

2018

HAVERING FABIAN

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HAVERING FABIAN

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Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. We have obituaries of two much missed local Labour Councillors, and an article from Claire Blakemore on the recent LSE “Beveridge 2.0” event to mark the 75th anniversary of the report that led to the creation of the Welfare State.

This edition contains details of recent meetings, which started with a panel of candidates for the Council Elections in May, the AGM with Mike Gapes and the return of Alan Williams covering his period on the GLC

Our presence on social media is bringing us closer to a number of new organisations; we now have over 1,000 followers on twitter. Keep up to date at our twitter site @haveringfabians for the latest news. We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties, and will do all we can to support their campaigns. Havering Young Labour are on twitter @ylabourhavering and hope they reflect a growing interest in Labour politics in Havering.

As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement as a whole are welcome.

Attendances at recent meetings have remained good and the quality of speakers remains exceptional. We are glad to see a number of new people attending the meetings, and have an ever increasing number of followers on Face book and Twitter.



Website – Our new website address is <http://haveringfabians.org> - a little different from the previous one so please update your Favourites.

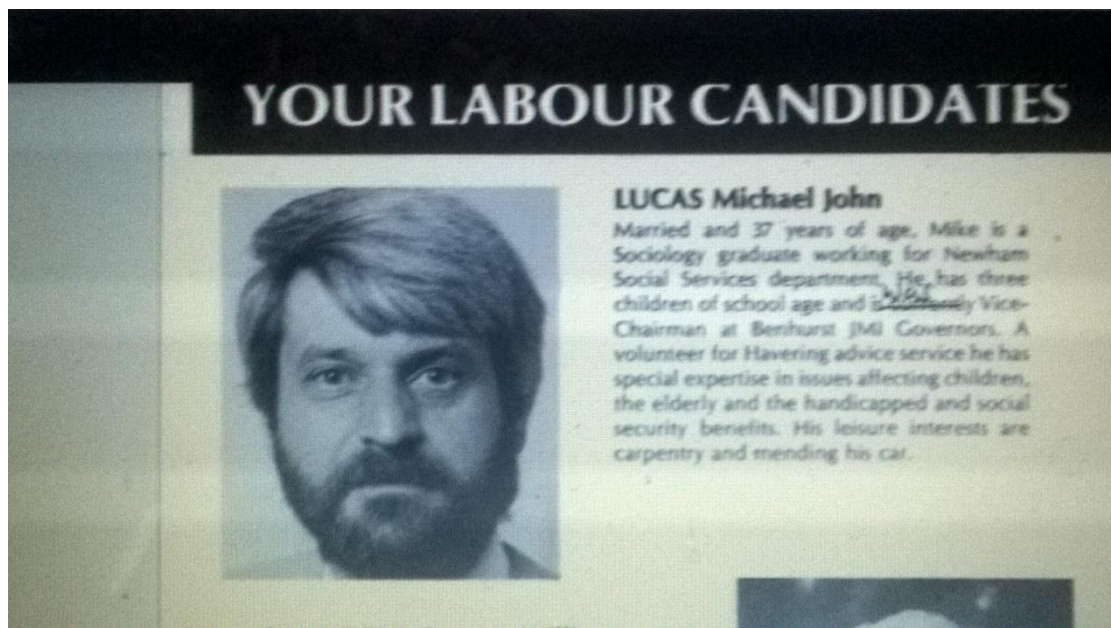
Obituaries

Sadly we report in this edition the death of Mike Lucas and John White.

Mike Lucas

Former Elm Park Labour Councillor Mike Lucas died in February. Mike was a Councillor from 1986-1994, having previously been Secretary of Elm Park Labour Party, and a school Governor at Benhurst and then Chair of Governors at Abbs Cross Secondary school. He was elected alongside Alan Williams and the late George Saunders in 1986 as Labour regained the seat, and re-elected in 1990 as the Labour vote in the ward increased to be among the highest in any seat in the Borough.

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Mike Lucas pictured in the 1986 election address - note the alteration, which is explained below

Mike had a massive heart attack during the 1990 election campaign and it was touch and go for a while. Alan Williams tells the story of arriving early in the morning on election day and seeing no one around, fearing the worst.

Mike survived, and was nominated as chair of Social Services in the minority administration that followed...however he never assumed this role for a variety of reasons. He did not stand in 1994, and was a bit disillusioned with Labour politics.

He had great integrity, and when we made a error in an election leaflet naming him as current Chair of Benhurst school governors rather than former Chair, we manually wrote in the correct title to 4,500 leaflets. Keith Darvill retold this story as part of a tribute at the recent Havering Council meeting. Mike was also remembered by Council Leader Roger Ramsey, and long standing Resident Councillors Ron Ower and Barbara Matthews, who remarked Mike was the nicest person ever to serve on the Council.

He was Chair of Governors at Abbs Cross until 1992 resigning when the school became Grant Maintained, and was recently described by a long standing teacher at the School as the best Chair of Governors the school has ever had.

Mike had been a social worker for Newham and later Essex County Council and helped out at Community Links, the main Charity in Canning Town.

He was a loss to the Labour Party, and a genuinely decent man.

Condolences to his wife June, and Joanne, Kevin David and his grandchildren RIP.

His son Kevin (who is North West area organiser for UNITE) is raising funds for Medical Aid for Palestine by cycling in Palestine during the summer. The family have asked that is anyone would like to make a donation in memory of Mike, this is a cause Mike supported – contact us for details.

John White

Sad also to report the death of John White, Barking and Dagenham Labour Councillor for Whalebone Ward. John had been an occasional visitor to Fabians, notably having an interesting and lively discussion on Housing with Kathy McGuirk in the run up to the 2010 election. He had been a Barking and Dagenham Councillor since 2006, and had previously served on Camden Council. He had initially recovered from a cancer scare in October, and had planned to stand again in May – however it returned and unfortunately claimed another victim. John had been a school Governor and was a Cabinet Member until the 2014 election when he declined an offer to remain in the Cabinet and returned to the back benches.



John White (left) leads the 86 Bus campaign in Chadwell Heath High Road with Andrew Achillious and Franco Salu

He was diligent at doing his case work and surgeries and campaigned hard to ensure the Library in Chadwell Heath High Road remained open as austerity hit home. A similar campaign to ensure the White Hart was given listed building status was lost, and the pub is now closed.

John fronted the local campaign to extend the 86 bus route to Queens Hospital, whether or not King George Hospital remains open.

Best wishes to his wife Headish , family and friends. The funeral will be on 4th April, contact us for details.

The London School of Economics was created by among others the Fabians George Bernard Shaw, Graham Wallas and Beatrice and Sidney Webb. The LSE has recently been holding a series of events to mark the 75th anniversary of the Beveridge Report “Beveridge 2.0”, looking at the future of the welfare state. Claire Blakemore writes.

Can Literature solve Poverty?

“Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of the mind”. Virginia Woolf

After the financial crash in 2007 an unlikely phenomenon occurred — pockets of readings groups studying John Steinbeck’s Pulitzer prize winning novel *Grapes of Wrath* sprung up across the United States. That ordinary people chose to respond to institutional negligence and corporate greed through literature, fills me with hope. Yet, back in the UK a more worrying trend is afoot. Since the austerity measures of 2012 a whopping 449 libraries have closed across England, Scotland and Wales.

It is this worrying trend that led me, on a bitingly cold evening in February to attend an event ‘Can Literature Solve Poverty?’. Jointly organised by the London Society of Economics and the Royal Society of Literature the event brought together an expert panel to reflect on questions such as: do you need money to access literature? If not, why are there comparatively few working-class writers? And can literature actively play a part in reducing financial hardship? The panel itself included working-class authors Kit de Waal and Paul McVeigh, together with LSE’s Dr Aaron Reeves, Associate Professorial Research Fellow at the International Inequalities Institute to try to untie these Gordian Knots.

The answer, of course, seems obvious. If poverty is defined as the inability to meet your basic needs of food, shelter and sanitation — a book, however thrilling, is not going to help. But, if this was all that was implied by the question we might as well have all gone home. We stayed, because the event was really addressing a different question: is there a connection between social class and artistic expression?

Dr Reeve told us that studies consistently show that reading is correlated with socio-economic status. In other words, the better off you are, the more likely you are to read. This is a worrying statistic given that areas associated with low literacy have recently been linked to lower life expectancy. But his research shows something far more interesting: the proportion of people who report that they write is not correlated with socio-economic status. The desire to write does not belong to the upper and middle classes it seems. It is a universal. Ah-ha! Give the paupers paper and pen already.

This begs the question, why aren't we seeing this diversity of creative expression mirrored in the books published and stocked in our local chain of Waterstones? Why is it the case that a remarkable 12% of those identifying themselves as writers in Who's Who come from the elite Clarendon schools, despite only representing 0.5% of the overall population.

The obvious answer is to look to the publisher, or as they were referred to continually throughout the evening, 'gatekeepers'. Shouldn't we be putting more onus on them to ensure marginalised voices are represented?

Many people in the publishing industry I suspect believe they are already doing their job very well. They are not going out of their way to exclude marginalised voices, they are simply trying to find the best stories. The stories that sell. A publisher amongst us in the audience pointed out that in genre writing and in the top ten booksellers list there are plenty of working class writers. So then, the problem is more subtle and complicated.

The real question then, the one that sat silently underneath the discussion. The one I really wanted answered was: is there something innately important about literature and its role in society that means we have a duty to ensure the very best writers in society are represented within the literary canon. To ensure that no one is held back from writing because of their class, race, gender or disability.

I suspect that as inequality increases and austerity measures continue to focus its gaze on the Arts, so too will we see a poverty of literature.

Literature has a value judgement attached to it. It is for want of a better phrase viewed as ‘good’ writing. The quality of the language and story, is part of that value judgement, but a lot of genre writing is good if that were all it is.

What then elevates a piece of writing to being literary? I’ve hunted around for a definition and the one that sits right with me is that stories ‘explain reality’, but literary fiction ‘opens reality up’. And this is the nub of the issue. How can we begin to open reality up if the experiences expressed in literary fiction belongs to a very narrow set of lived experiences. We are in danger as a society of continually navel gazing back into ourselves, of artistic stasis.

This might all seem rather high minded and rather pointless. Especially, it might seem as though it has very little to do with improving inequality, or poverty even. But I believe the poverty of literature is dangerous in a very real way. As the late Alan Rickman, once remarked “It’s a human need to be told stories. The more we’re governed by idiots and have no control over our destinies, the more we need to tell stories to each other about who we are, why we are, where we come from and, what might be possible”.

In essence: take our ability to tell stories away and you take away our ability to define what is true.

And, once you do that, someone else — normally those with money and power — will tell you what truth is for you.

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A podcast of the event can be accessed here; <http://www.lse.ac.uk/website-archive/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=3991>

Claire Blakemore

Panel Meeting of prospective Council Candidates

January saw another panel based meeting with prospective candidates for the Council elections in May. We welcomed back former Councillor Paul McGeary (PM), who had spoken at Fabians before and welcomed Angelina Leatherbarrow (AL), Tele Lewal (TL) and Trevor McKeever(TM) who were speaking at our meeting for the first time.

Another first was Denis O'Flynn in the Chair – he welcomed the enthusiastic audience to the meeting and wished them a prosperous New Year, although added this was unlikely under the current government.



Denis O'Flynn opens the meeting with (left to right) Trevor McKeever, Paul McGeary, Angelina leatherbarrow and Tele Lewal looking on

The panel introduced themselves

Trevor McKeever is a retired firefighter, having previously worked at Fords. He has lived in Elm Park since 1967, and became politically active after contacting Jon Cruddas in 2013. His aspiration is that his

grandchildren should have the same standard of life he has had, which is under threat at present. He is prospective Council candidate for South Hornchurch.

Paul McGeary has lived in Harold Hill since 1986, and came into politics after being a school governor. He was at a Nursery in Straight Road and met Denis O'Flynn, and joined the Party in around 2000, and has been involved ever since. Paul was a councillor from 2010-2014 and was Labour candidate for Hornchurch and Upminster in the 2015 General Election. He is now a school governor at a federation – in effect two schools in Harold Hill. He works for the NHS and is head of Estates in Havering Essex and Kent, and is prospective Labour candidate for Gooshays.

Angelina Leatherbarrow is currently Chair of Romford Labour Party, and was Labour candidate for Romford in the 2017 General Election. She had previously lived in Bow, and moved to Romford 13 years ago. She has two young daughters who attend school in the area. She previously worked as Head of Committees and Partnerships at the London Borough of Newham, and was inspired by many of the younger female Councillors. She had been politically restricted, but once moving to work at Queens Hospital, had become active, seeing at close hand the experience of the NHS at the hands of the Tories. She wants Havering to be a safe place that celebrates diversity – the Council seems afraid of this and she looks forward to being in a position to drive this through. She is prospective candidate for Brooklands.



Angelina answers questions from a packed audience – thanks to Nicolas West for the photos

Tele Lawal was born in Harold Wood hospital, and went to school in Collier Row, moving on to Havering sixth form college. After returning to the area after finishing university, she believes she can make a difference to the area – there is a growing divide in the area with areas ignored, and this needs to change. The Council is not promoting diversity, and is not embracing the digital age. She has been campaigning in Gooshays on fly tipping, closure of children's centres and is prospective candidate in Heaton ward.

The panel then took question from an enthusiastic audience.

The first was a broad one, given the freeze in public sector salaries, what was the message to voters to gain confidence as future leaders?

TM – Workers are entitled to a living wage, and locally the “Hexit” (Havering leaving Greater London) would see the loss of Bus Passes,

threaten London Weighting- foodbanks and child poverty were in the increase -there is a need for a cohesive approach working together.

AL - be innovative, or the area will lose its best people. Campaigning locally on issues such as street cleaning, trees was necessary to build confidence. The manifesto will be important, and with more Labour Councillors there should be more influence, and a chance to build trust to support a wider agenda.

TL – Build trust in both the people and the Party -sometimes there can be a disconnect between the National and Local Party in the mind of local people, and we need to campaign and raise awareness of where funding comes from (e.g. the GLA). So there is an educational role. There were many housing schemes in the borough but are the houses provided going to be affordable. There have been issues as well with substandard local new builds.

PM – A small number of Councillors can have influence and impact on other parties. Locally, the Harold Hill Intendents seem to oppose most things and are not in favour of very much. The election of Labour councillors across the borough will give greater influence, and a future Labour government may end the shortfall of funding.

Graham Lane asked “how can we encourage more people to come out to help? Door knocking is vital!”

AL – The Romford Party now has 450 members – campaigning was carried out by a small number of activists. There is increasing use of phone banks, while social media was effective during the General Election, and this did bring people into the campaign. The local Tories do have significant numbers and we should not underestimate this. In respect of motivation, the Manifesto launch is important in clarifying local objectives.

PM – We need to canvass members to engage with them, some are very keen to get more involved

TL – Need to interact whether Councillor or candidate and keep in touch both before and after May.

TM - We must knock on doors, social media is a tool and recent use of the boost facility on Facebook has had good results in spreading the message Tele's mother asked the next question; 30 years ago Havering was a safe place- it's less so now – how can we bring safety back? Tele seemed surprised that her Mum went to Romford nightclubs when younger...

TM – There has been an attack on police funding with a £600 million cut and a further £400m to come. We need more police and PCSOs- the latter do work and are undervalued. Sadiq Khan will provide some extra funding but not enough (see write up of Unmesh Desai meeting which covers this in detail in Newsletter 33). Local police stations are being closed. This is not good.

AL – What can we control? youth services expenditure is critical to keep children engaged and find other things to do. The cuts to Sure Start budgets were an issue and these are important to reduce the number of potentially vulnerable adults.

PM- Cuts in the noni statutory youth services in Harold Hill have had a big impact. Myplace has been decimated and the number of children's centres reduced from 12 to 6. More Local Government funding and an end to austerity are necessary to provide the finances needed.

TL – We need services that support the police and we should educate the community not to do things – systems should not give up on people. Former Havering Councillor Bill Harrison asked the next question. Knife crime has increased. Sadiq Khan favours increased use of stop and search while David Lammy feels this is the wrong approach and will increase hostility – which viewpoint would you agree with?

TM – this starts with education, but if targeted he would support stop and search provided it was evidenced based and backed with intelligence. He would not support indiscriminate targeting. There had been huge problems

in the Special Patrol Group era (70's and 80's for our younger readers). The culture was different now and intelligence led.

AL – Agreed – there is a need for preventative meetings as well with community involvement and intelligence to shape stop and search. There is a need to be transparent, e.g. numbers conducted, what was found as a result (knives, crimes solved) – so people can know whether the approach has been a success or not. Angelina had been stopped and searched, it was terrifying – she can see how a badly handled incident can quickly spiral.

PM – Target stop and search on an intelligence basis, once funding is restored PCSOs walking the beat would be beneficial. Safer Neighbourhood teams can be effective and feedback shows improvement – there are regular messages on Facebook while regular sessions in the local area help build trust.

TL – One of her friends had died as a result of knife crime, and so she favoured stop and search. This should not be on the basis of what people look like – yes intelligence based stop and search was needed. We should be tough on crime – it can change young lives and we need to change the ideology – why do 13 year olds carry a knife? We need to deal with the issues that cause this.

Nicholas West asked the next question – while canvassing it had become clear that wheelie bins were wanted in South Hornchurch – what did others think?

AL – was in favour if it promoted recycling

PM – Agreed recycling was important – Havering did not have a good record in this area, and it was one we would seek to improve on. The cost of waste disposal via the ELWA levy was increasing dramatically.

TL – had some interesting figures. Fly tipping cost Havering £250k per annum. Bull waste collection cost £40 in Havering, £20 in Newham and was free in Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham.

John Reid –The Romford MP had extensive coverage in the local press, while the resident groupings effectively opposed everything - how can Labour counter the Tories and Residents?

AL – During the General Election she had dealt with Rosindell on issues by tackling emotion with logic – respond with facts and what is said and keep a fact sheet to counter points- you can anticipate the issues and do not get drawn into excessive detail- people can feel patronised

PM – it is important to put a positive message across

TM – agreed

Ron Miller asked the simple question – where do we get the money from?

TM – The office of budget responsibility had reviewed the Labour costed manifesto – this helped get trust back. Labour should look at and deal with tax avoidance and close loopholes

AL – Locally the Tories government had reduced grant to the Council and Business Rates were an issue with lots of empty units. Havering has not invested in infrastructure that would generate income – business rates are the key. Romford market was dead as a result of under investment. We need to be creative with the value of assets we do have and become independent of government grant.

TL – Don't scare business away – don't automatically turn down planning applications, we need businesses to expand and grow. Infrastructure is important, and the Council seems scarred of growing and of change.

AL – remember the Romford MP voted against Crossrail!

There was then a question on Transport policy

AL – Crossrail would be a huge benefit if you can afford to use it! Bus infrastructure is an issue but North South infrastructure in the Borough is a nightmare- this does not help with social mobility

PM – social mobility is important – Havering had a poor record on funding of transport for disabled children and had reduced this despite local opposition- this is something Labour should look to correct. There is a need to engage with the transport companies e.g. C2C – campaigning had led the company to increase the number of coaches from 4 to 8. He favoured ending the franchise and bringing back in house.

A long and interesting session and the conclusion was there is a lot of energy within the local Labour Party and desire to increase influence- #HaveringDeservesBetter.

Mike Gapes

Mike Gapes has been to Havering Fabians several times before, the first visit being the early 1990's. he was pleased (as were we all) to see former Romford MP Eileen Gordon in the audience, which was our largest for some time.

Mike has been a consistent advocate for remaining in the European Union, and is passionately against Brexit. This will be no surprise to anyone who follows his entertaining twitter feed.

Britain had been a member of the European Economic Community \ European Union for 45 years. Over that period the Community has changed, introducing many regulations, minimum standards, product and pharmaceutical regulations

The community has grown steadily from 6 to 9 to 12 to 28, covering 550 million people. It is the biggest UK market 45% of UK trade is with the EU.



Mike Gapes begins his talk, watched by Sam Gould, David Marshall and Keith Darvill plus the largest audience for several years

The EU sets rules that are adopted globally, and negotiates trade agreements – the recent agreement with South Korea has been to the UK's advantage. The trade deal with Canada has taken seven years to negotiate. The economy has declined since 2008 – while George Osborne claimed the UK economy had outperformed the rest of Europe, that is not the case now with Germany and France in a stronger position.

Mike was back from the OECD meeting in Paris – telling statistics were that over the; last quarter, the UK household income per person was down 2.7% compared with 0.6% for the rest of the EU and 0.9% for the Euro area.

Austerity is a choice by right wing governments – Germany has three times the level of UK exports¹ mostly of goods to the EU. The UK trade is mostly services, and departure from the EU will ensure barriers to services.

Mike believes UK trade deals can happen, but at a price -the UK will have to make a series of compromises – for example, the Indian Government

¹ I have heard Professor Joseph Stiglitz comment that the German trade surplus is the destabilising issue for the EU economy, and for the EU to work as intended, Germany should leave; he also suggested prominent German politicians advocate that the solution is for all EU economies to have a trade surplus – which is impossible given that they mostly trade with each other!

will want a deal but wants to end the need for a visa requirement for its citizens to come to the UK to enable its economy to grow, China will do a deal via the Free Trade Area, but there are potential issues in respect of workers' rights and product standards that are at the core of EU arrangements. A deal with the American Government will hinge on their desire to protect US agriculture, and industry access to the NHS. Barriers are likely if the UK leaves.

During the referendum campaign "take back control" was a key slogan – Theresa may had intended that Parliament would have no say "Brexit means Brexit" – and it needed a high court case brought by Gina Miller to ensure a vote on the eventual deal.

Parliament had voted to trigger Article 50 without knowing what comes next -Mike voted against this and this put the Government and Country in a weak position

The General Election that followed weakened the Government position further, with no majority and the increased influence of the DUP.



Mike in full flow

Asking questions of the Brexit Secretary David Davis confirmed that there were a series of Brexit assessments – that were subsequently found not to

exist – the Government have (in the week leading up to our meeting) published regional assessments in a range of scenarios. These show only one case does one region (London) where growth is greater outside of the EU.

With a hard Brexit, over a 15-year period, London households face a loss of £15k each, (2%). For North East England this increases to 16%, and there are significant losses elsewhere, hitting the regions that voted to leave the worst.

Lower GDP means less tax revenue, and less to spend on infrastructure, education and the NHS. The figures released by the government align with those released by the independent National Institute for Economic Research (NIER)-leaving the Government unhappy that the information is public. Any deal will be worse than we currently have, and a hard line Brexit will have serious implications.

Northern Ireland is in the forefront of this. Mike had been recently. There are farms with fields on both sides of the border, farmhouses with rooms on either side. In a space of four miles Mike has crossed the border four times, with the Border apparent from sale of fireworks, legal in the North but not the Republic. There are all Ireland institutions such as Milk Marketing Board, Electricity Grid. There are cows that move across the border, who no doubt will continue to do so – this impacts on Baileys (owned by the Equity Investor De Aligio) – made of 2/3 milk from the South 1/3 from the North. These agreements will not easily be unscrambled!

The EU is part of the glue holding the all-Ireland agreements together, so is at risk if the UK is outside the Customs union.

EUROATOM controls nuclear rules and regulations, which will be made more difficult by Brexit. The European driving licence, Health Card and roaming charges for mobile phones are all benefits of the EU, and are all at risk.

The EU is an influential voice able to speak with authority in negotiation with President Putin.

With the UK still holding a seat on the UN Security Council, other EU members work closely with Britain and France – exit is likely to mean closer EU links with the French going forward. Mike does not feel Britain can act alone and retain the same influence.

Mike believes it is possible to mitigate the damage by staying in the single market, the Customs union, maintaining a common defence and security policy, European arrest warrant etc. - if Britain has no say anymore on the rules, it will still have to obey them – as the UK will have to meet the specification in order to trade.

If the decision is to exit, there is need to shape the eventual deal via parliament. The amendment that there must be a meaningful vote before proceeding, likely to be September or October this year. A year on from the decision to trigger article 50, the Government has not decided on what it wants – “Global Britain” is a meaningless phrase with no substance, not clarified by six Theresa May speeches on the subject. A change of government and replacement with a coherent policy is essential – parliament must take control. A bad deal must be rejected. The DUP influence remains strong and this comes at a huge cost. IF Parliament gets this wrong, the future of the young in Britain is at risk.

Mike then took a range of questions – the final one, intended to close the meeting was “will there ever be peace in the Middle East?”- so nothing simple!

Mikes response was very interesting. He saw four areas of conflict to resolve;

- The Shia \ Sunni split within the Muslim nations, being fought as a proxy war at present between the supporters of Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Yemen
- The Israel \ Palestine dispute which continues, with a sub division between Arab states content to accommodate a relationship with Israel, and those who are not

- The struggle between democracy and authoritarianism manifest in the Arab Spring and its aftermath
- The bulging young population in the area with no work to do and therefore at risk of radicalisation

To complicate this further, the Americans remain heavily involved in the region, joined by a resurgent Russian influence, with China increasing its influence as well.

So while nothing is impossible, peace in the region requires a lot of issues to be resolved – a subject for another discussion.

Alan Williams – the GLC and beyond

The March meeting saw the return of one of our founder member's after a long absence. Alan Williams had been the GLC Member for Hornchurch from 1981-86, a Havering Councillor between 1986 -1990, and was Labour candidate for Hornchurch at the 1983 and 1987 elections. He was for many years the Havering Fabian delegate to Hornchurch CLP, so has many links to the area.



Alan Williams begins the evening's discussion carefully watched by Vice Chair Sam Gould

He remembered many famous speaker including Peter Shore, John Smith, Roy Hattersley, Joan Maynard and the historian Ben Pimlott. He recalled that Tony Crosland had been due to speak in February 1974, only to cancel when the election was called.

The GLC had been created to take over from the London County Council, with expanding boundaries to take in the outer London Boroughs. The expectation from the Conservative government was that the traditional Labour majority would be replaced as a result – however this did not happen and Labour comfortably won the first GLC election. Candidates were elected on a borough wide basis, and all three Havering seats were Labour. The victorious Labour Candidates included the first Leader of the GLC Bill Fiske.

Labour lost the GLC in 1967, when Havering returned three Conservative Councillors including author Jeffery Archer. In 1973, Labour regained control, although a change in the election rules saw candidates elected for each Parliamentary constituency. Serge Lourie was elected in Hornchurch, and held on until 1977. When the Tories regained the GLC and the seat. The National Front came third in the number of votes cast, a warning of what was possible.

By 1981, the Thatcher Government elected in 1979 had become very unpopular, and the GLC election saw Labour regain control, with Alan elected in Hornchurch. A lively campaign and vitriolic coverage in the Evening Standard was to dent the eventual Labour majority, with unexpected losses of previously safe seats. Labour won 50 of the 92 seats, Conservatives 41 and Adrian Slade being elected as the sole Liberal.

The Standard had concentrated on the potential challenge to the existing Labour GLC Leader Andrew McIntosh from Ken Livingstone. The failure to secure a bigger majority meant the vote was less clear cut than forecast, Livingstone winning 30-20. Alan voted for McIntosh.

The Labour manifesto had been a radical one, with a pledge to reduce tube and bus fares by 25%. Within four months, this was implemented. Then the problems started. Bromley, an area with no tubes took the GLC to court

and won. The GLC appealed and won in the High Court. However, Bromley appealed to the House of lords where the previously respected Lord Denning overturned the decision and reversed the fare decrease. The decision required that the shortfall of funding be recovered, so fares went up. The GLC Labour group was split on whether to break the law and refuse to implement the verdict. Not to implement the verdict would have brought a surcharge against the Councillors who voted for the decision, which would run into millions of pounds. The Labour group voted 25-24 to implement although there was little prospect of the Conservatives not voting against (as they would risk surcharge by abstaining).

The GLC and the Government were fierce opponents. The GLC published the number of London's unemployed on the roof of County Hall, clearly visible from the Houses of Parliament. This began the seeds of abolition as the Conservatives ceased to value the GLC.

The Thatcher Government, assisted by the Falklands campaign, became more popular, and in the 1982 Council Elections, Labour failed to make progress. By 1983, the Labour majority in Hornchurch of 2,800 became a Conservative majority of 12,000 at the General Election. The Conservatives now took the fight to the GLC and began the process of abolition. The GLC began the "Keep GLC working for London" campaign that won significant public support.



For those of a certain age...

The GLC had many London wide responsibilities –including the Tubes, Buses, Refuse disposal, strategic planning, metropolitan roads, and gravel extraction. They also had responsibility for the Arts and as a result the GLC was able to provide the Queens Theatre in Hornchurch with a grant of £30k per year for the 5-year period from 1981, which enabled it to continue to operate.

Alan was appointed as Chair of Planning (North) while his colleague Tom Jenkinson was equivalent for South London. Tom had been a member of the GLC since 1964, and among the mound of planning applications he was required to agree, would always question officers at what appeared to be random intervals about individual applications. The GLC remit was strategic, although the definition appeared unclear and meant several small issues were determined at County Hall rather than at a local level – a measure for reform rather than abolition. When Tom went on holiday, his decisions would pass to Alan, who was surprised at the large volume of decisions that would suddenly appear – officers seeking an easier outcome were going to be disappointed.

The GLC had a budgeting excess of a billion pounds, so had plenty of resources. The Local Government Finance Acts permitted the GLC to levy an extra 2pence on the Rates, to support community initiatives – worth £40 million per year. The GLC levied this rate to support the London Enterprise Board to stimulate smaller businesses and increase employment- the Labour GLC made full use of these powers,

Locally, the proposal to build on Wykeham school fields needed GLC approval and Alan was surprised to receive a very welcoming letter in support of the proposal from the Havering Council leader Jack Moultrie who at this point he had never met. He had great pleasure in ensuring the proposal was rejected.

Alan had been appointed as Vice Chair of the Minerals committee, and was the decision maker when the issue of mineral extraction from Spring Farm in Rainham became an issue. To wade off potential legal action the GLC sought to instruct leading Counsel – who interestingly was the future Conservative Leader Michael Howard. The GLC won the case.

The GLC leadership did not confine itself to London issues. Ken Livingstone extended an invitation to Sinn Fien leadership Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. This caused a major reaction, and Alan received a lot of positive publicity when he opposed their invitation.

The 1984 Rates Act introduced “Rate Capping” which would restrict the ability of Councils’ to increase Rates alongside reductions in grant.

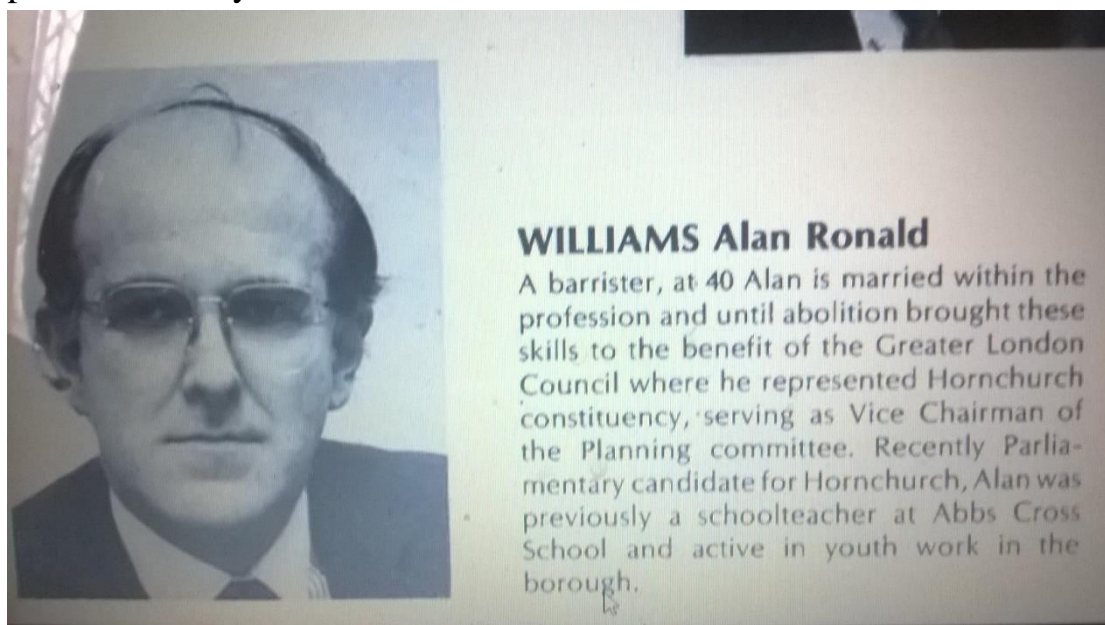
This led to a rebellion in several Labour Councils – Lambeth under Ted Knight, Liverpool with deputy Leader Derek Hatton took the lead. GLC Finance lead and Deputy Leader John McDonnell sought to align the GLC Labour group and defy the Government. The logic was that by failing to set a budget, the Councils’ would default on their substantial loans, meaning either pressure on the Government to concede from the City of London or a collapse of the Money Markets that would achieve the same thing. The GLC leader Ken Livingstone was initially a supporter of this strategy, although it soon became clear that the GLC as a whole would never vote for this, and there was no majority within the Labour group for this.

There was also the fact that the GLC had substantial funding and even without a budget would have the funds to meet its debts – reserves (in 1980’s prices) were in excess of £325 million. There was also a risk that a Labour split would enable the Conservatives to pass a cuts based budget that would undo much of what the Administration wanted to achieve.

The GLC Labour group fell out over the issue, with a rift between Livingstone and McDonnell. Livingstone also fell out with Lambeth Leader Ted Knight as a unified front was undeliverable. In the end only 8 Labour Members voted against the budget which passed 70-8.

The campaign against abolition was ultimately unsuccessful, and the GLC ended on 31st March 1986. London was left without a strategic tier of Government until Tony Blair’s government restored the GLA in 2000. Ken Livingstone returned as the first directly elected Mayor. Alan’s legal career

continued, first as a Barrister and then as a circuit judge, which limited his political activity.



Alan pictured in the same 1986 election address as Mike Lucas (above). The third successful candidate was George Saunders

The audience then asked questions – Denis O’Flynn recalled the Romford GLC by – Election in 1984, when as part of the campaign against abolition Conservative Member Bernard Brooke Partridge resigned, the by election being won by Havering Councillor (now MP) Bob Neill.

Denis remembered Bob, as they had both been on Havering Council for a number of years. As a fellow Barrister, Alan and Bob had opposed each other both in the Council chamber and at the Bar, and were on friendly terms. Denis recalled the time when he was driving through Collier Row and saw a flustered looking Bob Neill waiting for a cab that had not arrived. Bob was late for a case at Snaresbrook, and was grateful when Denis offered him a lift. It barely registered when Recorder Reporter Roy Weal took a photo of the two driving off – cross party friendships are not uncommon, and Denis as a full time union official was used to building common ground with his opponents.

When they arrived at Snaresbrook, Bob’s mood changed a little when he read the message on Denis’s windscreen² that Roy Weal had captured “Don’t blame me I voted Labour” ...

² Our younger readers may not remember a time when it was fashionable to have names on the sun visor on car windcreens – an era best forgotten

Future Meetings

There will be no meetings in April as the campaign for the Council (General?) election will be in full swing. *#HaveringDeservesBetter*

May

In May, the speaker will be GLA list Member Tom Copley. The subject is still to be finalised, but will probably be Housing. The date is 22nd May, venue Harold Hill Community centre 7.30pm start.



Tom Copley AM – note the badge

June

In June we will be holding a meeting with Graham Lane in capacity as a speaker from the Labour for PR Campaign 26th June 7.30 pm at Saffron House 273 South Street Romford (Romford Labour Party).



July

The Speaker will be Paul Embery. Paul describes himself in his w=twitter feed (well worth following as “Firefighter, Trade unionist. Democratic socialist. Pro-Brexit. Blue Labour. Made in (Barking and) Dagenham”



The meeting will be on 12th July (no clash with the World Cup fixtures) at a venue to be determined 8pm start. The subject will be the growing disconnect between Labour and its one-time heartland communities and how to close it?

The Fabian Society has the annual local societies House of Commons and Lords tea on Tuesday July 10th – contact David Marshall for further details.

We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige. The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the Borough; if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues we could use, contact David Marshall.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

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Secretary David Marshall

Contact

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Vice Chair Sam Gould

Treasurer Dave Baldock

Committee Members

Cecile Duerinckx

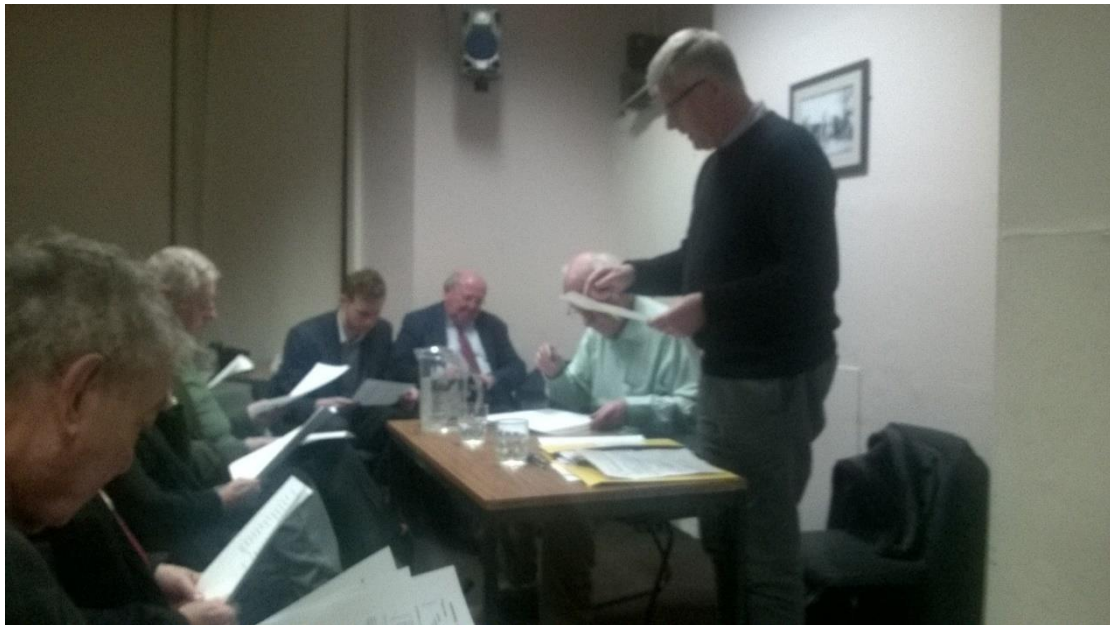
Graham Lane

Sanchia Alasia

Mike Flynn

Ian Carnochan

Hannah Dixon



Chair Keith Darvill reports on another successful year

The AGM saw Graham Lane join the committee. Graham is currently Chair of Hornchurch and Upminster Labour Party and will be speaker at the June meeting.

Future Editions

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement. As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos, but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material

which falls outside of this parameter. Our next edition will follow the Council elections and we hope to be able to report on the successful election of new Labour Councillors in Havering.

Links

The following links should be useful in keeping up with the debate in the Labour movement

National Fabian Society www.fabian-society.org.uk

The Labour Party www.labour.org.uk

Jon Cruddas MP for Dagenham www.joncruddas.org.uk

Twitter @joncruddas_1

Barking Labour Party www.barkinglabour.org.uk/

Twitter @barkinglabour

Romford Labour Party www.romford-labour-party.org.uk/

Twitter @romfordlabour

Hornchurch and Upminster Labour Party

Website <http://hornchurchandupminsterlabour.org.uk/>

Facebook Hornchurch-Upminster-Constituency-Labour-Party

Twitter @HULabour

Havering Fabian Society is affiliated to

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party
- Havering Young Labour

Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally, David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

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I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

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.....postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

02030Waged (£10) unwaged £5