

HAVERING **FABIAN** SOCIETY

HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 52 March April 2023

**Havering
Fabian Society
Meetings with
Hope Wilson
Mendy, Saima
Ashraf, Jennifer
Craft, and details
of future meetings
with Margaret
Mullane, Darren
Rodwell and
Carolyn Simpson**

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VOLUME 2 EDITION 51 March April 2023

Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. Our last edition covered a period when the country had three Prime Ministers, and the economy had imploded. Things have not improved.

We now have 1,378 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 are welcome.



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.

Trends in transport

The ULEZ has generated hostile comments on local social media sites and is not popular with the local Tories. There is a need for an enhanced scrappage scheme and improved public transport. With petrol vehicles being phased out from 2030, there will be a growth in electronic vehicles, requiring significant infrastructure such as charging points. There will be need for significant changes in the way tax is raised from motorists if the Treasury seeks to fill the gap. This almost certainly leads to road pricing. This will cause more outrage from the road lobby. If the aim is to make good the shortfall, the same amount will be raised, although there are likely to be winners and losers.

The road haulage lobby is a strong one. Goods moved by road represent 77 per cent of the total¹. Large scale changes to this will require innovative solutions. For example, the new markets in Barking will use the river to move goods, and there would be greater scope to move freight if there was an enhanced railway network.

These are key parts of an environmental agenda and will involve ideological clashes with those wedded to the car as a means of transport. Another area where politicians will have to make tough decisions.

¹ [Transport Statistics Great Britain: 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2021)

Labour Foreign Policy – new Fabian publication

In late March, the Fabian Society were pleased to launch **Britain Reconnected: A Foreign Policy for Security and Prosperity at Home** a new pamphlet written by shadow foreign secretary, David Lammy MP. David argues that the Conservatives have left Britain increasingly disconnected from our closest allies, with a tarnished international reputation and reduced influence in the world and he explores what foreign policy under the next Labour government will look like.

Download the pamphlet here.

[Britain Reconnected | Fabian Society](#)

Or watch the launch on YouTube via the following link.

[\(130\) David Lammy MP: Britain Reconnected - YouTube](#)

Hope Wilson Mendy -Reimagining Local Politics

Our first meeting of the year was our first visit to the newly decorated Saffron House since lockdown. We were joined by members of the Romford Party, and our speaker was the CLP chair Hope Wilson Mendy. The topic was re-imagining local politics.



Figure 1 Hope and Chair Keith Darvill pre meeting.

Hope had joined the Labour Party in 2020. A conversation with Rosina Purnell had encouraged her to stand for the council in 2022. Rosina had stressed the need for a passion for the community and a commitment to improvement. After a great deal of work with fellow candidate Jane Keane, Hope fell forty-six votes short of getting elected, while Jane was elected by eight votes, becoming the first Labour Councillor elected in a Romford ward since Pam Craig, Jeff Stafford, Sheila McCole, Eamonn Martin, and Bob Kilbey in 1998.

It was clear from the 2019 election and the reaction to Sadiq Khan what Romford did not want. Romford took a “traditionalist” view, and was not at the leading edge of progressive politics.

This requires a different approach with a focus on workers and supporting them in the way Labour had done in the past. This required finding issues people on the way to work could relate to.



Figure 2 Hope waiting for a question.

The cost-of-living crisis was one such issue, and the foodbank collection at Saffron House was an opportunity to engage with the local community. Jane (and others) had worked on the garden outside Saffron House, which made the building more attractive, while supplying more opportunities to talk to local people.

The Covid lockdown period made traditional political engagement difficult, with involvement limited to the support effort (the foodbank collection was important here).

During lockdown times, the NHS was focused on Covid, and this limited campaigning.

The cut in Universal credit as Covid was perceived to subside, (see Jane's article in Newsletter 47) made a bad position worse and had a knock-on impact on the local economy as local shops felt the impact. Romford Conservatives would not engage on the issue, talking instead about the need to take tough decisions. Focus was on their major enemy Sadiq Khan, whose policy on every issue they opposed. With some "dog

whistle” campaigning getting traction on local social media, engagement on these issues would mean difficult conversations with implications of getting drawn in respect of generating support and personal safety on the doorstep. People, rightly or wrongly, had formed opinions on Sadiq over months and a short doorstep conversation would be unlikely to change this.

The hard work on the doorstep campaign had started 12 months before. Taking on casework while not a councillor and with no experience was difficult. However, success with casework had a ripple effect and in time would pay off as residents recognised the work conducted on their behalf. Sitting councillors also had this beneficial upside, where they had helped people would remember and vote for the individual rather than the Party.

Now Labour has a considerable opinion poll lead, Labour locally can build on the national sentiment to build further links.

With the world and the country suffering from the after-effects of Covid and the war in Ukraine, an incoming Labour government is likely to face a far from ideal situation. We must tie this into the local community approach, if possible, on a road-by-road basis. When in roads bordering Barking and Dagenham, local campaigners were keen to point out the issues where the Labour Council had made a difference.

A bigger electoral breakthrough requires numbers, graft, 0000and people with time to expand campaigning. The desire to be big, bold, and expansive in respect of local improvements remains, but needs supporters in large numbers to get the message across. Keeping people involved is important, so avoiding burnout is essential.

Communications are important, and in the run-up to the election five newsletters had been delivered, a pace maintained since the election in St Albans. Help and support are always needed, and any time that people can give will be much appreciated. If you are unable to help canvass, there are plenty of leaflets to fold, bathrooms to paint and gardening opportunities for anyone with green fingers.

With a concerted effort, Romford can again have a Labour MP. An interesting discussion followed on how to engage with the community and the need to be positive was stressed.

An encouraging meeting with positive contributions from the floor.

Saima Ashraf - Using data & insight to deliver for the community with the community.

The speaker after our AGM was Councillor Saima Ashraf. Saima is currently Deputy Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council and holds the Cabinet portfolio for Community Leadership & Engagement. She was first elected in 2010 and is currently a Councillor for Norbury Ward.



Figure 3 Councillor Saima Ashraf

The subject of her talk was Using data & insight to deliver for the community with the community.

Barking and Dagenham Council is on a long journey from 2010, when the BNP Councillors were removed as Labour secured a clean sweep.

The council has been building the social sector and increasing trust with the community, seeking to make services the best they can be given the financial constraints.

Saima has the Community and Engagement portfolio and has a key role in taking this forward. The council is involving the Community, although there is more to do.

Saima's portfolio was created in 2015, and in 2017 the council finalised its vision to 2037. Now the council is five years into the plan, and there are fourteen areas where there are ambitions to see improvement.

The document and an accompanying video can be accessed from the link below.

[Borough Manifesto | London Borough of Barking and Dagenham](https://lbbd.gov.uk/Borough-Manifesto)
(lbbd.gov.uk)

The baseline showed how Barking and Dagenham measured against other London Councils and the progress is measured.

The community let the council know what they like and what they do not! People do respond when asked; listening is the key.

Performance is tracked and reported to Council annually. Involvement in the process brings the Community together, and progress (or the lack of it) is put in the spotlight subject to public scrutiny.



Figure 4 Saima begins the discussion Keith Darvill in the background.

The borough has welcomed new developments.

- Two new film studios
- Three new markets
- In the period 2017 to 2037, building 10,000 new homes.

The council aims to ensure everyone benefits and no one is left behind.

The measures include a social progress index linked to the manifesto.

This shows where progress is being made and where it is not performing.

[Social progress index | London Borough of Barking and Dagenham \(lbbd.gov.uk\)](https://lbbd.gov.uk)

There are fifty indicators held at Ward level that are used to shape policy, and where required enable a deep dive into issues.

[Borough Data Explorer \(emu-analytics.net\)](https://emu-analytics.net)

The data will have more impact if shared with Partners, allowing targeting of resources.

Funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy is used to take this forward.²

The location of community facilities such as food banks is made with reference to the database, which is also used to target support for issues relating to debt, housing support and mental health.

Six days before lockdown, community groups were brought together and partnered to deliver support to residents, building on existing networks and community engagement. There were eight hubs across the Borough, with 1,200 residents helped. There was a leaflet drop across the whole borough. The database was used to identify shielding via age and vulnerability. This approach was 97% accurate compared with the Government-produced list which came 6 weeks later. Services were provided from Community Hubs

The existing strong links between the Council and faith sector were enhanced, and the trust built during the pandemic remains. A local

² The **Community Infrastructure Levy** (CIL) is a charge that local authorities can set on new development to raise funds to help fund infrastructure, facilities, and services – such as schools or transport improvements – which are needed to support growth and new homes and businesses across an area.

mosque acts as a community hub and signposts residents to council services.

Resources are targeted to where they are needed – it is apparent the council cannot do everything everywhere, so targeting is at a ward basis to where the need is.

There is a Partnership with a Credit Union ***BD Living*** to provide low interest loans, with an objective to get to 0% as the relationship becomes established, although it is not there yet.

There are Family Hubs, like those established as part of Sure Start, covering services from 0 to 18 and up to twenty-five for those with special needs.

The aim is for a one stop approach, aimed at one visit and not fragmenting.



Figure 5 Barking, Dagenham and Havering Trades Union Council Chair Tony Briscoe, Saima, and Keith Darvill

The cost-of-living crisis has hit hard. Barking and Dagenham has higher deprivation than other London Boroughs and as a borough with a young population, this section of the community has suffered. The council provides support to vulnerable households via the cost-of-living allowances, and there are more support groups than were in place for Covid. The approach is to collaborate rather than tell them what to do,

The council is seeing more Mental Health and anxiety issues and the council is collaborating with the community to plan to recover; it will be slower and more difficult if the council does not respond.

The process is hard, but Saima is honoured to be able to help. She moved into the Borough after suffering domestic violence abroad. She received the support she needs, feels safe, and feels British. She is pleased to be able to give back to the community in Barking and Dagenham.

Jen Craft PPC for Thurrock

Our speaker for the March meeting was the Labour Party prospective parliamentary candidate for Thurrock Jennifer Craft, although she prefers Jen.

Her subject on World Downs Syndrome Day was about the challenges of parenting a child with additional needs in the current political landscape.



Figure 6 Jen with odd socks to mark World Downs Syndrome Day

The day is celebrated by wearing odd socks, to recognise that those with Downs Syndrome are different,

Jen took great pride in her eldest daughter Alice, who has Downs Syndrome. Those with the Syndrome now have increasing life expectancy, greater life chances and can live independently. There are

artists, actors and politicians who have the Syndrome and the scope to live a full life is increasing. When first diagnosed, Jen was offered a termination, which she did not follow through on, even though the diagnosis was devastating. At this early stage, “Ableism” was an issue ³ and one that would recur throughout her daughter’s journey.



Figure 7 Jen and Keith Darvill before the meeting starts.

³ Ableism is discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities and/or people who are perceived as being disabled. Ableism characterizes people as defined by their disabilities, and it also classifies disabled people as people who are inferior to non-disabled people. On this basis, people are assigned or denied certain perceived abilities, skills, or character orientations.

Although ableism and disablism are both terms which describe disability discrimination, the emphasis for each of these terms is slightly different. Ableism is discrimination in favour of non-disabled people, while disablism is discrimination against disabled people. Source Wikipedia

The level of services required are often underfunded or do not exist, with services and facilities to the disabled seen as an add on rather than an integral part. For example, the provision of ramps can make a building useable, but if there are only stairs, wheelchair users are excluded. These are straightforward to install for new facilities and harder to retrofit yet are often not included.

Covid was particularly an issue for the vulnerable in society, with prolonged periods in isolation and more risk. Services were withdrawn overnight, for example physiotherapy and respite care both ended. Previous routine was lost, which can be unsettling and disruptive for those with autism who need routine. When services return, backlogs are significant.

Jen's daughter needs orthopaedic boots, and it takes 3 months to get an appointment – there is no fitting service, and the delays cause a lack of mobility.

Sadly, there is a need to regularly engage with the various parts of the health service as co-ordination is lacking. This leads to parent/ patient support groups to help address this when greater co-ordination is needed. Children suffer if this is not done, and this gets worse with more complex and often multiple needs. Diagnostic overshadowing can conceal secondary symptoms.

Consultants often do not talk with each other, and the health-care co-ordination falls to the parents, who may or may not have the time and more importantly the skill set to undertake this role.

Lengthy delays to services such as speech therapy can push patients down the private route which not all can afford.

As children get older SEND⁴ practice within schools becomes an issue. This area is chronically underfunded (see newsletters 43 and 47) causing many councils financial issues and with a squeeze on funding available to schools, SEND often suffer.

⁴ **Special educational needs and disability (SEND)**

This requires active parenting to ensure the best for a child. There is a need for a formal Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP)⁵ which sets out the provision required. This can be hard to obtain with autism or lower-level disabilities where schools can be reluctant to engage. Sadly, EHCPs can be vaguely drafted which does not help e, g if the need for one-to-one tuition is not stated explicitly, schools will often push against this as it is expensive. They will offer direct supervision (of a larger group) as an alternative. As with many aspects of education, SEND matters are jargon and acronym heavy and this can be an issue for those new to the process.



Figure 8 Listening as an audience member asks a question.

Parents naturally want the best for their children and will engage accordingly. However, assessment can often take two or three terms which requires patience.

⁵ The EHCP, which means the **Education and Health Care Plan** is a document which sets out the education, healthcare and social care needs of a child or young person for whom extra support is needed in school, beyond that which the school can provide. It was formerly known as a 'statement of special educational needs'.

Disabled children can be left out of social activities which does not help them or the parents who have a different parenting experience as a result; for example, the appreciation of risk must be greater as the children often do not appreciate their environment.

What needs to change?

There needs to be a shift in attitude, with SEND pupils seen as part of how schools work, The child needs to be treated as an individual; minor accommodations are often difficult and dealt with outside of an EHCP.

Early years teachers should be skilled in British Sign Language to enable engagement with nonverbal pupils. Such pupils learn visually and teaching BSL in schools would open the world for them.

A significant increasing in funding for SEND is required to achieve this; the lack of funds is distorting school and council budgets.

Greater health-care co-ordination would help; it is often the case that the active parent will be effectively managing relevant consultants' diaries. Society also needs to adjust.

Disabled children exist, and this should be reflected in the design and build of playgrounds.

Disabled children deserve access to after school activities and groups such as Girl Guides.

Wider provision of Changing Place toilet facilities (see newsletter 17) would enable children and even adults to change nappies in a suitable environment rather than on the toilet floor or back of a car. Again, easier to install within new facilities than retrofit.

The fundamental change is to support parents so they can just be parents.

Jen then took questions. Understandably these were a mix of questions on her talk and the current position in Thurrock, where the Council has

effectively lost financial control and as a result residents are faced with a 10% increase in Council Tax.

This was the result of a risky investment in high-risk solar farms and had left the Council with debt of £1.4 billion. This is described in detail by the journalist Gareth Davis.^{6 / 7}

The local Conservatives had proceeded without transparency and lacked accountability. They had replaced opposition Labour Scrutiny chairs with Conservatives reducing scope for challenge.

As a result, services provided by the council faced being reduced to the statutory minimum, and vital community facilities such as the Thameside complex were liable to go. This would damage a range of community groups operating from the site and damage community cohesion.

Labour could well take back control of the Council but would have limited scope to do anything positive. Offering greater transparency was being well received on the doorstep where people were angry at the Conservatives. The position was dire.

We wish Jen good luck in her coming campaign and hope to see her elected when the election is held.

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⁶ [Chaos as Thurrock council tries to deal with backlash of investment scandal — The Bureau of Investigative Journalism \(en-GB\) \(thebureauinvestigates.com\)](https://thebureauinvestigates.com/2022/03/chaos-as-thurrock-council-tries-to-deal-with-backlash-of-investment-scandal/)

⁷ [‘Everybody’s on their knees’: the fallout of Thurrock’s failed investments — The Bureau of Investigative Journalism \(en-GB\) \(thebureauinvestigates.com\)](https://thebureauinvestigates.com/2022/03/everybodys-on-their-knees-the-fallout-of-thurrock-s-failed-investments/)

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

Online payment

There was a positive response to paying annual subscriptions online with 70 % of those responding willing to pay online. Details are included in the regular (ish) Havering Fabians email. Contact us for further details if you are not on the current mailing list.

Future Meetings

**24th April 7.30pm Councillor Margaret Mullane Labour
PPC for Dagenham and Rainham**



Figure 9 Councillor Margaret Mullane Labour Party PPC for Dagenham and Rainham

Margaret Mullane has spoken to the Fabians on several occasions. Margaret was the Labour Candidate for Romford in 2005 and has been a Councillor for Village Ward in Barking and Dagenham Council since 2010. She was selected as prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Dagenham and Rainham in December 2022.

The subject of her talk will be “Unaffordable affordable housing.”

**The venue St. Joseph's Social Hall 117 St. Mary's Lane Upminster
RM14 2QB**

May/ June date and venue to be confirmed. Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council and Labour Party Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Barking Darren Rodwell will be the speaker, *further details to follow.*



Figure 10 Darren Rodwell

6th July 2023 Carolyn Simpson - The Struggle for Female Equality
 7.30pm in Fairkytes Arts Centre main room.

Carolyn is a former UNITE officer who has an impressive CV including.

- . Full-time Trade Union Officer since 1988 involved in many industries and sectors.
- . Former Regional Organiser of Unite the Union.
- . Former National Pensioners' Officer for Unite the Union
- . Co-organiser of 2014 "Women Against Austerity" Conference
- . Regional Women's and Equalities Officer in the London & Eastern Region
- . Honorary Treasurer of the National Association of Women
- . National Association of Women representative on the Russian Centenary Committee
- . Co-Chair of the South-eastern Region of the TUC Women's Rights Committee
- . Long term advocate of proportional representation in Trade Union elections



Carolyn will speak on the struggle for female equality. Below is a link Unite produced several years ago for new Croatian members which features Carolyn four times.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVEU5jFbGcI>

September

Islington Councillor and Chair of the Fabian Law and Constitutional Policy Group Hannah McHugh has agreed to be the speaker. Details of the topic, time and venue are being finalised. Hannah spoke at the launch of the Fabian paper “Reclaiming Freedom – The case for a 21st Century Bill of powers and duties” alongside Liam Byrne MP, Steve Reed MP, Jon Cruddas MP and Dame Helena Kennedy

Politics in Havering

You may 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 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Sanchia Alasia		
Treasurer Dave Baldock		



Chair Keith Darvill reports ...

Future Editions

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 June 2023 – contributions welcome.

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