

# Executive Report to Members

Old Bexley and Sidcup CLP AGM Feb 2021

**Donna Briant**

## **Chairs Report June 2019- February 2021**

I could not do all that the role of Chair requires without the support and hard work of the Executive Officers that have been involved this year, thank you to Ana Davies as a first class Secretary, LaReo as a Vice Chair who has provided tremendous support in getting the flat above the office ready for our tenants, Teresa Gray who has been an extremely enthusiastic Women's Officer and happy to help with any task big or small, Dave Tingle for being a fabulous election candidate and putting his many skills in social media into action during the General Election and any other campaign that the party has been involved in since, along with Anthony Riches, Claire Mayes, Danny McGill, Dave Lovelace, Jay Zilik, Jeremy Fosten, Jo Chodha, Rahela Siddiqi and Stefano Borella.

The last 20 months as Chair of OBS have been a roller coaster both locally and across the world due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. When I was elected, along with other members who were elected to the executive, it was with the intention to bring a keen sense of enthusiasm and energy to go into the 2019 General Election and to put forward the Labour Party and our policies. The national result was disappointing, although locally we can be proud of the local campaign that we fought to maximise the vote for our Labour candidate, David Tingle.

During this time officers of the party were also working on bringing the flat above the office into a better decorative position to ensure that it was ready to be available for rental. We secured the current tenants in December of 2019 and I am pleased to update members that with regular contact from myself and others we have now renewed the current tenants for a further 12 months. Unfortunately, we are currently working with contractors to get quotes for repairs to the roof which has been causing concern, it is looking like a costly maintenance job, but necessary for the tenants' comfort and to ensure that the flat is well maintained.

During the first year of being Chair, the Treasurer resigned and was replaced with Anthony Riches and working with the whole Executive we were able to ensure that the various unpaid bills from the previous flat tenants, where the party were liable for them, were paid and others disputed to ensure that the party minimised its losses due to the bad debts caused by the squatters that took over the flat, when the previous tenant vacated. I would like to put on record my thanks to members of the Executive for their continued support and hard work throughout this time.

The All Member Meetings (AMM) had various speakers attend the meetings between June 2019 and February 2020 including Wes Streeting and Kelly Grehan, others were

lined up but as we entered the first National Lock Down in March 2020 the National Labour Party halted all face to face meetings and the local party kept in touch with members through a range of activities such as Keep in Touch emails out to members, virtual catch up meetings, a new members meeting in the summer, when there was a pause in the lockdown, I led a small working party from our Women's WhatsApp group to clear the office/flat garden for our tenants – thank you to all involved, you did a great job clearing the heaps of rubbish that had built up, you know who you are 😊

We have recently been able to hold AMM's again and I am delighted that the last meeting which took place in January had many new and returning members with motions and political discussion taking place once more.

I look forward to continuing to ensure that our party is open to all members and is a welcoming environment to enable full political discussion to take place in a positive and inclusive manner. As Chair I will continue to run the meetings in the friendly and transparent manner that I have done over the last 20 months (when we have been able to) and will encourage members to take part at every level to continually promote fairness and equality.

Here is to a year of well attended virtual and, hopefully at some point, face to face meeting in the run up to the London Elections supporting our very own officer and Councillor Stefano Borella and a, soon to be announced, by election in Longlands Ward of Bexley Council where we can campaign to support one of our members in this by-election for a Labour win.

**Ana Davies**

**Secretaries Report June 2019 – February 2021**

A Secretary's work is never done, but I must admit that the pandemic did bring some respite to organising elections, agendas meetings and minutes for several months. Behind the scenes I have been getting up to date on marking up our Constituency electoral register, this exercise identifies those voters who actually take the trouble to vote, so when we come to local and national elections we can focus our efforts on those who actually take part in the democratic process.

One of the exciting elements of my work is the technology that Labour have introduced. Early in my term, I championed the Labour Doorstep Application which allows easy disbursement of canvassers to independently knock on doors with all the voters details on a smart phone, no more gathering of sheets from the back of the car with risk of GDPR breach, then finding time to input the data, it's all done live by the canvasser at the point of speaking to the electorate.

As part of the GE 2019 organising team, OBS held its vote share well compared with some of Labour's epic losses, thanks to a great candidate, really targeted leafleting and paid Facebook advertising by postcode. Later we ran a Leadership nomination election just before lockdown, our meetings were getting up to 50+ members, not bad for a 'blue Constituency'. In September we ran our first virtual meeting for the NEC elections and used an electronic voting system, a bit hair-raising but we got through it smoothly and we're now well into the swing of running virtual meetings. Lockdown means we can't leaflet or door knock, but again we've been saved by technology with the Dialogue Ap, if you have a smart phone you can call any Constituency, any ward from the comfort of your home. I've enjoyed working with fellow Bromley campaign coordinators for our GLA candidate Councillor Borella and hope to see some of you on our regular sessions. Five minute training and off you go! A secretary wears many hats, as and when needed and following the sudden resignation of our Treasurer, I've had to submit the tax returns for the CLP and work to get the CLP future proof in terms of good record keeping. Just all in the life of a beleaguered party agent!

## Anthony Riches

### Treasurer Report October 2019 – February 2021

I became Treasurer late in 2019 and accessed the Treasurer's Account from mid-December. I decided to resign from the Labour Party on 29.10.20, so stood down as Treasurer.

Matters relating to the flat at 31A Sidcup Hill have dominated my time. On the recommendation of the letting agent Your Move, I took out a Legal and Rent Protection Insurance policy from First2protect Insurance Services, only for the company to refuse the insurance and refund my credit card two weeks later. Further communications confirmed that this was an error and as a client of Your Move, we were entitled to the insurance, but failed to produce either response or policy. By the time I broached the issue with our insurance brokers, the Pandemic had come along, and even for grade B tenants with grade A guarantors, such policies were no longer offered.

Subsequently, debt collection firms have hassled Labour Nominees Ltd over utility bills. Appraising Shell Energy (formerly First Utility) of when exactly the tenant (and squatter) had possession of the flat still left a seemingly huge energy bill to pay. Another, smaller, bill paid dated from *before* the tenant moved in in 2016. Finally, Bexley Council amended their Council Tax demand when provided with the dates we possessed the flat, although they couldn't send a copy of the bill to my address...

I have produced this report by analysing the past two years' Treasurer's Account entries, and those likely related to the flat, going back to 2016. I have no details of the Investment Account or the Shepherd's Bequest. Apportioning spending to specific areas (e.g., Election, Conferences etc.) is hampered where individual refunds cover more than one expense. I have described both deposits and spending as "unspecified" when I have no other identifying information. The analysis raises issues, mainly concerning the flat. A) The previous treasurer claimed that the defaulting tenant had paid regularly until she stopped. In fact, rent was £300 short in September 2016. Our experiences with Debt Collection firms suggests that utility bills were also not paid. B) Even with a new tenant who has extended their lease, it will be some months before revenue **breaks even** over expenditure since 2016. C) The number of utility payments that the CLP covers, suggests that (two?) may relate to the flat at 31A Sidcup Hill.

OBS Treasurer's Account 2019 Summary		OBS Treasurer's Account 2020 Summary	
	£		£
Income		Income	
65656.10		12553.76	
Expenditure		Expenditure	
18414.20		12728.93	
Account balance at 1.1.19	785.65	Balance at 1.1.20	48,027.55
Account Balance at 31.12.19	48027.55	Balance at 31.12.20	47,852.38
Increase	47241.90	Deficit	-175.17

#### Notes

- 1 Income in 2019 was boosted by two transfers of £4500 from the CLP's Investment account, and one in excess of £55,000 from the Shepherd's Bequest Fund, by the previous treasurer. I understand that some £209,000 remains in the Investment Account.
- 2 Income in 2020 reflects the fact that a new tenant had moved into the flat at 31A Sidcup Hill shortly before the beginning of the year, and that 12 monthly rent payments were made.  
Note from Secretary: A full set of accounts is currently being prepared.

**Claire Mayes**

## **Policy Officer Report June 2019 – February 2021**

Well, it has been an exceedingly difficult and challenging year on so many levels for all of us. It started with my taking our CLP motion to Conference in Brighton which now seems like a lifetime ago. My report below:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this year's conference as one of the OBS delegates. I am going to feedback my experience of representing our OBS conference motion in the compositing meeting and its progression through conference.

I would echo what the other delegates have said that there is a lot to take on board in a short space of time and it really is nonstop. I spent most of my time in the main hall, early morning policy workshops and meeting with the remain alliance to support our CLP motion through the compositing process and conference vote.

It was my first time at the conference and at a compositing meeting. There were 92 CLP that had Brexit motions accepted for conference but only 60 attended the compositing meeting, the split was 52 wanting the party to adopt and campaign to remain in EU and the remaining 8 supporting current NEC position on Brexit.

The remain group crossed all factions of the party, Another Europe is Possible, Labour for a Socialist Europe, Open Labour, Labour for a Public Vote and Remain Labour. We met and brought together our motions into one composite 13, that we all felt we could support and take into the composite meeting on the Sunday evening. Once the meeting doors are shut then only those in the room can work on and vote on the composites, however delegates can leave the process at any time. The meeting was scheduled to start at 6.30, but was late starting due to the main conference finishing late, and we finished at about midnight.

A policy statement from head office was handed out as we started the meeting but the consensus in the room was that we start with composite 13, so we went through paragraph by paragraph and we changed some of the content, but still there were 8 CLP who felt unable to get behind the composite so a split composite was agreed by a vote of 52 CLP for composite 13 and 8 CLP for composite 14. The 8 CLP that supported composite 14 refused any changes to their motion.

I am sure many of you saw or read about the voting on both composite 13 and 14 on Monday the 23rd of September. The context for asking for a card vote after a close hand vote and the obvious confusion of the chair and panel on stage, was that card votes had been used the previous day on numerous occasions and for much less controversial issues.

I have feedback to the conference organizers that I feel along with many in the conference hall that the conference voting system as it stands it not fit for purpose and that we should move to an electronic based voting system with a card vote back up.

We then commenced a questionnaire to find out what OBS members felt that their policy priorities were. We had a good online and paper response to this but were overtaken by the events of suspension of activities due to the General Election, which

sadly even with our excellent local candidate and a good local reception to canvassing we lost both locally and nationally. Sadly, the aftermath of such a large defeat left the party having to pick up the pieces and head into a period of review and a leadership contest.

Early 2020 we were hit with COVID-19 and everyone's life changed, I like many of you had and indeed am still shielding due to being clinically extremely vulnerable. Working for the NHS I have continued to work remotely and been involved in providing psychological support for both front line staff and staff shielding. But I am aware I am lucky compared to many who lost their lives or been left in great hardship. We have had fewer, but I think you will agree interesting speakers where possible before the Covid lockdown.

Let us hope that 2021 and the new vaccination roll out will allow us to meet up in person once more.

**Teresa Gray**

**Women's Officer Report June 2019 – February 2021**

Shortly after becoming the Women's Officer in July 2019, I was at a party where a friend asked me "So what are you going to do as Women's Officer?"

I tossed my hair, laughed, and said, "As little as possible. Ha!"

Well. Have I managed to fulfil this avowed aim?

No! Despite COVID 19.....

Actually, I was seriously impressed to get this job but had little idea what it would involve. No idea what I was doing. I would go as far as to say, however, that despite numerous lockdowns, the achievements of our little unit have been very noteworthy indeed. Due in large part to the support I have enjoyed, from so many lovely Labour women in the constituency .... and some men too!

**Pre COVID-19**

**SOLACE**

In October 2019, two speakers, Joanne Rolling and Frances Moore, came to speak to a meeting of CLP women about their work for SOLACE. This charity works with victims of domestic violence in Bexley. It was a very informative and interesting. Not least in finding out how high the prevalence of domestic violence is; 1 in 4 women experience it in their lifetime. Our guests outlined how referrals are done. Definitions of emotional as well as physical abuse were discussed. The types of support were outlined: phone consultations, support groups and in extreme cases finding accommodation. A donation of £100 was made to work of Solace after discussion in a general CLP meeting. As start to Women's' Sections meetings this was a success.

**Radical women of the East End Walk**

On Sunday November 3<sup>rd</sup>, a group went on this walk in the East End. It was led by Oonagh Gay of the tour company Radical London Walks. Oonagh is also an active party member in Islington. The tour began at the site of the Bryant and May Matchgirls Strike in 1888 in Bow. We learnt about the events and achievements of the strike whilst standing at the very entrance to the factory.



The walk then followed a route, which allowed Oonagh to give us relevant details of the life and social work of Sylvia Pankhurst in particular (who turned a local pub into a thriving mother and baby centre) and of the Lansbury family. George Lansbury became Mayor of Poplar in 1919 and gave a lot of support to Women's Suffrage. His home in Bow was a haven for radical activists and ideas. Many of his children also became MPs and left-wing activists. A very interesting walk and talk. I was hoping to organise others before COVID!

### **Since COVID-19**

I was on the brink of trying to be more organised in a political way when COVID arrived. Plans for further speakers and activities flew out the window. But.....

### **OBS Women's Section WhatsApp**

This has been a real success. During the last AMM, before we had to suspend physical meetings, I made an appeal for any women CLP members who would like to join a WhatsApp group. Its purpose would be to organise further activities more easily and to be a means of providing an informal forum for discussion and ideas.

The WhatsApp group has been a very effective and positive vehicle for debate on all topics of current affairs and Labour Policy in a balanced manner. We have also swapped suggestions on books, films and other relevant diversions of a left-wing nature. It would be great if more CLP women could join us on the WhatsApp.

If you would like to text me on 07941758092 and I can add your names.

### **Digging for victory**

Sarah Miller, Claire Hedderman and I turned out, after an appeal by Donna Briant for help to clear the overgrown vegetation at the back of the offices at 31, Sidcup Hill. This task we performed with ease whilst socially distancing but also having a good lefty chat. We got so carried away we even cleared the section of land belonging to the next-door neighbors' flat .....He was grateful!!

### **Gloria Steinem : British library interview**

After a suggestion by Katie Jackson that the British Library was doing a series of relevant talks on Women's issues, a group of us signed up for a talk with the American Women's Rights campaigner Gloria Steinem. We heard the talk then had a discussion on the WhatsApp afterwards. Which was all very interesting: especially in increasing my knowledge of assertive Hindu Goddesses.

### **Ladies in Red Christmas zoom**

This was an unexpected but total hit!!

Just before Christmas we decided to have a zoom 'Ladies in Red Night' which took place on Thursday Dec.18<sup>th</sup>. It occurred to me that rather than get an outside speaker, which could be tricky at short notice, that we have in OBS CLP, a huge reserve of dynamic women who are doing things every day to contribute to equality and social justice. Why not ask them to talk? I had a quiz ready in case the action dried up, but there was no need. Three very engaging presentations and following Q and A sessions kept us going for two hours. Which bears witness to the appeal of the three speakers.

Claire Hedderman spoke about her work in the Business and Employment department of Greenwich council and in setting up a Facebook page to coordinate ideas on ending child poverty in Bexley. Claire recently coordinated the Plate Protest when protesters left plates daubed with questions and slogans outside the offices of the borough's TWO Conservative MPs: namely James Brokenshire and David Evernett. This was following on from the Tory vote against giving vouchers to free school meal children for last October half term. You can find the video Claire did on Facebook on the 'Child Poverty Bexley' page

Secondly, Katie Jackson spoke about the British Library. Her insight into the work of managing the collections and treasures alone was fascinating. She also highlighted the challenges and importance of being an inclusive and anti-racist institution. I particularly agreed with her comment that social justice starts with education... doesn't it just.. and libraries have a major role to play in that. Katie also described the new exhibition 'Unfinished Business' which highlights the state of women's rights since the vote was won. I was hoping to organise an outing to this for OBS women. I hope it will be extended and we can go in the Autumn..or maybe before.

Thirdly Shakira Martin spoke. Shakira rose to fame as the first black, female president of the NUS when she was a student at Lewisham College. An impressive enough achievement in itself. She is now Head of Student Experience at Rose Bruford College and was able to organise the first National Digital Prom for students leaving in summer 2020. A great boost to them. Shakira spoke passionately about diversity, inclusion and how she hoped to raise levels of resilience in the students.

I have only given brief outlines of the talks here. All three were very engaging.

### **Telephone canvassing**

Several OBS Women members have become involved in telephone canvassing using a tool called Dialogue. It needs a little training but is essentially easy to do and for anyone like me who just loves to talk it's great. In the lead up to the election for London's Mayor, we are hoping to do more of this. At the time of writing, most forms of canvassing are suspended except this one. So, if you are at home doing less than you would like to why not contact Ana or myself and give it a go. We are supporting our very own OBS LGBT Officer Stefano Borella who is a GLA candidate for Bromley and Bexley.

### **The Future**

So, I did not get round to doing as little as possible. In fact, I think we did a lot. I have met some inspiring women this year and would love more of you to meet more of them. There have been lots of suggestion for activities we can get involved with and agencies we can support once COVID-19 is history. I am sure many OBS women will have many positive contributions to make to the body which replaces the LCF. I am going to get to that exhibition at the British Library. Hopefully accompanied by a load of you good people. In the near future, I hope we can get more local OBS women to tell us about their work. I will also get onto a good female MP to ask if they can talk about their work, especially as the Labour party totally smashed the 50/50 barrier last December! There are 104 Labour Women MPs to 98 men. For the Tories its 87 women to 277 men. It is true.....

A woman's place is in her party!  
See you there in 2021.

## **Dave Tingle**

### **Social Media Officer**

Over the past year and a half our Twitter followers have tripled and crucially the Tories have started reacting both online and in person to what we post as they realise our increasing online presence. We follow each reaction up with detailed analysis and rebuttal. They have quite clearly sparked discussion within Tory circles due to our fact checked and accurate posts. This should continue in future.

We have caught up to and are nearly beating the main Tory council page (@BexleyNews) in terms of followers and just need a little push to overcome them. We remain very far away from @JBrokershire (29,500 followers) although his follower count is relatively low for a former cabinet member.

Since the last AGM our overall engagement average is up, peaking during the election with an organic reach of 100,000 people on Twitter. Facebook allowed us to be more targeted so we were able to reach the same 6,000-8,000 people every day throughout the election period. This strategy remains in our locker to use at any time for any localised campaign.

In my view a target for the following year should be to further increase engagement, overcome @BexleyNews in terms of followers and close the gap between our follower count and @JBrokershire.

Our features such the 'Who Am I' for Black History Month (which highlighted some lesser known members of the black community who fundamentally changed our world for the better) and our current LGBT+ Labour timeline have proved popular. Please let me know if you have any ideas for a feature on our social media. At the moment we are pushing early vote applications.

## **Jay Zilik**

### **Trade Union Liaison Officer**

As your Trade Union Liaison Officer (TULO), I know how precious free time is nowadays when people are forced to have more than one job with zero hours contracts. It makes it very difficult to juggle family life with work life and to find the right balance.

I'm pleased to have secured the £200 cheque from our union Usdaw as a donation towards the Bexley Food Bank, but there is always more need so I would like to encourage you to contact your branch secretaries in your unions and request any donation towards the Local Food bank as every penny counts and we would be most grateful for every little help towards this good cause.

I would like also to inform you that the CWU Union sent us a £200 cheque towards the General Elections campaign and I wrote to sincerely thank the CWU Union and their General Secretary.

The General Election result is obviously devastating news. Union members needed a Labour Government but now we are faced with a Conservative government that will ignore the needs of working people.

We are building Labour's campaigning capacity. In this election the Unions were involved in more campaigning activity than for many years. Faced with the challenges ahead, campaigning around the basic issues that affect union members - low pay, insecure work and the retail crisis – will be more important than ever and we urge the Government to listen and act especially in current crisis where nearly 180,000 retail job losses and around 20,000 store closures last year lay bare the scale of the challenge the industry faces.

Despite the very disappointing result we mustn't allow ourselves to be disheartened. We all knew this election would be a difficult one, but we have been involved in fantastic campaigning efforts and I would like to encourage every one of you if you get a chance to attend your CLP meetings, it's a great place where you will meet likeminded people who want to make some difference, you could be part of too!

Affiliations received for 2021

Unison – member Anna Day

CWU – Richard Crook and 1 unassigned

GMB – 2 delegates

USDaw – 3 delegates

Unite – Munir Malik, Bridget Riches and 1 unassigned

Aslef – Ray Garland and 1 unassigned

Co-op – Munir Malik (based on last year's affiliation)

## Membership Report

With a disappointing election, a new leadership in place for almost a year, no Party Conference and the spectre of antisemitism, and COVID-19 fallout there's so much to digest but we'll let the numbers speak for themselves.

We've seen resignations in 2019 and returning members post April 2020, a surge in lapses and resignations after the last leader left the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Overall membership remains around 480 members, we're 3 years before an election and are fast closing the gap with the Tories. The economic landscape looks bleak, so there's still a lot of political upheaval yet to come.

Overall Party national membership is 512,000 now, 19% joining post the start of 2020, with 92 new members in the same period OBS mirrors this (19% of its membership).



