

Present: 43 members

Membership Report: Vice Chair (Membership) Peter Bradbury reported that the CLP now has 1267 members and provided a breakdown for each branch. He stated that each new member had received a welcome pack, but encouraged branch secretaries to get in touch with new members in their branches directly.

Kevin Brennan MP: Kevin discussed the current governmental situation, wherein the Prime Minister had moved from a place of 'strong and stable' leadership, to 'weak and wobbly' to 'weak but stable', with a government unable to deliver any manifesto promises and reliant on support for the budget from the DUP.

Mark Drakeford AM: Mark discussed three key developments, beginning with the announcement of educational funding for local authorities, with Fitzalan, Cantonian and Ysgol Gymraeg Nant schools in Cardiff West to benefit. Mark further discussed the progress of the draft Budget, set to be finalized by 16th January. This included £240m worth of revenue across four years from the UK budget, the largest allocations of which included £50m extra for the NHS over 2018-19 and 2019-20 and £20m extra for local government over 2018-19, with an extra £40m in 2019-20, and smaller monies for assistance for compliance with clean air regulations. Mark highlighted £20m allocated to tackling homelessness in 2018-19 and 2019-20, which would particularly focus on youth homelessness and care leavers. Mark also outlined the impact of the new fiscal framework and tax-raising powers, alongside progressive changes to stamp duty in Wales. Thirdly, Mark reminded members of the forthcoming Assembly by-election in Alyn and Deeside, with Jack Sargeant chosen as the candidate for the election on 6th February. Finally, Mark thanked his staff member Kirrin Davidson for his work, as he moves to a new role in the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Brexit Discussion: This discussion was led by Mark and Kevin, with Mark introducing progress over the last year and Kevin providing commentary on potential events in the year to come. Mark began by highlighting the Welsh Government's response to Brexit, as outlined in the 'Securing Wales' Future' document, which he said had punched above its weight in terms of impact, being recognised at EU level. This report, jointly agreed with Plaid Cymru, focussed on the form, rather than fact, of Brexit, and outlined the Welsh Government's key priorities. Mark highlighted the difference in Theresa May's positioning on these issues, between her October 2016 Conservative party conference and Lancaster House speeches (in which she was clear on no freedom of movement, no EU courts, no to the single market and customs union, no transition period and no further payments to the EU budget) and her December 2017 speech, in which her positioning appeared to have been reversed on all of these points, particularly on agreement on a transition period of at least two years following March 2019, during which time the UK will have no negotiating powers.

Mark believed that the chances of remaining in the single market and customs union were strengthened due to the ongoing issues around the Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland border. Mark outlined three arrangements for the prevention of a hard border: the use of new technologies (the government's preferred option) which do not currently exist and would need to monitor 30 million journeys a year; a relationship wherein Northern Ireland would remain in the single market and customs union, making the Irish Sea a hard border (with which the DUP do not agree); and the Welsh Government's preferred option, wherein the whole of the UK remains in the single market

and a customs union, which would mitigate the damage to the Welsh economy to a degree. Mark felt overall that we ended the year in a stronger position than when the year began.

Kevin highlighted that this was a difficult issue for the Labour Party, but felt that Keir Starmer was working well and that the party's position had moved closer to that of the Welsh Government. He highlighted that the Brexit Bill is in its final stages in the House of Commons and will soon pass to the House of Lords. The UK Government had rejected all of Labour's amendments, with only one significant win, wherein a meaningful parliamentary vote will be held on the final bill, and the removal of an exact leaving date was removed from the face of the bill. This vote will take place in summer 2018. The Lords are expected, constitutionally, not to block the bill, but may improve it with advantageous amendments. Kevin highlighted that there was some evidence that public opinion is changing on the issue, with more voters favouring a second referendum, and speculated as to what the year may bring in terms of such a referendum, a governmental defeat or another general election.

Mark and Kevin then considered questions and comments, including on whether the party at UK level should be opposing Brexit more strongly, the need not to pander to racism and xenophobia and increased evidence of existential threats around recruitment to the NHS and the financial sector. Kevin stated that there had been debates in the PLP on those terms and reiterated the need to be clear around values on immigration and asylum seekers. Mark had attended meetings with the CBI in Wales, who said that they were making business decisions at this point in time and were not waiting to see the outcome. Mark further highlighted the way in which discussion on Brexit occurred only with those with whom we agree, and suggested that the Conservatives will concentrate resources where Labour is struggling and for whom Brexit is not a primarily economic argument.

Further questions were taken around what reforms to the EU could have been presented to voters, what support exists for EU citizens and whether there are any clear messages that can be presented on the doorstep. Mark felt that there had been a need to work with socialists across Europe during the referendum campaign to present positive reforms, but that there may be an opportunity to do so now. He further reiterated that, from a Welsh Government perspective, that EU citizens are welcome in Wales. Kevin highlighted the disenfranchisement of EU citizens during the referendum and discussed reasons behind why the vote was won by the Leave campaign, including the wording of the question (Leave/Remain v Yes/No). In terms of doorstep messages, Mark suggested raising the concept of a 'jobs first Brexit', with a reform agenda around opposing an austerity Europe, promoting a social Europe, opposing a fortress Europe (closing its doors to migrants and refugees) and promoting a democratic Europe.

Final comments included discussion of the benefits of the EU for UK citizens, including university grants, the need for simplified and relevant messages for voters in areas in the constituency that voted to leave the actions of the Wales for Europe organisation.

Party Democracy Review: NEC member Darren Williams outlined the elements of the UK party's democracy review, which has six sections (building a mass movement, how we make policy, diversity and participation, local Labour parties, electing the leadership and the way we work), with three different deadlines (12 Jan, 23 March and 29 June). Women's Officer Alison Scouller highlighted that the deadline for submissions regarding women's conference was 12 January, and wished to make a submission about women's conference becoming part of direct policy-making. It was agreed that

both the Women's Officer and the Secretary would make a submission on these lines. For the other elements of the consultation, it was agreed to arrange a Saturday morning session open to all members.

Campaigning Report: Campaign Coordinator Selwyn Hughes provided an update on a recent meeting of the campaign committee, including preparations for a future general election, Universal Credit campaigning Saturdays in January, Mark and Kevin's visits to non-Labour held wards, pre GC surgeries and activity in Fairwater ward.