

HAVERING FABIAN SOCIETY

HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 46 June 2021

**Havering
Fabian Society**
Covering: Romford
Labour Party
foodbank. Denis
O'Flynn – 50 years
since he was first
elected to Havering
Council. Michael
Chessum on
Europe. Dominic
Byrne on
Education and
Covid. Shadow
Education Minister
Kate Green on
Education
nationally. GLA
Election with
Unmesh Desai and
Judith Garfield.
Labour
homelessness
campaign. Book
reviews, and future
meetings

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Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. These are unusual times with the country on partial lockdown, and we have suspended meetings in person until some unknown point in the future. The newsletter will continue to provide updates and an opportunity for those of you confined to home to finalise those articles you always promised to write for us.

There was no edition in March – a combination of the run up to the Mayoral election and the editor being busy at work. So this is a bumper edition covering five meetings this year, book reviews and much more, including Romford Labour Party foodbank collections. The meeting in June on local government finance will be included in our next edition, and we will also do a separate paper on the question-and-answer session with Kate Green which was very interesting (and quite long!).

This edition contains an article on Havering Labour Councillor Denis O'Flynn. Denis was first elected to Havering Council in July 1971 and is still there 50 years later. This is a great service to the community and we are proud Denis is a regular attender at Fabian meetings.

There is an article by Hope Mendy on the Romford Labour Party foodbank; please help if you can.

Since our last edition we have lost Trevor Lowe and David Bowman who both came to Fabian meetings. You may have seen that Dick Leonard, former MP for Romford from 1970 to 1974, also died, aged 90. We will have an obituary in our next edition. Our sympathies to friends and family.

We now have 1,296 followers on twitter. Keep up to date at our twitter site @haveringfabians for the latest news. We have a blog now as well as our website <https://haveringfabians.org/posts/>
You will need to follow us to get updates.

We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties, and will do all we can to support their campaigns. Havering and Dagenham Young Labour are on twitter @HavAndDagYL 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.

With traditional meetings no longer possible, we have moved discussion online, and have made use of Zoom to host a series of online sessions. Issues with technology have been limited and we have had an interesting range of speakers. We welcomed some interesting visitors from across Europe – Zoom is something we will use in future and is ideal if you cannot get to our meetings in person.



Our website address is <http://haveringfabians.org> As you are no doubt aware GDPR means we need to keep our mailing list up to date. If you are not on our mailing list (we use Mailchimp – please check your spam folders!) contact us via the website or email and we will add you in.

FOOD BANK AT ROMFORD LABOUR HEADQUARTERS

Prospective Labour Candidates for the St Albans ward Jane Keane and Hope Mendy have begun a Food Bank Collection point at Saffron House on South Street. The collection is open every Saturday from 10am-2pm, although they are happy to collect donations if people are unable to make the trip

“We started the collection to give back to the community” Hope commented. “Over a decade of Tory austerity has sadly meant there’s a real need for food bank, even in a relatively wealthy area like Romford. After we publicised that we were going to be donating, we heard from another Food Bank that they would appreciate donations as well, so we’ve begun donating to them too. It’s a real issue. 2.5 million people used foodbanks over the past year.”

Through the terrific generosity of residents, Jane and Hope have been able to deliver over 80kg of food to local food banks. In addition to collecting food, they also collect toiletries and pet food.



Figure 1 Hope (left) and Jane await your donations

“The reception from the locals in Romford Town, particularly in our ward, has been warm and generous. We’ve even seen some regulars pop by!” says Jane “Although this isn’t the only community project we have embarked on. We’re also planning on setting up a Gardening Club along with arranging Historical Walks and Assisted Dog Walking. If anyone would like to get involved, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.”

Hope Mendy and Jane Keane

Denis O’Flynn – A life of Public Service

Denis was first elected to Havering Council in July 1971, in one of the by-elections caused by the appointment of an Alderman following on from the Council elections in May. This was the Havering election which was won outright by Labour for the first (and so far only) time. Denis joined the new administration at an exciting time, and was also part of minority Labour administrations under Arthur Latham, Wilf Mills and Ray Harris.

Dave Ainsworth paid the following tribute;

"I first met Denis when starting work in Ford's Dagenham Foundry. Denis was a leading Shop Steward. The Trade Union was "The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (Foundry Section)". In time Denis successfully stood for election to become a full-time District Organiser, hence he became based at their Dagenham East Office. Denis had a wide area to cover.

In time the Trade Union changed its name a few times through amalgamations, becoming the AEUW (Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers), then AMICUS and now UNITE.

It's like turning a full circle, for only a couple of months ago UNITE opened its new office block in Yew Tree Avenue at Dagenham East, which is where the old May & Baker Works were - this office complex is also where Jon Cruddas MP recently moved his Constituency Office to. You can see Denis's old office from Unite's new office. Denis is highly active in UNITE as he's Chair of the local UNITE Retired Members' Branch.

He has held many other Community positions. He's so active that constituents of other less committed Councillors often turn to Denis with their concerns and problems. He never turns anybody away - and makes his home phone number available in all publications.

Denis is - without doubt - the most active Councillor ever to serve on the Harold Hill Estate. He stood 4 times for Parliament, in Romford February 1974, when I was his Election Agent - then in the same Constituency in October 1974. In 1979 Denis stood in Hitchin and in 1987 for Upminster.

In Havering he was a highly effective Housing Chairman.



Figure 2 Denis in full flow at a Havering Fabian meeting in 2018

Denis always was, and still is, a brilliant orator. He can quickly grasp situations, such as in his early Council days as he organised effective protests and demonstrations on Harold Hill about the dangerous Straight Road, when mobilising hundreds of residents to stage road blocks at two locations along what was dubbed "*Murder Mile*" by our local press owing to many serious road accidents, some fatal. Soon after he was elected he organised one of the most successful and best supported mass participation protests ever seen in Havering - one which Denis is still proud of, to this day.

Denis twice had his Council service broken. Prior to our 2006 Council Elections he was disgracefully "*stitched-up*" in a curious selection meeting, where people were present who nobody knew - and to this day have never been seen since. Along with long-serving Wilf Mills R.I.P. he was deselected. The Romford Recorder reported that Labour had ditched their two best drawing cards. Denis was then selected to contest Rainham & Wennington Ward, where he was unsuccessful. However, he continued supporting Labour and, along with fellow dumped local politician Wilf, ran weekly advice surgeries in St. George's Church on Harold Hill - this despite receiving a Labour Party disciplinary letter instructing him not to,

as he was no longer an elected Councillor. Denis ignored that letter and carried on! As did Wilf! As for Heaton Ward - without Denis & Wilf - Tories won 2 of the 3 seats with only Councillor Keith Darvill remaining for Labour. *Ouch!*

Denis also lost his seat in the 2014 Council Election when UKIP won 2 Heaton Ward seats, again with only Councillor Keith Darvill retaining his seat. However, Denis was back in our Council Chamber in 2016 after a really hard fought by-election with numerous candidates, caused when Councillor Philip Hyde (ex-UKIP and then "Independent") resigned.

Without doubt Denis has been the most active Harold Hill Councillor ever seen. So much so that residents from all parts of the Borough contact him when, at times, their own elected Councillors aren't so active. Denis never turns anybody away. He's always made his home address and personal telephone number available to all, on campaign literature and in directories.

Denis has twice served as Mayor with wife Maureen as his Mayoress and currently holds a Council position - this being The Havering Champion for the Armed Forces. Denis, along with Wilf, was a protagonist in securing a Harold Hill War Memorial and commencing a well-attended open-air service each Remembrance Sunday.

We will never see his like again! ”.

Dave Ainsworth

Denis is keen to point out that the “Made in Dagenham” film on the equal pay dispute understates for dramatic impact the level of support for the women from the male trade unionists. Denis was very supportive and did all he could to support the cause, and was not unique in this.

Denis did not seek re-nomination for the Council Election in May 2022 and so will end his time on Havering Council and once again become an honorary freeman of the Borough. We wish him well in what we hope will be a long and happy retirement and look forward to seeing him at future Fabian meetings where his wit and humour are always welcome.

Future Relations with Europe - Michael Chessum

Our January speaker was journalist Michael Chessum from the pressure group Another Europe, and the subject of his talk was “Post-Brexit and the Labour approach up to the 2024 Election”.

Another Europe were the left wing Remain campaign and were active in the campaign for a second referendum. They now take the view that while the Brexit campaign is all but over, and the Labour leadership in particular are keen to move on, in reality Brexit is only just beginning as Britain moves out of transition and regulations are beginning to diverge.

Michael said that it is important that the Labour Party campaigns on workers’ rights, the environment, deals with free movement and the impact on European nationals. There is a need to resolve “settled status” as there is currently no right to remain for many individuals who have been in the country for years. European nationals are denied jobs and healthcare, and the impact is getting brutal very quickly. Labour needs to act to ensure they support this campaign as a matter of priority.

A number of trade deals are still to be settled, and if the UK does not reach agreement and regulates unilaterally there is a risk this could bring about retaliation from the rest of Europe. At present Brussels and the United Kingdom blame each other for this position and this is not helping getting the matter resolved. The current position overlaid with Covid is quite catastrophic with a third of children in poverty and a 10.6% reduction in real wages, which puts Britain second lowest behind Greece in the European community. Two million people are using food banks, and there are issues with infant mortality on the increase and overall life expectancy on the down for the first time in a century.

The political position is changing, with neo-liberalism and austerity both currently unpopular, and there are attempts to re-establish orthodox economics amongst the Right-wing governments. This is a common theme across Europe and in the United States, and Brexit gives an opportunity for further deregulation which could in turn lead to greater adverse impact for those already worse off. There are a whole range of issues that are still unresolved.

Keir Starmer is in retreat at the moment, for example on freedom of movement, despite Labour conference being clear on the approach required and Keir during his leadership campaign supporting it. Keir Starmer whipped the Party in order to get the Brexit deal across the line and has recently been seen to wrap the Party in flags and adopt a nationalist agenda.

Views may differ on this. There is a move towards “Redwallism” and making the same series of errors again on English nationalism. The working class is not wholly made up of white over 50s with northern accents, but is present across the country and has a great deal of diversity. This was addressed in part in Claire Ainsley’s book¹ - and was the subject of an article in newsletter 40 which covered Claire’s visit to the Society.

Michael argued that the Remain coalition seems to have fallen into retreat and has effectively been demobilised. Unless and until there is a realignment, this group will become demoralized. It is important that there is not a retreat. It would be morally wrong to do so and as there are many issues that can still be fought for that are relevant to the way the country operates, either inside or outside of the EU. Preservation of the rights that were present within the EU is still a goal worth fighting for.

He said that we are currently in a position within the Party where we seeing a rerun of 2015 and the Ed Miliband flag-waving, the famous immigration mugs. This is unlikely to pay electoral dividends as people who are likely to believe this are still likely to vote Conservative. Labour need to address Brexit nationalism - what does this all mean?

Michael asked “What is the core narrative?” The current approach is superficial. At present there is a narrative around economics and poverty but below the line there is a crisis of meaning underneath this, and the fallout of neoliberalism, loneliness, loss of public space and of community.

The Conservatives are currently talking about throwing a lot of money at this. To actually deal with these issues requires a sense of belonging - flag waving is as an attempt at a shortcut to get to the issues will be superficial and the Party needs really answers.

¹ *The New Working Class – How to win hearts, minds and votes - Claire Ainsley*
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The Labour Party cannot try and get its way out of this again by adopting Government policies. It has tried and failed nationalism and talking tough on immigration the past. It is ironic that the Corbyn project was built on principles but kept the handbrake on and then did handbrake turns on Brexit with the position changing regularly.

It is important to address the core argument and not to get deflected. The Party can't triangulate economically and it is important that a radical economic alternative is provided. The Labour economic offer has moved beyond offering a freeze on energy prices- that horse has bolted; we need an inspiring radical program and to this end what should Labour do?

Should there be a campaign to re-join the EU? Not at the moment. Any move to re-join will require a mass movement to rise again demanding this. Realistically it is unlikely to be the case, so the issues themselves have to be dealt with. Free movement offers an alternative mandate and we need these issues to be taken to through the Labour Party and discussed at conference again in order to gain widespread support.

This could end with a “Norway plus” type arrangement as part of the Labour manifesto offer in 2024, but this would be difficult to achieve; the decisions to achieve this lie ahead. The Party has to address the issues of immigration and regulatory alignment. With environment and workers’ rights there is an agenda that has an appeal, and will need a cohesive policy in order to get this over to the electorate.

It is hard to understand how Covid will impact on this. The death toll has been a national shame, but will the Tories suffer for it? Keir Starmer has been cautious but needs to show some aggression where necessary and where there are mistakes have been made they should be pointed out and the government held to account for them.

Is electoral reform a way back? Yes, this will help deal with the wide disenfranchisement that is now an issue across the country as people feel alienated from the political process.

Michael gave a different and interesting analysis of where the country was in January. He said that while some issues have altered, fundamentally Britain remains in limbo with the big issues still to be resolved.

Education – the local picture

Dominic Byrne

Dominic Byrne was our speaker at the first meeting in February. Dominic is District secretary of Barking and Dagenham National Education Union (NEU) and a member of the union's National Executive Committee. He came to speak to us just after an NEC meeting, to discuss what were then recent announcements about going back to school on March 8th.

Dominic began by pointing out that of course some schools were already open, and already 15% of pupils were at school - the children of vulnerable and key workers. All the 8th of March start date was meant to be was the return to school for the mass of pupils.

The approach so far during Covid has been blended learning², which had issues. In planning for return on 8th of March, the Union's view had not been listened to. It was clear the Unions wanted schools to open. Having spoken to members of the Union, they and some pupils were suffering, but a "big bang" with all the schools open at once does not have the flexibility that is needed to get the country back safely.

A "big bang" opening with around 10 million people on the move in order to get children into school from the 8th of March would be quite an achievement, with a big impact on the transport system.

In the devolved governments (Wales Northern Ireland and Scotland) schools have been going back over a number of weeks, and this has taken time to achieve. Arrangements included testing of health and safety arrangements, and it was hard to see why there is a case for doing it differently in England.

Secondary schools would return, with pupils required to take three lateral flow tests. For some of the largest schools in the area 1,500 pupils will need testing. This will be a major logistical exercise.

There will be issues for teachers in forcing the wearing of masks. There is a dilemma in what to do if people refuse. There is a need to consider who would be able to do the tests.

² *A mix of classroom and remote teaching via Zoom or a similar application.*

The vast numbers involved are important as schools can be seen as vectors of transmission; even though the pupils may not be affected personally they can return home and transmit the virus to their parents and other adults. This is a particular issue with extended families in poor housing when it is quite likely the “R” rate will go up.

Initial assessments have been that this could lead to up to 30,000 more deaths. It is hard to know at this stage how this will be impacted by the speed of opening. This is seen as being the major issue in contention, not the concept of reopening the schools.

There is no circuit breaker in place, and the opportunity to do something innovative and novel around half term appears to have been missed.

Keir Starmer is backing opening, but with Nightingale schools to increase capacity and ventilation in order to enable safer return. However, that is not going to be the case, and it's uncertain there is enough PPE³ to enable a full safe rate of opening in England.

Present infection rates vary considerably, with the North and Midlands increasing while in a number of places in London they are going down. The one-size-fits-all policy in these circumstances seems inappropriate. Dominic advocated a sliding-scale opening based on perhaps the number of cases per 100,000, so you'd have to achieve a low number in order for the schools to reopen.

The 10 million referred to earlier was around one 7th of the population that would be moving to ensuring pupils return to school. Dominic and the union would prefer this was staggered over a period which would enable the professionals involved to make the decisions, rather than being a central dictate from government.

Government is not listening, and the expected rate of infection will increase as a result, with an implied acceptable casualty rate - which cannot be the way to go.

An issue was whether teachers should be vaccinated. There was a case for teachers over 50 and those with an underlying health issues.

³ *Personal Protective Equipment*

Dominic could see the logic of ensuring that they were at the front of the queue. There is no particular reason why 25-year olds in good health and no underlying health conditions should have priority over other key workers.

As ever it's important that key workers are not played off against each other in a race to divide and conquer. This view isn't shared by all teachers and in some areas there's a view that teachers should be treated as a priority. Dominic recognised that there is a difference of opinion and that this is a controversial area. He would like a recovery plan based on a better standard of education that ensures safer and more equal outcomes.

Some of the issues indeed predate Covid in terms of inequality; for example, 40% of black children are growing up in poverty and this needs to be tackled. This was an issue before Covid that's only been made worse afterwards.

Children cannot learn if they are hungry, and on average 9 out of 30 attend school without breakfast. The life chances of a number of individuals are set in stone before they enter school, and more of the same will follow unless we address this.

There is a need to look at the whole education system, and as you know we have Kate Green coming later in the year (see below) in order to ensure a wider discussion.

Computer access was initially a problem and it is now being addressed but also there is the cost of Internet provision. These are key issues in terms of driving up equality of opportunity.

School meals have been problematic - but what did the government think was going to happen? The provision of meals outside of holidays has always been an issue, and Marcus Rashford is embarrassing the Government into dealing with this. The issue has always been there.

There is also a great deal of concern about the quality of school meals. This is not particularly high, and it's not unknown for some teachers to be bringing in food in order to ensure that some children in their class have something to eat.

Breakfast clubs help and there is scope for development in this area.

Dominic explained that these are all important issues that drive the standard of education and the ability of the children in order to learn - but inspectors do not focus on this. It is quite right for schools to want inspections which have high expectations. The underlying issues covered in an inspection do not address the inequality and the lack of opportunity that currently exist, so it is important as part of the recovery plan that we “build back better”.

The will has to be there to do this and to move the education system on to a higher standard than it was before the lockdown. We will look forward to discussing these issues with Kate Green in the near future.

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Academies and local authority schools have had a different experience in outsourcing. This doesn't deliver and the ability of the councils to influence the Academies during Covid has been limited and has not led to a cohesive and joined-up response. Having profit as part of the education system is not a good thing, and we're seeing issues that are similar to those within the NHS where value for money is important but it's also the quality.

It is not sure certain that the Academy system is driving a better quality of outsourcing cleaners and cooks. The Academies may have made savings, but when schools are working for the local authority they have a pride that goes with the job and have a sense of belonging.

Nationally we are now getting to the point where some of the Catholic schools are seeking to go down an Academy Trust route, and it has been pointed out some of the issues that this will bring will reflect those in Multi Academy Trusts, with a divergence from the aims and objectives of the Local Education Authority. So there are a whole host of issues apart from Covid.

We thanked Dominic for his interesting discussion and then there were a number of questions. Keith Darvill make the point that it is good to hear from trade unionists in such forums, and that we should make sure we invite trade unionists again in future, something that we look forward to in order to consolidate links with the wider labour movement.

Kate Green Shadow Education Minister

We welcomed Kate Green MP (the Shadow Education Minister) to our second meeting in February. Kate was Chair of the Fabian Society and we were joined by a number of Fabians from across the South of England thanks to Ian Taylor, Secretary of Bournemouth Fabians who had circulated the invitation widely. We had between 35-50 on the call at various points, which was welcome and our best attendance during lockdown.



Figure 3 Kate Green MP

We recorded the meeting and the following is a direct transcript of what was said, save for editing of tenses and sound effects.

“It’s really great to be here, I will not try not to talk for very long because really, the interesting thing for me in these meetings is when people start asking questions and sharing their knowledge and expertise and there’s almost like a huge amount of expertise and experience in the Fabian Society and in the Labour movement and you’re absolutely right that whenever I do one of these talks at the moment I talk about education in the context of the pandemic.

But the truth is that everything that I’m talking about in relation to the pandemic, we would prioritise the challenges that face the education system that existed already and what we’re actually seeing is that the pandemic is bringing them into sharper focus is exacerbating, and the challenges on problems, but also, I think creating a real appetite in education, as in so many other aspects of life for a very, very different way

of doing things. This is a real moment to be visionary, to be transformative, and what we're thinking about is the kind of future of education for our children and young people, but also for lifelong learners. I find these meetings really, really stimulating for the ideas that people give me, so please don't hold back when we come to the discussion in the Q&A. As I say, we already knew about the challenges, the problems in the education system and the things that we would have wanted to address. That's right, the way through the system, beginning with the funding pressures in early years, which means that is both incredibly expensive for parents to find suitable childcare. But at the same time, providers simply can't make their businesses viable. On the pandemic is worse than that, to the point where around 20,000 providers are saying they may go out of business this year that will be disastrous for the recovery coming out of the pandemic. Disastrous for children, clearly but also disastrous for working parents and precisely time that we need parents to be going back into employment to rebuild our economy.

When in schools, it is clear that the exam system was stressful and was over focused on testing knowledge and not on testing the skills and aptitudes that young people will need in the complex world that they're growing up in. The curriculum was delivering a knowledge rich curriculum, but not enough in the way of the wider skills, the collaboration, the critical thinking, the ability to research and evaluate information, and the soft skills that employers value.

The current accountability regime is driving competition between schools rather than collaboration among and across them, and again and in the pandemic, we've seen that our exam system, in particular, is completely unfit for purpose.

Michael Gove 's determination to move to a single terminal Exam as the means of assessing students' attainment at GCSE and A level means we have nothing to fall back on.

Once exams couldn't take place because we got rid of ongoing assessment, such as the coursework on S levels, and the interim staging points to evaluating students' performance in further education.

We have seen disastrous funding cuts over the last 10 years, 45% cuts in budgets across that period. I know that's coming home to roost at precisely the moment that we need to be re-skilling, retraining people for the jobs of the future. Many jobs that they did before the pandemic will not come back, they need to get new and different skills.

In any event, even without the pandemic, we knew that the future of the Labour market was going to be very unpredictable and that people would need to train and retrain and throughout their working lives. Let's not forget the young people going into college now will still be in the Labour market in 2060, so we need to give them generic skills that enable them to keep coming back and retraining.

This is the moment when we find ourselves with a severely depleted further education infrastructure just at the moment when we need to put those retraining and re-skilling and offers in place to start to rebuild our economy and the University sector.

The marketization of higher education, the funding of universities; we need to undo ever increasing tuition fees and over reliance on international students. Again we saw that come home to roost when over the last year, University students have not been able to have the full student experience, but they not only expected but they would say they paid for; and indeed they did!

I'm sure it is hardly surprising when you go to market model for higher education and you can't deliver what it is you saw to those students where they are now saying we are very unhappy about this and we would like our money back please! and I think again you can see the absolute failure of the model that we've been pursuing over, particularly the last nine years since we saw that significant increase in tuition fees.

This leaves students with substantial levels of personal debt and this increases with maintenance support, which is a real concern I think, particularly for the most disadvantaged students.

So vast challenges abound and are being increased with the pandemic, and then you've got all the challenges of bringing in the students and children

and young people back into learning, into the classroom and it has been really great over the last two weeks to see our schools fully reopen.

The vast majority of children back in the classroom. I know how much this pleased parents, many of whom have been delighted to see their kids get back into class. They found home schooling pretty tough and they have renewed appreciation of teaching.

One Girls' secondary school I've been walking past in the mornings as the girls are back and it's just so lovely to see how excited they are to be together again, buzzing around chatting show each other things on their phones and engaging with their peers, with their teachers and the school staff. Though getting children back to school was only the first stage. We've got to keep them back, and now that they're back there we know it's the best place for their learning. We know it's the best place for their social and emotional well-being.

But schools need support so that we don't have a repeat of the pattern we saw in the autumn term of children being in and out and in and out of school. Forced to go home again and again if their bubbles have to isolate.

I want the government to be doing more to support schools with the Covid security measures they are taking and with the extra costs that they are having to meet. Being properly supported with a recognition that they will need to ventilate their premises differently, that they will need to rely on supply staff and that they may need to take extra space.

We called for Nightingale classrooms many months ago, we called for the wearing of masks and communal areas in school, and we called for mass testing many, many months before it was finally introduced by the government. As you will know, we also called for teacher vaccinations to be carried out during the February half term. One opportunity that the government missed, but the point about teacher vaccinations does not go away. The teachers are not more susceptible to serious illness from the virus, but that if teachers are off sick with Covid it would upset the continuity.

For a couple of days during February half term we could have vaccinated all school staff. It wouldn't have made a big knock in the vaccination programme. We could have really reduced that risk of children having to be sent home because there's nobody there to teach them.

The Government missed an opportunity when Labour called for it. Now we have got a series of short term responses to the wider issues of learning loss on the impact on children's social and emotional wellbeing.

The national tutoring programme to address the catch up programme will be under the leadership of Sir Kevan Collins⁴. Kate thought this was a good appointment, as he is widely respected, but it's a nine month appointment only and he's clearly not getting in funding terms anything like the support that is needed for children to make up on their lost learning and for the support that they will need for their social and emotional well-being.⁵

The national tutoring programme is failing to reach thousands and thousands of disadvantaged children such as children on free school meals. There are still problems with digital resources and children will still have to do some studying at home. The Government still hasn't delivered all the laptops and dongles and so on. But it promised and of course, and we also still have issues, despite the Government's apparent sudden recognition that it would need to provide free meals to hungry children during the holidays.

Actually, we still have a post code lottery as we go into the Easter Holidays in eight or nine days' time. There's still no guarantee that every child on free school meals will be properly able to access meals during the school holidays. So a whole lot of things that we are concerned about and that the government is simply responding to inadequately and insufficiently.

Let me just say a little bit about what our priorities would be. Both our short term priorities, but also our longer term priorities. So first of all, the early years are absolutely crucial, crucial for catch up, crucial for recovery crucial at all times. The big investment we make in the early years pays the

⁴ *Who subsequently resigned -see link [Education recovery chief quits in English schools catch-up row](#) / Education policy / The Guardian*

⁵ *So Kate had already spotted the issues*

greatest dividends. This government has shown no real interest in the early years. That is something Labour will reprioritised we are ambitious for every child in the education system and for every young person's achievement.

That means we need to be very, very focused on closing attainment gap. That was already widening before the pandemic, and which will have been exacerbated by the greater learning loss suffered by more disadvantaged children. That's why we set up our Bright Future Task Force, announced a couple of weeks ago. Really to focus on what we can do to address unequal educational outcomes on educational inequalities. We know that the quality of teaching that children receive is crucial to their attainment. Labour would prioritise investment in the profession and continuing professional development in valuing the profession.

In supporting and developing future school leaders, we want to incentivise teachers, experienced teachers, highly skilled teachers to stay in the classroom, teaching the most disadvantaged students.

That's something that Labour would work out as we did when we were in power with our London challenge. We are very, very committed to a learning environment which is inclusive, that is welcoming and recognises the identity and needs of every learner.

Assessment and accountability- clearly we need to have some radical rethinking in this space and to be responsive to the curriculum that we need for the future and we are absolutely passionately committed.

Before the 2019 election, Labour's Lifelong Learning Commission came forward with a number of really important recommendations, well in advance of the government's pretty inadequate skills White Paper. These include giving all learners a second chance or third chance to keep their skills up to date and refreshed and re training for the jobs of the future.

But finally I just want to say that everything we do in the education system to improve attainment, to improve outcomes, and to give every learner the opportunity to fulfil their full potential can't be enough if we don't address

the wider socio economic context and the child poverty and inequality that inhibits learning successful learning.

Also, when we talk about our response to the recovery post pandemic, it's not enough to talk about what we're going to do in education. is why we are really clear that we have got to make this country the best country to grow up in, and Keir Starmer has said that reasserting our commitment to ending child poverty must to be a vital part of that ambition, and that a holistic recovery approach in education can only be successful if we are focused ruthlessly.

Focused on addressing the poverty and inequality that is so damaging for individual children and young people and damaging for our country. So I hope that gives people some starting points for a while. I'm sure there's going to be a really interesting and rich discussion”.

There was a series of in-depth questions across a wide range of subjects – these generated interesting responses and will be published separately to keep this newsletter to a readable size.

Kate is an excellent Shadow Minister and we were pleased to have the time with someone so senior in the Party on a key issue.

Judith Garfield and Unmesh Desai

For a second meeting in March we were joined by Judith Garfield and Unmesh Desai.

Unmesh began by recalling his last visit to Fabians in Upminster prior to the pandemic. He set out the importance of the upcoming election, the task ahead of the Mayor and the Labour Group, the record of the Mayor in office and vision for the Mayor going forward.



Figure 4 Unmesh Desai when we could meet...

The government appeared to have an anti-London agenda and in particular the TfL settlement which was causing a great deal of grief. The proposals being put forward in order to bridge the gap that weren't coming from the Mayor were coming from the Government and were being used by the Tories against Sadiq. The long awaited KPMG report on TfL finances had not been released and so some of the policy making was being done in a vacuum.

The delaying of the London plan also did not help, and it also played to the Government's levelling up agenda to be seen to be anti London. Only two London boroughs- Newham and Barking & Dagenham - have been included within the levelling up financial settlement, and it remains to be seen how much impact this would actually have.

The view was that London was regarded by the Government as a Labour city and was being punished accordingly. The current opinion polls showed it was possible Sadiq would win on the 1st vote, although nobody was taking this for granted. Anti-Semitism was indeed an issue and in some areas would be likely to count against the Labour Party.

There were some key areas for the campaign.

Being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime is one of the things that resonated across the capital. The Council tax precept was being used to stabilise police numbers which looks to increase by 1,300. Numbers were falling, but are now at 32,700. £70 million is being spent on youth in order to provide facilities for young Londoners, again as part of the anti-crime initiative. Metropolitan Police funding had reduced by a billion over 10 years, and was now about £60 million a year short. Previous assembly meetings motions have been put to increase police numbers by 6,000, which the Tories had abstained on. Misogyn has now been recorded and so there is statistical analysis available that wasn't there before. Len Duvall has been pushing for a Domestic Violence Register, and there have been issues to address in terms of modern slavery and female genital mutilation.

Housing had been an important issue for the Mayor, with more new builds underway. Also under consideration was how to make a rent control system work.

There has been progress on air pollution. The introduction of cycle lanes and the hopper bus scheme had proved to be very popular, and were aimed at reducing car use.

Sadiq had attracted criticism from both Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, so he must be doing something right.

How London and East London recovers from the pandemic will be particularly important. The Manifesto had been launched at the beginning of April against the backdrop of 300,000 jobs being lost. So there is a need for a major economic recovery that was bold and visionary, and on the scale of the 1945 Labour manifesto against this backdrop. The identification of a new Indian strain⁶ has been causing some concern

⁶ The strains were later named after the Greek alphabet, so the "gamma" strain
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around this time. It was appreciated there was a need to balance the health of the nation and the economy. And it was extremely difficult to do this, although it needed to be appreciated that while you can resurrect the economy, you can't resurrect the dead.

Judith began by pointing out how difficult it was campaigning in an environment where face to face contact was not allowed, and that there will be a lot to gain for Labour in winning the Havering and Redbridge seat in order to make sure that the voice of Outer London was heard more strongly within the assembly.

Keith Prince, the sitting Assembly Member for Havering and Redbridge, was worried as the Conservative majority has been dropping over time and there was a real chance this time that Labour might take the seat.

The difference of having a Labour administration in Redbridge was significant and is making a real difference to people's lives.

The delaying of the elections from last year meant that this is one of the biggest electoral tests for the government outside of a general election. There's been a lot of issues around Covid during lockdown that have been being dealt with. It is important that a clear message was put across.



Figure 5 relected Mayor Sadiq Khan with Judith Garfield

Winning Redbridge in 2014 had made a significant difference. The Labour administration can achieve a great deal in a relatively short amount of time. The impact of various health inequalities in East London had led to queues at Queens and was a reflection of the wider issues in terms of health inequalities. This was something Labour was working to address. This would include paying the NHS staff decent wages. The 1% offered by the government is insulting. One of the things to do is to try and get this onto Sadiq's agenda, appreciating that this would be a campaign issue as the settlement of this was not something that was down to the GLA to resolve.

There are a lot of issues in terms of housing with a need for social as well as physical regeneration. Temporary accommodation costs were significant and there was a need to build social housing and transport links. Schools and health centres and build resilient communities.

Gallows Corner is taking a great deal of effort by a number of people and actually is still remains the problem that it's always been. A lot of this is down to the Tory government. Although TfL bid to government is for funding for, this is currently being sat on and one other thing to stress is the environmental issues that arise from this.

A great deal of importance is put on the women's Night Time Safety Charter. Violence is not new and sadly had been seen to rise. Making London safe is very important. Reporting hate crime has been a problem and improved data allows allocation of resources to where they are required.

Campaigning has been going on since October with regular phone banks. The ability to knock on doors starts at the beginning of April, leafleting can begin, so it's important that a campaign takes place.

As we now know, the election campaign resulted in Unmesh being returned with a slightly reduced majority. In Havering and Redbridge, Judith did not make the breakthrough that we all hoped would be achieved. Nonetheless, there are lots of positives from being able to campaign and be seen to be a clear alternative to the Tories. We go again next year, and we go again in the GLA in three years' time, and we need to keep plugging away.

It's possible one day the seat will go Labour. We need to make sure that it's done on the basis of a deliverable programme that addresses the needs of the area.

Labour Homelessness Campaign

At our meeting on the 18th of May, we were joined by Andrea Gilbert of the Labour Homelessness Campaign. The campaign has its origins in 2018 and was formed partly as a reaction to the number of rough sleepers in Westminster, which at that time exceeded the number in the rest of the capital.

Rough sleepers in particular are amongst the most vulnerable of those seeking temporary accommodation. Many risk being moved on and fined £100 under the ancient Vagrancy Act, which remains in place.

The campaign also deals with squatter's rights, aims to end homelessness and is lobbying on the Homelessness bill.

One of its activities during the General Election was to ensure that rough sleepers were signed up to vote, and in Wandsworth alone they were able to ensure that around 100 rough sleepers were added to the electoral register.



The pandemic has exposed the inequality aspects of homelessness and highlighted some of the problems. The Government policy of “Everybody in” has shown it is possible to end rough sleeping if the funding is available. Over 3,000 people moved into hotels in an effort to reduce the risk and exposure that would have followed if they had they remained on the streets. It also exposed some inconsistencies in terms of the numbers. For example, in Wandsworth there were 25 registered rough sleepers, but in reality the number turned out to be 140. Similar disparity in numbers is reported elsewhere in the capital.

One of the activities during the Covid campaign has been to ensure that those rough sleepers are vaccinated as well, as they are a particularly vulnerable group. As funding provided during Covid lockdown is withdrawn, an increase of rough sleepers is already occurring.

In addition, those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) ⁷ increase the numbers requiring housing and employment, and many of these have been relocated into hotels during the pandemic as well.

⁷ a matter discussed when Stephen Timms MP visited last year- see newsletter 43.

One of the issues LHC are currently campaigning on is the ability of government to deport rough sleepers from non EU countries, which seems remarkably callous. The campaign is linking with unions such as Unite in order to develop new policies and are currently campaigning to reach the 100,000 signatures required in order to have a parliamentary debate on the deportation procedures.

The policy of moving people out back out of hotels at the end of Covid will see more people return to the streets, and the funding that was provided previously has proved to be a sticking plaster. Homelessness is often a result of a multitude of issues such as

- Addiction \ Dependency,
- lack of employment,
- disability
- LGBTQ

all leading to potential breakups of existing family relationships and people becoming homeless as a result.

So the links with other issues are important and the outreach teams that deal with these issues need to be multidisciplinary as a result.

The long term solution is building more affordable housing on which a great deal of lobbying has taken place of various parliamentary groups with little or no response. In particular the Labour Party is undertaking a review of policies at the moment, with no known announcements in terms of how it can address these issues in the near future.

The LHC is campaigning to ensure that these issues are taken seriously as and when the new manifesto is developed ahead of the next election. This policy should include ensuring support for all rough sleepers, including those currently with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

Homelessness within Havering has doubled over the recent years (according to the Samaritans), and while Havering has a homeless strategy, this is seen as something that needs further development.

The policy of building homes has to cut through the NIMBY attitude that is prevalent within the borough, and other parts of London. This is not easy; during the discussions afterwards while all were in favour of more house

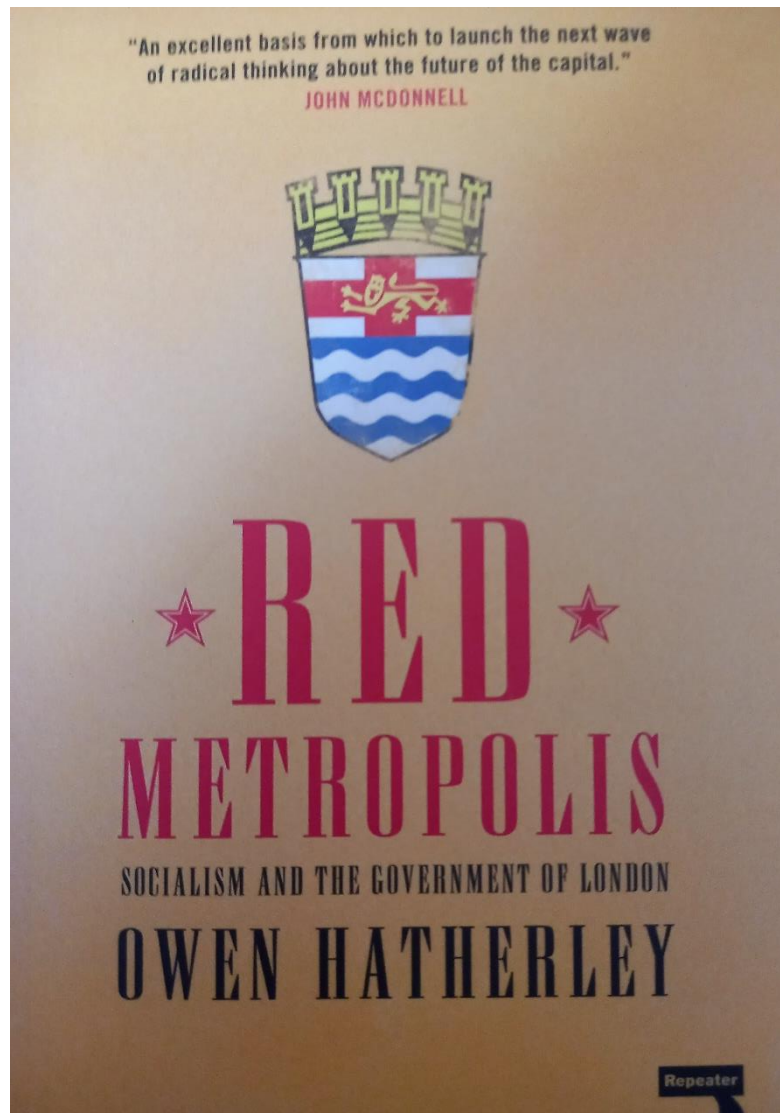
building, many had been involved at some stage in ensuring that development within an area close to them was rejected.

Houses that are built need to be fit for purpose and in the right location. Housing will remain a big issue for the party locally and will be a key component of the next Havering Labour manifesto.

We thanked Andrea for an interesting discussion and will no doubt revisit many of the subjects raised again in the run up to the Borough elections.

Book review - Red Metropolis

Owen Hatherley Repeater Books £10.99



This is an interesting book that charts the rise of the left, (in the broadest sense) in London from the formation of the Labour Party through to just prior to the Mayoral elections in 2021.

The book leans heavily on architecture as a means of expressing how successful the left has been in delivering a housing agenda, and in particular in the early period when most of the current London estates were designed and built.

The concentration is on Inner London and the surrounds, basically the former. ILEA⁸ area with occasional mentions of those boroughs that border this (e.g. Newham and Greenwich). Barking and Dagenham gets a mention because of the Becontree Estate, as an example of large scale Council house building by the London County Council.

One of the things it comments on is whilst there were successful housing estates, the infrastructure that went with it reflected the traditions of the time within the architectural profession, and some look odd in retrospect. For example, many were influenced by architects supportive of the temperance movement who were not keen on the provision of pubs, and so community facilities reflect this in some areas.

The book does successfully chart the decline of housing as an important issue, with less relevance under the GLC over time. The approach of Ken Livingstone, as the most left wing Leader in London since the war, is seen as mixed. Interestingly his approach is criticized more for the GLA era, when specific housing responsibilities were restored to a level not present at the end of the GLC in the 1980's. The Blair government gave limited attention to housing, which allowed some of London's problems to continue to increase.

The lack of engagement on housing issues by the Corbynite left is a continuation of this trend, and examples are given towards the end of the book, drawing some similarities with the issues raised by Jon Cruddas in his book⁹ about the common approach of the Blairite and the Corbynite tendencies. These have more in common than they both like to recognise.

⁸ Inner London Education Authority – the 12 inner London Boroughs

⁹ Jon Cruddas *Dignity of Labour*

This is an interesting book, partly if you have got any interest in architecture and it will give a context that is not always obvious.

There are some noticeable interesting historical points made. The old left of County Hall were represented within the Corbyn Shadow Cabinet, with John McDonnell being the lead for Finance on the GLC and the Shadow Chancellor. Credibility is stretched with comments about him keeping the GLA budget balanced, as it was John McDonnell that led the revolt against setting a rate. McDonnell and Livingstone ended on opposite sides with relations strained.

Pointing to some of the major players on the GLC that went on to enter Parliament, no mention is made of Paul Boateng who went on to be the first Black Cabinet Minister in 2002 and British High Commissioner to South Africa, or Tony Banks, although credited early on in the book as being effectively the GLC's effective London Arts Minister, went on to actually be the Minister of Sport in the Labour Government in 1997.

This is an interesting book. Anyone with an interest in London government will find something in here that they probably did not know before, and certainly the links of the various architecture practices and then the Political nature of architecture in the 1960s in particular is brought out in a way that would not otherwise be apparent.

I am sure people who would wish to represent themselves differently to the way that's represented in the book, but that is probably always the case; so read with a critical eye as there's much to be gained from this that wouldn't obviously have been apparent.

Links

Blog	http://haveringfabians.wordpress.com/
Website	https://haveringfabians.org/
Twitter	https://twitter.com/HaveringFabians
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/havering.fabians
LinkedIn	https://uk.linkedin.com/in/havering-fabians

On line payment

There was a positive response to paying annual subscriptions on line with 70 % of those responding willing to pay on line. Details will be included in the next Havering Fabians email. Contact us for further details if you are not on the current mailing list. Thanks to the many of you that have paid for 2021 – *and to those of you that are about to...*

Future Speakers

Our next meeting will be on 21st July 7pm with local author and Diversity expert Vernal Scott. Vernal was recently appointed Diversity and Inclusion Manager at Essex Police. In his limited time in his role he has revised the pending D&I Strategy, updated the Impact Assessment template, proposed EDIC (Equality Diversity Inclusion Cohesion) working groups to effect problem-solving on issues such as Stop and Search and Use of Force. Prior to moving to this role he worked for Havering Council.



Some of his biggest external past projects including working with Whitney Houston, Dionne Warwick and George Michael. He is most proud of the now defunct Brent HIV Centre, which he developed during the outset of that virus in the 1980s. Supporters included Princess Diana. One of his first service users was a Met Police officer living with AIDS.

His hobbies include writing books, the gym, cooking and keeping up with politics.

Vernal's book *God's Other Children: a London Memoir* was published in 2017 and was described as a "Fascinating, riveting account of a life full of

the joys and sorrows of growing up and living in a homophobic environment and surviving to tell the tale. Well written with a delightful touch of humour throughout".

His talk will be "Gods, Policing and Life"

Time: Jul 21, 2021 07:00 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89251666373?pwd=amRvTVFBTXRrdUdvVlQ1SlVSVmE1QT09>

Meeting ID: 892 5166 6373

Passcode: 765655

Future Meetings -when we resume

The indications around the vaccine are positive, but it will be some time before we can resume meetings in person. We will keep this under review and hope to meet at some point during 2021. We may start with hybrid meetings to allow those who want to participate remotely to do so.

Wes Streeting had agreed to speak when we returned, however he is now recovering from illness and may not be available for some time after we resume.

The MP for Ilford South Sam Tarry has also agreed to come to a future meeting, and we look forward to being able to welcome Barking and Dagenham Cabinet member Saima Ashraf who has also agreed to speak. We will arrange dates shortly.

Politics in Havering

Many of you will already be aware of the excellent Politics in Havering Blog, which we repost via our twitter feed. This gives a regular update on politics within the borough – a link is below, please follow them (and our blog!) for regular updates!

<https://haverling.blog/>

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

Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	Contact David Marshall
Membership Secretary		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 <u>david.c.marshall@talk21com</u>
Vice Chair Sam Gould		
Treasurer Dave Baldock		



Chair Keith Darvill reports ...

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 be in September 2021 and will hopefully reflect being ever nearer to a return to something like normality, and we can stop looking at screens all day. It will include an article covering the meeting on Local Government Finance in June.

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 and Dagenham 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

.....

.....

.....postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5