Williamson, Joel Kaye, Gordon Kennedy, Pat Kennedy, Peter Leary, Peter Ledwith, Sue Ledwith, Simon Lowles, Michael March, Cherry Mosteshar, Dawn Oliver, Alex Palmer, Anthony Phillips, Caroline Pinder, Rosemary Preston, Bob Price, Chris Robins, Andrew Smith, Jane Stockton, Geoff Taylor, Marie Tidball, Emma Turnbull, Ed Turner, Janet Warren, Pete Willsman

1. **Minutes of the all member meeting on 16 June 2017 and matters arising**

These were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising:

1. 13(a) **Motion on ending Israeli state interference in British political parties**. This has been sent to the Chair of the parliamentary Labour party and to the general secretary.
2. 13(b) **Motion on right to rent**. This has been posted on the policy forum website at <https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/agenda-2020/commissions/housing-local-government-and-transport/right-to-rent> and sent to the city and county Labour groups. City leader Bob Price has established that right-to-rent is included in the council’s accreditation training, and the council had an Immigration officer present at a recent landlord forum on the RTR requirements. Information on monitoring is awaited.
3. 13(c) **Motion on comprehensive education**. This has been posted on the policy forum website at <https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/agenda-2020/commissions/early-years-education-and-skills/defend-comprehensive-education> and sent to the county Labour group.

The Chief Executive of Cherwell School has been invited to Summertown branch to discuss. Members asked to contact Jane Stockton, Branch Secretary, if interested in attending the meeting.

1. **Urgent business, including any other business**

None.

1. **The Socialist Government in Portugal** with speaker **Tiago Corais**

Tiago Corais

“Geringonça” (improbable contraption)

The Portuguese Socialist Government and the Left Alliance in Portugal

1. About Portugal
* Community of Portuguese Language Countries, known in English as the Lusophone Commonwealth, great asset
* One of the oldest universities in the world, University Coimbra (Established:1290).
* Subsequent Universities of Lisbon and Porto not established until 1911.
* Period of Salazar Dictatorship (1933–1974).
* “25 de Abril” - Democracy in Portugal (1974).
* Portuguese National Health Service (Founded: 1979) by the Socialist Government.
* Portugal joined EU in 1986.
* Political system – semi-Presidential Representative Democratic Republic

Socialist Party (Left wing)

Left Bloc Party (Left wing)

Communist & Green Party

Social Democratic Party: Liberal and Conservative Party (Right wing)

Social Christian Democratic Party (Right wing)

People Animals & Nature Party (Centrist Party)

* Democracy and EU member legacy

Compulsory Schooling, big difference since dictatorship.

Rate of illiteracy, improved hugely but still above EU average.

1. Economy in crisis and austerity programme

“Adjustment Programme" (2011-2014): International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Central Bank, and European Commission - Signed by Socialist Party and Right Coalition Party.

Portugal received finance help and had to follow the programme.

The new Right Coalition Government promised to go beyond the programme.

This was catastrophic.

* Stopped the public investment.
* Cut on the public wage above 700€ per months.
* Cut in the pension above 1,000€ per months.
* Huge tax increase for the middle class.
* Cut in NHS and Education.
* Privatisations (EDP, Post office – service deteriorated)
* The Prime Minister recommended emigration to anyone who could not find a job in Portugal.
* Unemployment rate – increased to 16.2%
* Public debt % GDP increased
* Permanent emigration – 2% of population
1. Geringonça (the Portuguese Socialist Government and the Left Alliance

General Election 2015 - the Portuguese Left Parties: 122 MPs, out of total of 230

Although Portugal was poorer the Right Coalition wins (without majority)

Reasons:

* The Socialist Party produced an innovative and great manifesto but they didn’t have a good strategy to defend it.
* The right coalition manipulated the campaign and changed the name of the coalition and the leaders did not appear on the outdoors. (Marketing)
* Electorate has the idea that the Socialist party doesn’t know about Economy.
* The Socialist Party was divided internally.

“Geringonça” – the Impossible Alliance

* Socialist & Communists were known as “The Enemy Parties”:
* Socialist Party defend the representative liberal democracy model (Western style).
* Communist Party defends popular democracy model (Soviet style - dictatorship, the most orthodox Communist Party in Western Europe).
* The Portuguese Socialist Party is one of the most centrist of their family political party in Europe.
* The Socialist Party didn’t want to take the risk to lose the centre's voters and the others were afraid to lose “their voters”.
* Left Bloc stated that they would only made an alliance with Socialists if the Communist Party also signed the agreement.
* The impact of Austerity in Portugal and effect on public services was principal reason. Also, majority of left voters wanted a left alliance.

“Geringonça” – Government Programme

* Turn the page on austerity.
* Increase the minimum wage.
* Reduce the Tax for the small business.
* Change the contracts of the public workers from the temporary to permanent.
* Develop a friendly environment for business.
* Invest in science.
* Keynesian approach to growth.

“Geringonça” is a benchmark

* Other left parties in other countries can learn from this. We can arrange a speaker from the Portuguese Government to a Labour Party meeting if you would like.
* Portugal has played the game, and were not seen to be going against the EU, unlike Syriza.
* Legacy: since 2008, the financial system has already received 14.348 million euros.
* Portugal Bank report predicts in 2017: the unemployment rate above 10%. This will contribute to balance the books because it will reduce the social contribution and will receive more taxes.
* The investment and the exports will increase more than expected
* Tourism will increase.
* Opinion polls put the left parties ahead: 40.4% left v 28.6% right
1. Brexit and Portugal

Portuguese do not believe Brexit will happen. The Portuguese Government will try to take advantage of Brexit, encourage companies to go to Portugal. Importance of oldest alliance between Britain and Portugal.

Questions and general discussion

Jennifer Pegg

Are people emigrating to Portuguese speaking countries or elsewhere?

Tiago Corais

UK is the top destination of the new Portuguese emigration, then is France and also Angola and Brazil is a relevant choice. But the UK is notably the country that receives the most new Portuguese emigrants.

David Blackman

Is prospect of coalition controversial? Left Bloc where does this come from? How does coalition work and is there internal opposition to it?

Tiago Corais

This is a Socialist government, supported by Communist Party and Left Bloc. Small group do not agree with alliance. The parties support it because voters support the alliance and will not support a party that leaves.

Michele Paule

Who owns the media and what is their attitude?

Tiago Corais

Media is right wing like in UK

Caroline Raine

Communists and greens are they one party? Does Socialist party plan to bring privatised companies back in to public ownership?

Tiago Corais

Greens are not a true green party, it is a part of the Communists. Socialists banned some privatisations, energy and post office will be more difficult to nationalise.

Ann Black

There is one MP per constituency here, while you have 10 MPs per constituency in Portugal. Do you think proportional system makes it easier for a wide range of parties to get elected?

Tiago Corais

We have some advantage, but importance in UK of knowing who is your MP. Sometimes in Portugal people do not know who their MP is. Perhaps we should have a mix, but I prefer the system here.

Liz Peretz

Keynesian approach – how has this approach itself led to GDP growth and how does the EU react?

Tiago Corais

Important to understand this works in Portugal, but would need to be adapted for UK. We try to invest in science and then, after, businesses will do it, we increase some salaries, consumption increases and economy grows. Needed to make a break with austerity. Tourism has increased a lot. Some investments because we have a friendly investment environment for businesses. Need to play the game of the economy. We have increased taxes.

James O’Donoghue

Relationship with trade unions?

Tiago Corais

Very strong in communist party. Socialist party has trades unionists but not as strong as it should be. The Labour Party has better approach because TU are key for a fair society.

Amr Aswad

Learnt from lessons of Greece overplaying their hand. How long left on the Portuguese programme?

Tiago Corais

The programme ran from 2011 -14, but still need to follow rules of EU. Not so rigid as austerity programme but we need to follow it. Greece went against EU and did not negotiate well.

Jo (?)

Relationship to European Central Bank?

Tiago Corais

Portugal needs to follow the rules. The Central Bank is helpful to Portugal, but of course need to follow the rules.

1. **Fundraising collection** £147.69 was collected.
2. **Parliamentary report Anneliese Dodds MP**

Skype connection inaudible, Anneliese would provide a written report. [*A note on the Queen’s speech, Brexit and Chuka Umunna’s amendment is included below*]

1. **Oxford county council report**

No county councillors present.

1. **Oxford city council report**

John Tanner

We now have large Labour majority on the city council. We have been focusing a lot on our tower blocks following the disaster at Grenfell Tower. The rules seem to be changing by the day and it is probably going to cost us a lot of money. Bob Price has submitted a report to the meeting. We had already fitted sprinkler systems into tower blocks in Oxford and are looking to the best advice. The disaster shows what happens when you get a Conservative government, which privatises and rejects red tape.

New Local Plan – we have launched consultation. There are a number of controversial issues. We would like to know your views:

Building houses is one of the biggest issues in this city. We want to make that easier. Neighbouring councils not keen to let us build on the green belt so we want to build higher in both social and private housing. Also looking in part at building on some of the green belt.

My job on council is rubbish and recycling and we have almost reached 50% - 49.6% of recycling rubbish was put in the recycling bins last year. Because we are all now thinking about rubbish and recycling more, we now throw away less, which is good for the environment.

Questions:

Oliver Spratley

How much taller do you intend to build – what is the current policy?

Richard Howlett

What are the ways in which we and other members of the public are able to input into the plan?

Bill Mackeith

The government advised that our cladding needed to be replaced, and then they said it didn’t but Oxford now seems to be going ahead and replacing. Is this the right thing to do?

John Tanner

Height – depends where in Oxford. There are currently 5 high rise blocks currently in centre. Want to keep views of dreaming spires. But elsewhere we are much more flexible. Recently agreed new high rises at Cowley Centre. If plan goes through the average would increase.

Comments on the Local Plan can be made online, and as Labour Party members we can also contact our Labour councillors – want to know local residents views on local proposals. Balance between, green spaces, housing people, transport, jobs. Want to get people of Oxford behind the Local Plan so we have gone the extra mile, to engage the public.

Cladding – it is complicated. When Grenfell Tower disaster happened, cladding was tested in a different way. Now drawing back, and we are following the debate. Took decision in principle to remove it, but now holding off to see what the next step will be. We are in the middle of upgrading all the tower blocks.

Mashhuda Glencross

Will the council be looking at a sensible transport policy to supplement the housing strategy? Already high fuel emissions and traffic problems in Cowley.

Sally Joss

What is the proportion of affordable housing and proportion of social housing in the plan?

Caroline Raine

All the housing I have seen going up in recent years has been student housing. What is council’s policy?

Roy Darke

Complaints that some people have received letters about the local plan and others haven’t.

John Tanner

Understand hospitals are also looking at cladding. Student housing – we have had policy for some time of making sure that if we have students that they have purpose built accommodation so that they don’t end up living in houses that families and other residents can otherwise occupy. We have put pressure on universities to build accommodation. Not building enough houses/flats or social housing overall.

Proportion of social housing. We had a policy that in a new development, half should be social housing of some form, 40% social, 10% affordable.

The more people who live in Oxford, the more financially viable any transport plan will be. Rose Hill, housing much more dense, people move around less, more likely to have shops and facilities nearby. Density can environmentally be a good thing.

Late August is closing date but planning department will always listen to contributions.

Jane Darke

Propose to programme in discussion on Local Plan into future meetings.

David Blackman

Local fire service, how many ladders can reach top floor of high rise blocks?

Marie Vickers

I understand there has been discord between city council and bus companies about buses around new shopping centre. Bus stoops have been put far out of centre without shelter.

Oliver Spratley

Unitary situation – will election delay this? Are you pressing for your housing company?

John Tanner

Fire ladders - there are none that go as high as the 5 blocks. The fire service is part of county council.

We do not control the colleges. Tend to build to a high standard, but housing does not get built.

Continue to press case for building other side of Grenoble Road. Allocated some money to fighting the case because need for housing is so great.

Westgate building has caused much disruption. When it opens in October, situation should improve, but worry that buses will not have enough priority. Buses is county council matter.

Unitary authority – have not heard from government officially but the idea is dead and buried.

Housing company – in order to develop houses in New Barton have created a company to give us more flexibility but it is very much under council control.

Nils Bartleet

Unless there is means of subsidising or regulating public transport you cannot have a good service.

John Tanner

Agree with Nils – we have two companies who can now cooperate together. We have reasonable service but costs too much to travel and look forward to renationalising.

1. **Executive committee.** The minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2017 have been circulated to members. These were accepted.
2. **Future meetings.** These were noted as **Friday 8 September** (Exeter Hall, Kidlington – resolutions for annual conference), **Thursday 12 / Friday 13 October 2017**, **Thursday 9/Friday 10 November**, **Friday 8 / Thursday 14 December 2017**. Further dates, venues and topics to be arranged.

Note from Anneliese Dodds MP

I understand that the last AMM discussed the topic of Brexit including Chuka Umunna's amendment so I thought it might be helpful to explain to members my activities and position in this area.

During the referendum, I campaigned hard to remain, and while I accept and respect the result, this does not mean we must accept the Tories' approach to Brexit which, in my view, puts jobs, the environment, the economy and rights at risk.

I believe the UK has been left to start negotiations from the worst possible basis following the General Election, and the Prime Minister's approach has served to weaken our relations with the EU, alienate our allies and leave Britain short of goodwill across Europe. It is therefore crucial that the Government adopt a more constructive and responsible approach to these negotiations. That means ruling out leaving the EU with no deal, which would be the worst possible outcome, as a viable option.

I am very clear that Brexit cannot be an excuse for weakening workers' rights, consumer rights and environmental protections. All existing provisions in these areas must be retained without qualifications, limitations or sunset clauses. Nor did the referendum give any authority to rip up our existing economic and social model and turn the UK into a tax-haven economy.

While it is likely that freedom of movement will end and immigration rules will change as we exit the EU, those EU nationals who are already living here must have their legal status guaranteed immediately -and the status of British citizens in the EU must be guaranteed too. I believe the Government's proposal on this is too little, too late and falls far short of the full and unilateral guarantee that I believe should have been made many months ago (and which Labour pledged to enact as its first act in government if we had been elected in June).

Without significant changes in the areas that I have outlined I will be unable to vote for the Government's 'Great Repeal Bill' at its Second Reading in the House of Commons in September. I hope the Government will listen carefully to the points that have been raised, including by a number of organisations, and make the improvements that are necessary.

Many constituents contacted me regarding Amendment G to the Queen's speech, proposed by Chuka Umunna, which would have committed the government to staying in the Customs Union and the Single Market.

I abstained on this amendment but voted in favour of the Labour amendment instead. This Labour amendment unambiguously stated that the worst possible outcome from the Brexit negotiations would be 'no deal'; it held the government to account for its claim that it could deliver the 'exact same benefits' as single market membership and the customs union without being in the single market; and required the government to protect the rights of EU citizens living in Britain, and British people living in the rest of the EU.

Some people interpreted my voting for the Labour amendment as being in favour of 'hard Brexit', when it was quite the opposite and no-one reading the amendment could have come to that conclusion. I think this may be because the contents of the Labour amendment relating to Brexit did not receive as much publicity as Chuka's amendment. I also felt the Labour amendment had a better chance of being passed than Chuka's amendment, which turned out to be the case even though both amendments failed. You can see a video of my reaction to the vote on my facebook page.

I believe that we must seek to build a new and strong relationship with the EU - not as members, but as partners - and that there must be much more inclusive political engagement in this process. The Brexit negotiations must aim for a deal that ensures a cooperative, collaborative new partnership. It must ensure continued cooperation in areas where we all benefit - from counter-terrorism and higher education, to culture and climate change. It must also be one that that puts jobs, the economy and living standards first, and I strongly believe that seeking to retain the benefits of both the Single Market and the Customs Union will be vital to protecting these. As Oxford East's MP I am also aware that our constituency stands to lose more than many from a botched approach to the negotiations, in a variety of areas. These include for example our membership of Euratom, which the government is wrongly insisting we must leave. I was pleased that my demands, with other Labour MPs, that this issue be debated in the Commons was granted and that I was able to take Theresa May to task for failing to sufficiently consider research matters within her negotiating approach, even if I received a very weak 'handwaving' response back.

I would of course be very happy to hear from any members who wish to discuss this, or any other, issues further.