Report on UKIP NEC meeting January 9th 2017

Members present: Paul Nuttall MEP (Party Leader) (PN), Paul Oakden (Party Chairman) (PO), David Sprason (DS), Alan Bown (AB), John Bickley (JB), Toby Coke (TC), Fiona Mills (FM), Steve Crowther (SC), Mick McGough (MM), Elizabeth Jones (EJ), Marion Mason (MAM), Anish Patel (AP), Paul Oakley (PJO), Katie Fanning (KF) (from 2.30pm).

Also present: Adam Richardson (Party Secretary) (AR), Jonathan Arnott MEP (General Secretary) (JA), Peter Whittle (PW).

The meeting started at 1.14pm.

Apologies were received from Douglas Carswell, and some members were expected to be late due to industrial action on the London Underground.

The meeting began with brief introductions for the benefit of the newly-elected members.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Proposed by DS, seconded by AB. Carried by 5-0 with 7 abstentions (not present at previous meeting).

JB asked the Committee to thank Rob McWhirter for his work when he was an NEC member and his work on the Technical Sub-Committee.

Motion: To thank Rob McWhirter for his service to the Party during his time on the NEC. Proposed by JB, SC. Carried by 12-0 with no abstentions.

The Spring Conference this year will be on Friday February 17th and will take place at the Macron Stadium in Bolton. There will be a Gala Dinner on the Friday night. On the Saturday, whilst the main Conference room is not available, we will have a day of local government-focused speakers.

We anticipate a real opportunity for the Party at the (anticipated) Leigh by-election. There will be a big canvassing and campaigning day on Leigh on Sunday February 19th. It is important that we hit the ground running.

The meeting briefly discussed the proposed reorganisation of the London branches, and the funding of the necessary database changes.

The NEC approved in principle a branch merger as follows:

Motion: That the NEC approves the merger of Ilford branch into Redbridge & Waltham Forest branch, and the merger of Tower Hamlets and Newham
branches. Proposed by PJO, seconded by EJ. Carried by 12-0 with no abstentions.

There has been a productive meeting about Key Seats targeting and about data gathering; we need our canvassing efforts to be more data-driven. The ideal system is expensive, and therefore the Party would have to seek donors to fund the project.

The NEC discussed the Copeland by-election and also the potential by-election in Leigh.

The NEC was given an update about proposed policy launches.

PN reported that we’re up to 14% in the polls and there are further opportunities in Labour constituencies. Theresa May will probably invoke Article 50 by the end of March, and we anticipate that the wheels will come off for the Conservatives by the autumn; they cannot always promise everything to everyone. We could have another MP by the summer if things go well for us.

Since the last meeting, PN has appointed Victoria Ayling (tourism), David Coburn (Leader in Scotland), Lisa Duffy (Foreign Aid) and Tim Aker (key seats).

Motion: That the NEC ratifies the appointments made by the Party Leader since the last meeting. Proposed by JB, seconded by KF. Carried by 11-0 with 2 abstentions.

AR reported on ongoing legal cases. We have received costs in one case which was dismissed against us. One potential case against us appears to be vexatious, and the Party is confident in others.

JA reported on the status of 23 outstanding disciplinary complaints, with more to follow. He is attempting to work through those complaints since his appointment as General Secretary last month.

The NEC approved changes to the Rules of Procedure. These were to remove typos, delete an obsolete Rule, add a Rule banning members from campaigning against UKIP candidates at public elections, mechanisms for dealing with disputes in County and Regional Committees, resolving ties in Branch meeting votes, and to codify current practice – recognising the existence of vetting panels and noting that there is no absolute right for members to be selected as candidates.
Motion: That the NEC approves the changes to the Rules of Procedure as amended, to Rules P.1 and V.1, the deletion of Rule X.7.1 and the new Rules W.1.16, C.5.18, C.5.19, C.6.7, B.3.16, R.11 and R.12. Proposed by DS, seconded by SC. Carried by 11-0 with two abstentions.

DS reported on the Councillors’ Association, and about proposals for training. There will be significant time devoted to this at the Spring Conference, which will be the focus of the Saturday (Feb 18th).

We must, as a Party, improve the number of Council by-elections that we contest.

The NEC discussed ways to improve transparency.

JA is re-instituting the reports on NEC meetings.

PJO supports greater transparency, and the meeting discussed ways of balancing transparency with the danger of information being used to attack the Party – either in the press, or by our opponents.

The meeting discussed the possibility of holding meetings in different locations around the country, rather than meeting in London every time. The possibility of weekend meetings was also raised. There are some logistical difficulties with ensuring the Party Leader’s attendance at NEC if the Leader needs to be in London for media purposes.

The meeting also discussed the Constitution Reform working group, which will be headed up by Michael Greaves who has substantial experience in this respect.

The meeting was briefly reminded that the number of candidates for this year’s NEC elections was so high as to make the choice very difficult for members. Choosing from 91 candidates for 7 vacancies is not sustainable. Members were invited to consider proposals – whether as Rule changes or as part of a broader review of the Constitution – which could be put forward at future meetings.

Motion: That the NEC wishes a speedy recovery to Derek Bennett. Proposed by PN, seconded by SC. Carried by 13 to 0 with no abstentions.

Motion: To congratulate Pete Reeve on his MBE. Proposed by SC, seconded by JB. Carried by 13 to 0 with no abstentions.
The meeting closed at 5.11pm.