

BUILDING A PARTY FOR THE FUTURE

NEC Party Development Taskforce report 2005

Working for Britain



NEC Party Development Taskforce

This report is produced by the NEC Party Development Taskforce taking forward the debate and responses from local parties, affiliates and other party stakeholders to the consultation report '21st century party – the next steps'.

Members of the taskforce

Ian McCartney MP, Chair

Ann Black

Hazel Blears MP

Caroline Flint MP

John Hannett

Dr Simon Henig

Shahid Malik MP

Anne Moffat MP

Paul Simpson

Peter Skinner MEP

Margaret Wall

September 2005

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Foreword



This is an extraordinary moment in the history of the Labour Party.

Any conference in our party's history would have loved to meet in these circumstances: we have just been elected for an historic third full term, with the party united around a radical manifesto for change.

We achieved our victories because as a party we had the courage to modernise, to take Labour's traditional values and apply them to the world we face today.

And as we approach conference strong, united and victorious, we need to grasp the opportunity to address the challenges of the 21st century.

Changes in modern Britain mean changes in the way the Labour Party campaigns and is organised. We live in a rapidly changing world, we face different challenges, there are new and competing pressures on people's time, and there are new forms of communication.

This report recognises that the Labour Party needs to change the way we campaign, the way we communicate, and the way we reach out to the communities we seek to serve, as we continue to renew ourselves in government.

We have identified a wide range of modern campaigning techniques, driven by local party activists, who are adapting the way they work to the modern world. It is no coincidence that so many of the parties we highlight are the parties who achieved the best results in the recent general election.

In 1997 not only did we win our target seats, we also won many more seats that no-one ever expected Labour to win. Many of them we held in 2001, thanks to excellent, modern campaign techniques backed up by strong local leadership. We held many such seats again in 2005, and in those seats where we just lost in 2005 it is our intention to run campaigns to make sure we win them back.

Modern campaigning is permanent. In politics we can never again think about a four week election campaign. Local Labour parties are at their best when they are on the doorstep, in their communities, winning people to Labour. We cannot allow ourselves to be confined

exclusively to an activism that is defined by our ability to attend a cycle of meetings.

Modern campaigning needs modern techniques – our most innovative campaigners identify and inform a group of active supporters far wider than card carrying members.

Modern campaigning faces outwards, into our communities. This was highlighted by Labour's Big Conversation, which saw us reach out to tens of thousands of people who would not otherwise have come into contact with our party.

Innovative campaigners also use the internet for fundraising, they produce DVDs to promote their work, they personalise their message. We have learnt that some of our best activists, councillors and MPs are the ones who are key agents of change in their communities. It is vital that we support them in driving this change.

At this year's conference we have worked to build a significant consensus in the party around moving forward and tackling these challenges. We are now recommending a number of changes to how the party works, with the potential of more to come if required.

This report launches a debate about the right model for a 21st century party. We want party members up and down the country to identify the rules and procedures which hold them back.

This report identifies best practice across the country. The key questions now are:

- How quickly can all parties shift to all-member General Committees, with the Executive Committee taking full responsibility for the running of the constituency?
- How can all local manifestos be developed using 'Big Conversation' techniques which involve local communities, as suggested by the Partnership in Power review report to this conference?
- How can supporters be involved in all activities of local parties, particularly in social events and campaigning?

Local parties must lead the change over the next year, and we will consult parties so that at Conference 2006 the NEC can bring forward required changes that will promote and embed these changes in our political and organisational culture which will give all members the rights to be involved.

Our aim is to reach out beyond our membership

In many seats during the election, Labour supporters who were not members, made a huge contribution to Labour victories. And more than 50,000 supporters signed up on the Party's website during the election campaign. We will now work to establish a National Supporters' Network which will bring together these supporters and those signed up by individual MPs and local parties. We will work with our affiliated trade unions and socialist societies to enrol their members as supporters or recruit them as members. We will communicate with those supporters, link them to their local parties and MPs. And we will seek to draw them into membership.

Our aim is to empower local leadership as the key to leading change

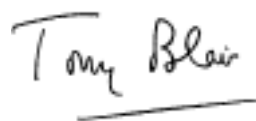
Some of the most marginal seats in Britain retained a Labour MP because local parties campaigned in a different way, using modern incumbency techniques. We will develop these techniques across local government and the devolved bodies. We will change the campaigning culture as part of our programme of party renewal.

Our aim is to reach out in to our communities

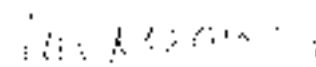
The Big Conversation saw the party reach out to tens of thousands of people who have not had contact with the party before. This style of approach will now be permanently built into Labour's policy making.

The process of party renewal is ongoing. Over the next year, we will drive forward renewal at all levels of the party, enabling local activists to bring about change in their communities.

This report – and what we have learnt from the election – shows us how to build a party which will campaign throughout our third term to provide the basis for a fourth election victory.



Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party



Ian McCartney MP
Party Chair

1. Introduction

This report has come about from the work of the NEC Party Development Taskforce and submissions from local parties, affiliates and other party stakeholders to the consultation report '21st century party – the next steps'.

It builds on the debate and work undertaken in the party since 1997 on how we best work and organise in the modern world. It takes forward this work following the publication of 'Building a healthy party' followed by consultations on the '21st century party' in 1999 and a subsequent report to conference in 2000.

Our historic third general election win was down to the work of thousands of members across the country who gave time to the party – delivering newsletters, raising funds, calling on voters, as well as the commitment and dedication of local party officers who manage and keep local parties running on a day-to-day basis. The 2005 campaign showed that our organisation was far stronger than our opponents enabling us to run an efficient, professional campaign.

The challenge we face is to provide a focus for our party in the third term of a Labour government which ensures we renew our organisation for the future whilst ensuring we have a platform for campaigning in the forthcoming local, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, mayoral and Greater London Assembly elections and ultimately the next general election.

We do this work against a back drop of changes to society where people lead busier and faster lives combining work and family commitments with competing demands and opportunities for leisure time. It is also against an international trend of decreasing party membership which we must work hard to beat.

This report shows how local parties should look. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach but shows where resources of a 21st century party should be focussed. The report does not propose wholesale changes to party structures and institutions but is clear on the areas where local parties need to focus hard as their contribution to the renewal which will take us forward in the coming years.

2. The consultation

NEC's Party Development Taskforce report, '21st century party – the next steps', was published in September 2003 for our Annual Conference that year.

Following conference, the report was distributed for consultation to party stakeholders at all levels including branch, constituency and county parties, Women's Forums, Young Labour groups, trade union and socialist society affiliates and all Labour politicians.

The consultation period ended in April 2004. We received a number of interesting and innovative responses with examples of how local parties have adapted to challenges they face locally.

What also came through strongly from the responses was the dedication and commitment of members who hold officer positions in local parties - at constituency or branch levels – managing the day-to-day affairs of local parties.

Due to the amount of time local officers give to the party – juggling work and family commitments – it did not come as a surprise their desire to engage in discussions about change and how they can work more effectively.

The key issues coming through the consultation were:

- The importance of branch organisation in terms of reaching local members and keeping in touch with the local community, local issues and local opinion.
- The experiences of constituency parties who hold all-member constituency meetings (compared with those retaining a delegate body) so facilitating greater member participation and more regular discussion of local, regional and national policy issues.

- Further study of the results of Reading West Labour Party's pilot Labour Supporters' Club project.
- Considering ways of improving involvement and participation in the party of the black and minority ethnic communities, with a proposal to allow local parties to set up Ethnic Minority Forums.
- Best practice on trade union involvement in local parties, and the role played by constituency trade union liaison officers.
- The way regional parties have responded to the demands of the new region-wide European parliamentary constituencies and how Labour MEPs communicate and campaign with local parties.

Regional consultation meetings

In the autumn of 2004 and early January 2005, we held a series of regional consultation meetings with party stakeholders to discuss further issues that had emerged from the consultation.

East Midlands – CLP/branch organisation and campaigning

Eastern – CLP/branch organisation in rural seats

London – Building local links with trade unions

North West – CLP/branch organisation and campaigning

South West – Labour Supporters Network

Yorkshire & Humber – Local government organisation

The main observations to come out of these meetings were:

- Local parties welcoming an opportunity to think about how they currently organise themselves and work.

- A willingness to listen to new ideas on how they can better organise themselves to meet their goals.
- There cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' model.

The report also draws on the debriefing undertaken with Members of Parliament and their campaign teams after the general election.

This report draws on all these comments and responses.

3. A party for the 21st century

3.1 A campaigning party

Our aim

To develop a party at all levels which campaigns year round, communicating in a professional manner and recognises the importance of building long term relationships with the communities we serve.

The challenge

Political parties exist to bring together those who share values and ideals and who wish to see them turned into positive action. The campaigning work of a party is the process of moving beyond wanting something to happen, to delivering change. Labour representatives on local councils, in parliament, or serving as MEPs are able to ensure policy positions are turned into improvements for the community.

For that reason the party has always valued campaigning skills and those who can organise our resources to support Labour representatives. The party must ensure that it has the structures and support to deliver high quality political campaigns based on excellent political intelligence. Experience from the recent election campaign suggests that local parties do well when they consider the best campaign structure for their local circumstances.

Our work is set against a rapidly changing backdrop. For instance, the Labour Party is fighting not just to win national office but to hold power for a fourth term, an experience we have never before been through. The development of devolution means there are more elections to bodies with different electoral systems and in the case of Scotland, different boundaries. Local elections have always been important, but never more so as the government seeks to devolve power to local government.

We must also recognise that future elections will be fought on different terms and need new tactics.

To meet these challenges our thinking is evolving. We recognise that we need to work harder to maintain contact with voters, understanding their concerns and engaging in dialogue to persuade them not just of our opposition's faults but to engage them in the government's programme. Early feedback from the 2005 election campaign showed that MPs and candidates put a great deal of value in a sustained programme of engagement with voters that went beyond simply identifying them as supporters but developed a relationship based on voters concerns and aspirations for their community and their families.

And this campaigning has to be local. Communities have to feel that the Labour Party is on their side with a strong local identity which takes campaigning beyond simply listing government achievements but linking outcomes to improvements that voters recognise.

Case studies

Scotland

In Scotland, local parties have already considered how best they organise themselves as a result of the boundary review and the need to reorganise all the Westminster parliamentary constituencies.

Following consultation with party stakeholders, Scottish Parliament Forums have been established as the unit of organisation for the Scottish Parliament constituencies. Freed from the need to carry on the day-to-day work of a CLP, each SPF will focus solely on recruiting and retaining members, returning Labour politicians, policy

making for the Scottish manifesto and local campaigning to build and retain support within the local community.

Then to ensure that CLPs covering the Westminster seats can work as effectively as possible, most have decided to move to all-member meetings, monthly alternation between branch meetings and campaigning, and will hold regular policy forums.

Paisley and Renfrewshire South used this opportunity to consult their members through surveys and local members' meetings about how they should best organise their local party. Out of these discussions, it became clear that members wanted fewer business meetings but more time set aside for local campaigning and guest speakers.

Paisley and Renfrewshire South now meets bi-monthly with the meetings open to all members. And then branches meet on alternative months. This change is combined with the party officers ensuring that all party meetings had a focus and purpose with guest speakers, policy forums, local campaigning and social events. Already this is paying dividends with higher attendance at CLP meetings and the members feeling increasingly engaged and enthusiastic about their local party.

Team Bridgend

After a disappointing set of election results in 2004, members in Bridgend realised that they needed longer term planning and much better co-ordination if they were to re-gain control of the local authority. Bridgend county takes in two CLPs, Bridgend and Ogmore, has two Labour MPs, and two Labour Assembly Members; involving all levels of the party was going to be crucial if they were to build the relationship with the electorates that could build on victories in the forthcoming general and assembly elections.

At an all member meeting in November 2004, it was agreed to establish Team Bridgend, a co-ordinating group made up of all the AMs and MPs plus two representatives from the CLPs, County Party and the County Group. The team has already facilitated the joint purchase of a risograph, helped with joint campaigning events in the general election,

established a list of key wards for the 2008 local elections and set up a series of taster events for prospective candidates. The next all member event will be in November this year and will focus on policy development, an all member mailing has already been sent out asking members for ideas on how the local area can be improved.

The team has no powers of its own but its capacity to cut across barriers within the party and provide better coordination is already making a big difference.

North Southwark and Bermondsey appointed a volunteer manager in the run up to the general election to engage with the membership on campaigning. The postholder spoke to members, encouraged them to turn up at campaign events and telephoned, emailed and texted members with information. This helped to increase the activist base and ensured that over 100 members had a role in campaigning during the general election.

Finchley and Golders Green constituency, former stronghold of Margaret Thatcher, is not traditional Labour territory. All year round campaigning has been a key part of gaining and holding the seat for Labour. Regular weekend street stalls at a number of sites throughout the area provide an opportunity for high visibility campaigning and are a vehicle for raising local issues or a local slant on national campaigns. The party regularly uses petitions as a focus for discussion on the stalls and subsequent relationship building using Labour.contact and targeted direct mail.

In recent years, Finchley and Golders Green have used ward-based newsletters, produced in conjunction with Barnet Labour group and delivered to every household in key areas, to maintain Labour's profile. They have included with these a yearly area-based questionnaire. This, along with newsletter response, encourages feedback and builds relationships with individual residents on local issues. Close working with local councillors allows the party to maximise the impact of local campaigns. This has allowed the party to "hit the ground running" during election campaigns and to target groups of

voters in between elections. With voting habits becoming less predictable and more issues based, Finchley and Golders Green see year-round campaigning as an important part of engaging voters.

Dedicated campaign teams

A number of parties have developed teams that do a specific campaign task.

Nottingham East have a 'Tiger Squad' – led by local MP, John Heppell. The Tiger Squad is a band of 20 or so party members from Nottingham who are willing and able to help in local by-elections, key marginal constituencies and even go further afield to parliamentary by elections around the country.

In **Carlisle** a team of 15-20 members - led by local MP Eric Martlew and Labour group leader, Heather Bradley – come together every Saturday morning (52 weeks) to deliver at least 1,500 campaign leaflets in target areas around the constituency.

The success of such dedicated campaign teams is due to the fact that it is a specific activity, limited to about an hour and because it takes place every week. Members feel they are part of a team which in turn fosters a greater sense of responsibility to attend future sessions, and the team spirit created has led to an increasingly effective election machine.

Rural parties

Local parties in rural areas face particular political and organisational challenges. They are more likely to be in opposition on local councils and the MP is likely to be from the opposition as well. They face difficulties in terms of party organisation as the huge geographical boundaries will mean members have to travel significant distances to attend meetings.

Yet party officers in rural constituencies work tirelessly to promote the party locally – reaching out to members and the wider community. Party activity tends to focus on branches organised around the villages and market towns. And winning local elections require particular campaign techniques, with the successful candidates being those who are well known locally for playing a strong leadership role in local communities - for example, having made a name for themselves

locally as the "Chairman of the Local Allotment Society", the organiser of the "Hospital Car Rota" or for championing a particular local issue such as improved footpaths or facilities for young people.

Brian Hunter serves as a district councillor on **Waveney District Council** representing the rural ward of Lothingland made up of small rural villages with an average population of 220 electors per village.

Prior to his election, Brian was involved in many community groups, especially an organisation which organised weekly bingo sessions at a central community centre.

The Community Centre was, and still is, run by a committee within which Brian plays a leading part. Recognising the numbers of elderly people in the Ward who had no access to either private or public transport and were therefore relatively isolated, he helped to form a club for older people. He organises Christmas parties, outings to the theatre at Norwich and Cromer and mystery coach tours during the summer months for the club's members.

The party in opposition heartlands

Not all local parties have Labour representatives in Westminster or in the town halls. Like members in rural parties, local parties in the opposition heartlands, whether the opposition is Tory, Liberal Democrat or the nationalists, face different challenges and difficulties.

They have to work even harder to engage with their members as they do not enjoy the benefits of, for example, having a Labour MP who they can talk to about the Government's programme and responses to topical issues. Similarly, they have to think through carefully what resources to allocate to campaigning in local and national elections when faced with large opposition majorities.

Guildford Labour Party in the Tory stronghold of Surrey works in a number of ways to respond to these challenges.

- Leadership of the local officers
Ensuring that the party does the day-to-day things like keeping in touch with members, selecting candidates for local and national

elections, keeping a profile in the local community, falls on the leadership and drive provided by the constituency and branch officers. Without the commitment and dedication of this group of members, many local parties in the opposition heartlands would simply not exist.

- **Policy forums**

These play an even important part in providing a platform for engaging members on policy issues. Guildford Labour Party invites ministers and senior Labour MPs to lead the discussion on particular policy areas at meetings that are open to all members in Guildford as well as the neighbouring constituencies. In recent times, they have held successful local policy forums with Charlie Falconer, Yvette Cooper MP and John Denham MP

- **Links with the nearest Labour seat**

Guildford Labour Party has also invested time into building links with the party in Crawley, their nearest Labour seat. This is a two-way relationship with the Labour MP Laura Moffat supporting party activity in Guildford and in return Guildford members join campaign activity in Crawley.

Recommendations for action

- **Review your party structures**

Local parties should think about their structures for organising the campaign. Is it effective or are there other structures which could work – for example, more informal task-based groups or groups that cross constituency boundaries?

- **Link campaigning to other areas of work to develop year round campaigning**

We need to join up our work. For example, CLPs can use Partnership in Power to develop policy discussions and through this to build strong relationship with voters. There is no substitute for year round campaigning and regular communication with the electorate.

- **Make it local**

Campaigners build up a body of local case studies which illustrate Labour's programme rather than base a campaign on national figures.

- **Produce an engagement strategy**

Set targets for communicating and engaging with voters. Use a range of tools from 'Big Conversation' style events to surveys to reach out.

- **Don't become complacent**

Political parties cannot assume support nor should anyone in the party believe we have a right to be elected. Complacency is the enemy of good political organisation.

- **Build links with the nearest Labour seat**

Parties without Labour MPs or other Labour representatives should build links with their nearest Labour seat. This should be a two-way relationship with the Labour MP attending and supporting events in your party and members from the non Labour seat joining campaigning activity or attending events in the Labour seat.

3.2 A broad based party

Our aim

We wish to see a party that is truly reflective of the communities they serve, bringing a range of skills and experience to our work, and which finds innovative and flexible ways to encourage contact and support for the party.

The challenge

Members are the life blood of our party. We need a strong membership base and a party that is representative of our local community. When our party no longer looks like the communities we purport to represent, we lose touch with common concerns, policy development suffers and ultimately cede the initiative to our opponents. We will achieve nothing if we speak only to ourselves.

Each local party unit needs to consider if the way it operates is the most welcoming and open way possible. Is the pattern of meetings such that it takes a particular amount of dedication to make a contribution, does the party structure exclude minority groups or those who are not typical of the current membership?

Regular contact with members, particularly those who are not involved in the day-to-day activity of running the party, is extremely important. And keeping up contact with those who have left, if only occasionally, can pay big dividends.

One way that has been seen to work to broaden the membership is to develop new points of entry with different expectations about the contribution the supporter is expected to make. Many who share our values may not be ready to make the leap to join the party but are interested in keeping in touch with what the party is doing in their community and make a contribution to our work. They may wish to join the party at a later stage or wish to help informally. Either way their contribution is to be welcomed and encouraged.

Engaging with local trade unions is another way of reaching out to supporters and potential new members.

And it is worth considering that whilst the breakdown of traditional voting patterns makes the work of political parties more difficult, it also provides an opportunity to look at new ways of reaching out to Labour supporters.

Case studies

The **Mitcham and Morden** party together with the local MP are a good example of a member centred party. The key is the regular contact existing and new members get from the party and the political leadership of the local MP Siobhain McDonagh. The party has a programme of open meetings with external speakers, events for new members, regular communications on the work of government, an annual members get-together, as well as a personal contact for new members from Siobhain.

All this means members feel valued and are more likely to help in the range of party activity. Members who attend meetings, socials, help in campaigns and generally take part, are less likely to lapse and more likely to become further involved and help fundraise later on.

Reading West Labour Party pro-actively set out to establish a supporters club to run alongside party membership and boost the numbers of local people associating with the party. Local activists started by selecting a number of key wards, involved the local councillors and telephoned people who had said they were Labour supporters and voted Labour in previous elections. The calls were made on behalf of the local MP, Martin Salter, who also telephoned residents himself. With comparatively little effort nearly a thousand members were recruited to the Reading West Labour Supporters' Club plus a number of new members.

The Labour Supporters' Club member receives a quarterly newsletter informing them of activities both in the constituency and in Parliament. They can be invited to events such as visits by Labour ministers, the recent Big Conversation exercise or the MP's community forum. Their names were also entered in the Christmas prize draw for a meal in the House of Commons and a tour of Parliament.

The supporters' club has added a group of people beyond the party membership who can be asked gently to help with tasks such as envelope stuffing or gate duty at election time. They can be given election posters to display the moment the general election is called to create an immediate splash of party colours. Some have even become regular leafleters. More importantly, they extend the reach of the party into the community.

Involving young people

In **Wolverhampton South West** a Young Labour group has been forged from a pattern of activity that has been consistently effective for involving young people in the Labour Party.

First, the local party worked to build a nucleus of just two or three young members around which a Young Labour group could be established. This was labour intensive but an essential first step. It involved telephoning every young member in the area. The few young members who were interested in getting involved were brought together as a small group in informal situations e.g. a meeting for a cup of coffee. Once relationships between this group was established, the local party then supported them in organising more informal 'get togethers' for them and their friends. Crucial throughout were local party efforts to ensure that young members were given ownership of the project and involved in their constituencies' mainstream decision making processes.

To start with the local party supplied a venue and the resources to do the phoning. Now that it is established, the Local Government Committee has agreed to finance Wolverhampton Young Labour to expand its activity across all three Wolverhampton constituencies.

Recommendations for action

- **Reaching out**

Local parties should constantly review their membership strategies to ensure they are seeking to attract a cross section of the community. As part of this process, local parties should look hard at their pattern of work to establish if they have the best possible programme for attracting members from every background.

As well as reaching out, it is important that parties keep in touch with their membership base with regular contact.

- **Using new technology**

Many local parties and elected representatives (MPs, MEPs, NEC and National Policy Forum members) now use emails to keep in touch with members. Some use email groups of, for example, branch members or GC delegates to send information on future meetings and events as well as invite comment on local policy proposals. Parties in rural areas could also consider using telephone conference calls to talk to members about particular local issues.

- **Building supporters networks**

The national party should provide support and advice in the establishment of supporters networks and consider the more formal establishment of a national programme. The party should examine the impact of supporters' networks on the current structures of the party.

- **Take stock, think ahead - what is the future pattern of local support?**

Voters are more willing to change their support than in the past. Each party should think about how this affects their local situation. What are the threats this poses and what are the opportunities?

3.3 A party at the centre of local networks

Our aim

For all local parties to be at the heart of their communities, establishing and participating in a range of networks and influencing other decision makers to bring practical support to the implementation of Labour's programme.

The challenge

It is often said that the party's structures are built on a model that would be recognised in the period of the First World War. Whilst this provides a strong base for our work, there is more to be done to ensure that we are widening our connections and providing leadership locally.

Local parties should consider what their role is in developing, sustaining and participating in informal groups that aim to share knowledge, support the participants and provide a way of discussing policy and helping with implementation. Our party is rich with practitioners, experts and people who are passionate about a subject. Yet often we do not grasp this wealth of knowledge nor utilise this resource to build, develop and implement Labour's programme.

We should encourage those with a shared interest in a policy area to join together to trade knowledge, and discuss solutions to problems. These groups should be informal, and be open to members and supporters across an appropriate geographic area.

For example, a community improvement network could bring together all those involved in the local party who have an active interest in building better communities. They could share information across a city or a rural area, meet with other community leaders and help deliver Labour values on the ground and inform local and national policy development. Another good network would be with school governors who could support each other in their vital task or a group to reach out and support regeneration. The Partnership in Power report discusses how this suggestion could be an important part of our future policy development work.

Case Studies

Like many Labour MPs, **Chatham and Aylesford MP Jonathan Shaw** seeks to ensure that he keeps in touch with local voters and community organisations including people leading key public services.

Jonathan has a local network of primary and secondary school head teachers who receive mailings on government education policies inviting comments. He also hosts an annual meeting of the school heads in his constituency providing an opportunity to discuss local impact of education policies as well as hearing the views and experiences of head teachers from the chalk face.

Southampton Labour Party led by the local MPs, John Denham and Alan Whitehead are developing a 'Port Partnership' bringing together Associated British Ports, local government and other organisations with an interest in the development of the port of Southampton. The idea is to provide a body to negotiate with government and promote the port's interests collectively. Having established the idea and held meetings to win support, the local Chamber of Commerce is now developing the project on a day-to-day basis.

Alan Johnson MP holds regular meetings with local trade union shop stewards in his constituency in Hull. These provide an opportunity to go through government priorities and policies as they impact on workers and their workplaces. More importantly, it provides a forum for shop stewards to highlight what is happening in the major local workplaces. The shop stewards feed back from these meetings to their members and ensure large numbers of people are kept informed and involved in Labour's work.

Recommendations for action**• Joining up our work**

The Partnership in Power Review recommends the establishment of local policy networks to inform the development and implementation of policy. The national party should provide support for local parties in establishing policy networks, providing a national resource and linkage to national policy making.

• Local party networks

With the support of the regional and national office, local parties should establish and support the development of local networks – sharing ideas and experiences with other CLPs.

3.4 A party at the heart of the local community

Our aim

To ensure that we remain rooted in each and every community through good relationships with other organisations, participating in their work and involving a wide range of people in our discussions.

The challenge

We need to provide help so that our members can get more involved in their community and also work to bring more local activists into the party. Building strong community links with local opinion-formers, voluntary organisations, charities, schools and other groups is one of the best ways of broadening the appeal of our party. It is through this mechanism that we can understand the needs of local communities and identify the problems that we as a party need to tackle.

Labour values are not only reflected through government action but there are lots of other places where policy is made and implemented – local councils, health trusts and police authorities. We need people with Labour values to be active in these organisations so that local communities get the services and facilities they need and deserve.

There are many ways that local parties can be active and visible in their community. Holding policy forum style events which allow you to bring together different organisations such as voluntary groups, trade unions, business and local people is one way of showing you are listening to local concerns and also a good way of building community support for your campaigns.

Another way of providing a visible Labour presence is through offering to run surgeries in community groups. For instance, a local councillor running a surgery in a Sure Start Children's Centre will be able to speak to people who traditionally might not have approached their local councillor. Furthermore, by working with the Sure Start Children's Centre in this way, it is also possible that the party will be able to build stronger links with those connected to the centre.

Case studies

In **High Peak** the local party, led by Tom Levitt MP, holds regular 'Big Conversation' style events on a range of subjects including health, anti-social behaviour and education. A recent meeting to look at local facilities for young people was attended by representatives from over 30 organisations including schools, sports clubs and local businesses.

Joan Ryan MP in Enfield North has engaged the community in discussing health issues in the constituency. She organised meetings with representatives from the hospital and the Secretary of State for Health to answer questions from local residents on the hospital and the quality of services offered to them. This helped to show that Labour was taking a lead in the community.

In Oldham, **Phil Woolas MP** has created a network of residents groups. These organisations had little contact with the Tories or the Liberal Democrats. He also created estate partnerships and links with churches. These links have enabled him to consult and speak to different groups in the community.

Recommendations for action

- **Involve the local community in your discussions**

Local parties should organise a series of 'Big Conversation' style consultation meetings on a local or national issue - inviting community groups and local residents who might have expressed an interest in this issue. Such consultation meetings should become a regular feature of your party's relationship with the community. It is also worth considering consulting with local groups and individuals on the drafting of local manifestos.

- **Keep in touch with voluntary organisations**

Constituencies will have active voluntary groups such as resident associations, church groups, neighbourhood watch associations and other groups. Local parties could consider sending these people regular mailings on the work of the local party and invite them to events.

- **Encourage your membership to get involved**

Many people would like to get involved in their local community but lack knowledge about how they can get active. For instance, local parties could use experienced members to organise events for members on how they can become a school governor and what the role involves.

3.5 A social party

Our aim

That every party member feels membership is rewarding and enjoyable in part through participation in a varied programme of social events.

The challenge

Local parties have to be inclusive and keep members motivated. It is also important that local parties have mechanisms to communicate with members who might not be able to commit as much time as the core group of activists in the constituency. And of course, membership of a political party should be enjoyable, social activity.

Many local parties already organise regular social events for members, reaching a wider membership and help turning members into activists. In planning social events, organisers should give some thought to looking after new members or long-standing members who previously have not been involved. For instance, perhaps there are a couple of members who would be happy to look after new members and introduce them to other activities.

It is also possible to merge campaigning activities with social activities. Many constituencies have regular social events after campaigning sessions such as a trip to the pub or having some food. This is a good way of building strong personal links between members and can be important in helping to motivate people to come out campaigning.

Case studies

Blaydon has a very active Women's Officer who works hard to deliver an interesting programme of activities for Blaydon Women's Forum. The forum members have enjoyed a minibus tour of Gateshead's public art installations and discussions on topical issues. Future events include visits to an art gallery and an event for women who might be interested in becoming councillors.

Vale of Glamorgan has a Sunday campaign team made up of party members from across the constituency. The team meets on Sunday mornings and leaflets in a target area for a couple of hours before going for brunch at a local café. The format of campaigning has proved popular as members can commit to a specific time limited activity and the social element enables team building.

In **Plymouth**, Usdaw members joined the telephone voter contact sessions on the same night as the quiz night at the local pub. After a couple of hours of calling, they would form a team for the quiz. Members had fun and felt a sense of teamwork, both in the election and in the quiz!

Recommendations for action

- **Plan a programme of social events**
Social events can help engage members and are also a valuable way of raising funds for campaigning. Local parties should consider at the start of the year what activities they would like to organise – perhaps a drinks party, a fundraising dinner, a trip to the theatre or a karaoke evening.
- **Use your Labour representatives**
Local parties can organise social events for members and Labour supporters outside of the party for example, through meet your MP/councillor receptions.
- **Look at how the party actually spends its time**
Meetings, committees and formal events are an important part of our work but each party should take time to reflect on the amount of time it spends on activities such as campaigning, committee meetings, social events and policy discussions so as to ensure the best balance.

3.6 A party working in partnership with local government

Our aim

Work to ensure that in every area the party has the best possible representation in local government and is supporting the partnership between Labour in national government and Labour in local government.

The challenge

We need to ensure that the party has the best possible partnership with local government. Central government does not do everything and it is important that local parties are active parts of local civil society to ensure our values are well delivered.

Of course we need to fight every seat and ensure we have a strong base in local government. But we can also help local government deliver our programme. The Labour Government has given many new powers to local authorities on issues such as anti-social behaviour and environmental crime. By working in partnership we can ensure that the new powers are used effectively and that local authorities have the right powers they need. It is also possible for local parties to engage their members in helping to drive forward the change that we need to see in our communities.

In addition, we need to ensure that local parties feel ownership and take the credit for policy decisions that have been taken. We need to encourage local parties to play a greater role in leading policy discussions in their local area and building consensus for the action that Labour is taking.

Case studies

There are many good examples of Labour councils and local parties working in partnership with government and other local agencies to implement party policy.

Following the introduction of anti social behaviour legislation in 2003, **Hastings Borough Council** appointed an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) Coordinator to oversee issues relating to anti-social behaviour and coordinate between agencies. The post was jointly funded by the council, the police and a local housing association. The police and 1066 Housing Association have since also seconded additional staff to the ASBO team.

Once the team receives a complaint, they liaise with other agencies to ensure a coordinated approach. The unit has been involved in acquiring over 15 full ASBOs in the town. They take care to point out that the ASBO 'is the end of the line' and there are many cases which have been resolved before an ASBO has been needed.

In 2004, in recognition of the work carried out by the ASBO Unit and the Safer Hastings Partnership, Hastings was awarded 'Together Action Area' status, which provided the team with extra government funding. This announcement was welcomed by the ASBO Unit, the Council and local MP, Michael Foster, who subsequently organised a 'town breakfast meeting' to highlight the work of the ASBO team.

The work of the ASBO Unit, along with the other activities of the Safer Hastings Partnership (such as the establishment of Safer Hastings TV) and the powers given to the Council to remove abandoned vehicles have helped crime in Hastings fall. There were almost 1,000 fewer victims of crime in 2003-04, compared to 2002-03. The Safer Hastings Partnership Crime Survey has shown that between 2001 and 2005 resident's fear of crime has also fallen significantly.

Durham County Council's Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative began as a response to the Urban and Rural White Papers issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2000, which led to the nationwide Sustainable Communities agenda. Working in partnership with district councils, Groundwork Trusts and other key local organisations, the scheme was launched in June 2003, with the aim of working with local people to improve the environment in towns, villages and neighbourhoods, many of which were former coalfield communities.

Over the last two years many of the county's towns and villages have seen big improvements in their streetscene including new pedestrianised areas, easier access to public transport and more modern street furniture. There have also been local projects to tackle areas of dereliction.

To date the scheme has involved 40 full partners and has attracted £12 million of match funding on top of the county council's initial £5 million.

The initiative is a very good example of councils working together with other partners to improve the environment for local people and was one of the finalists in the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Award in 2004-5.

Rhondda MP **Chris Bryant** has established an Anti-Social Behaviour Panel. The panel is made up of ordinary people and questions stakeholders on anti-social behaviour. Five meetings on different issues such as policing, drugs, young people, environment and housing have taken place and the panel has heard from a police inspector, head of youth services, senior rail manager, a representative of the local housing associations and young people themselves. After the meeting a report is produced and sent to local residents with the MP then taking forward the concerns and issues identified by the panel.

Recommendations for action

• **Policy development**

The Government consults on many issues in the form of White and Green Papers. Local parties should be involved in leading the local consultation with outside organisations and residents highlighting how government proposals will impact on the community, what more is needed and how the local party can help build a consensus for the kind of reforms that we need to see.

• **Engaging members**

Local parties could encourage members and supporters to become street watch coordinators who report anti-social behaviour, dumped rubbish, abandoned cars to local councillors. This will give local parties a record of action in the community and ensure that local members feel they have a role in helping to improve their community.

• **Local Government Forums**

Labour groups can work with Local Government Committees to hold open meetings each year which brings together senior Labour councillors, party members and residents to discuss local council issues/future plans.

Where community investment is planned for an area, Labour councillors and the local party should be at the forefront of encouraging local people to have their say and to get involved in stakeholder groups to help plan and oversee the development.

3.7 A learning party

Our aim

That across the party we have a comprehensive programme of learning to ensure we have the skills required of a modern campaigning organisation and that we are providing opportunities for party members to learn more about policy and our history.

The challenge

In a fast moving world, members get political information from huge variety of sources – including newspapers, radio, television, increasingly the internet, from peer discussions, trade unions as well as interest and lobby groups. Local communities draw on the same sources of information. It is important that amongst this plethora of information the party's voice is heard and that members and supporters are clear about how our underlying values are informing the work of the party.

Political education can help members make sense of the challenges that face us and the public policy responses required. It also helps our members make the arguments in their workplace and their communities.

We also need to be an effective party and build the skills that help us campaign, develop leaders and run open and transparent organisations. Simply coming into contact and becoming involved with a local Labour Party helps people learn new skills, broaden their horizons and take on new responsibilities. Members become more confident about developing arguments in support of Labour's approach and new opportunities are open to them. When we lack skills it damages our ability to campaign. For example, in reviewing their local campaigns in the general election, MPs have identified the need to develop local writing skills to help adapt national material to convey local messages.

The response to the Labour Academy in the last Parliament and to the regular training sessions organised by regions and head office demonstrate that there is an ongoing demand for learning and training.

The national party has a responsibility for providing leadership and resources but local parties should have a clear programme of political education for all to participate in and develop a shared responsibility for the skills and learning of local parties.

Case studies

The constituency parties in **Gwynedd** worked together to provide encouragement and support to members in difficult areas and generate responses to UK and Welsh policy documents which would fully reflect the particular circumstances of their area. They held a series of policy forums which, in addition to producing policy responses, helped regenerate the party across the area.

Great Yarmouth party modernised its meeting structures to allow for more political discussion and all-member meetings on the one hand whilst also streamlining 'bread and butter' decision making.

Bristol Labour Party have put together a syllabus for a Bristol Labour Academy aimed at training up the councillors and activists of the future. This will involve a training seminar once a month from September through to June, when, upon attendance at all of the seminars and completion of a small portfolio of evidence to show that they have understood the work, participants will graduate from the academy. The expectation in future years will be that they will need to have completed this to get onto the panel for selections. The syllabus includes seminars on basic campaigning skills, formulating message, producing printed materials, identifying local issues, community involvement, understanding the basics of local government, recruiting members and building a team of volunteers.

Recommendations for action

- **Develop a political education programme**
Each local party should have a plan on how it will develop both the skills and knowledge of its members. The plan could include formal and informal training sessions, mentoring for new campaigners, using Partnership in Power policy documents and bringing in outside speakers. An annual training and learning brochure could be provided to each member.
- **New member mentoring**
Provide new members with access to a more experienced member who can answer questions and help build up their knowledge of the party's structures and methods of campaigning.
- **Study groups**
Encourage the development of study groups which can meet informally, outside of the traditional party structures, to discuss political and current affairs issues in more depth.
- **European Forums**
Working with MEPs, establish sub-regional/cluster constituencies European Forums. Open to all members from a group of neighbouring constituencies, these could be held one or two times a year which allow members to talk through European issues and the work of your local MEP in the European Parliament.
- **Use Partnership in Power**
The party's policy development programme provides local parties with a framework for discussing and shaping party policy as well as learning about the Labour government's programme. It is also a great way to get outside speakers into the party and to engage with national politicians.

3.8 Leadership for the future

Our aim

That across the party we are putting in place the strategies to ensure that we have developed the next generation of Labour Party representatives, reflecting the communities we seek to represent.

The challenge

Local parties are the source of leadership for the next generation of political leaders – the future councillors, MSPs, AMs, MPs and MEPs - not to mention Cabinet members and Prime Ministers. At whatever level of representation, good candidates who are able to offer leadership and connect with the communities they represent are vital. Local parties play a crucial role in identifying and bringing forward people, building their confidence and skills; exposing them to the challenges and opportunities of leadership; and providing a clear and open process of selection.

Furthermore, collectively we need to ensure we have candidates that reflect modern Britain so that we can deal proactively with issues of gender balance and diversity.

Case studies

Derbyshire County Party made exceptional efforts to open up the county elections to all members and to encourage candidates by sending out a survey to members in the whole county. They were staggered by the response with a 20 per cent response rate to the survey on what issues members thought were important and which county issues they should campaign on and attracted a high number of members who hadn't previously stood for election. The county party worked closely with the majority Labour group on the county council and held several half day events for candidates to ensure that they were briefed effectively on the work of the county council to which MPs and the region's Labour MEP were also invited.

Lambeth Labour Party was concerned that black and minority ethnic party members were much less likely to be selected and elected than their white counterparts. To tackle this work the party took action with a programme of events and support for black and minority ethnic members of the party. They began by holding a social event in October 2000. Rather than a meeting with lots of speeches, the local party wished to give members a chance to be listened to and meet each other at a 'hospitality event'. The event cost around £200, not a normal party event, but this included a quality venue with refreshments and printed invitations. Over 50 people turned up attracted by the black and minority ethnic VIPs invited. It went really well, everyone had name badges and they included a number of hosts from the party so no one was left on their own in the corner. As a result of this meeting a number of key points were identified. For example:

- Shift workers had difficulty going to regular party meetings.
- Sunday 11am campaigning conflicts with family and church.
- Dates for events and meetings were needed advance in a proper calendar to arrange time off work.
- Set targets for active participation by black and minority ethnic members.
- Develop candidates for 2006 elections now.

Tamworth Labour Party recognised that trade union representatives from the local Co-op stores had not only excellent links with the local community, but also a great deal of skills and experience at representation of members, recruitment and organisation. They worked with the local official from the shopworkers union Usdaw to encourage the – mainly female – shop stewards to join the party and to consider standing for the council.

Finding leaders in the community

Whitton ward in **Waveney** is home to the Whitton estate which has suffered from a number of anti social behaviour issues. The chair of the local Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) had been a non active member of the Labour party for many years. Through her work as the Chair of the local TRA, this member worked closely with the local Labour councillors in trying to deal with the anti social behaviour issues in the area.

Working together, the TRA and the local Labour councillors have moved the area forward; ASBOs have been issued, funding has been put in place for new children's facilities and the area is now improving. Valuing the work of the TRA, one local Labour Councillor successfully nominated the Chair of the TRA for one of the Home Office's "together" awards, which she received from Home Office Minister, Hazel Blears MP.

Seeing how Labour's policies, nationally and locally were delivering for communities, the TRA chair decided to become more active in the local Labour Party standing as a local council candidate and attending annual conference as a CLP delegate, where she was called to speak about her experiences.

Recommendations for action

- **Identify, encourage and support members to become candidates**

Local parties should always be on the look out for members who would make good council and/or parliamentary candidates. Watch out for them at local party meetings, hold regular social or other informal events where all members can meet local Labour politicians (MPs, MSPs, AMs or councillors) and learn more about standing for office.

- **Set up a local shadowing scheme**

Encourage interested members to shadow a local politician giving potential candidates confidence to stand and a better awareness of what it would be like being an elected representative.

- **Use your local networks**

Identify community leaders, trade unions representatives and activists who may not be members yet but are long standing Labour supporters who may make strong council candidates - for example, a local trade union steward, someone in the local residents or tenants association, or someone on the local health trust, or someone on your school governing body.

- **Establish Ethnic Minority Forums**

Set up a local Ethnic Minority Forum to reach out to local black and minority ethnic party members and the wider ethnic community. In addition to helping you build stronger relations with your local black and Asian community, it will also help you reach another group of members who with encouragement and support would make strong Labour candidates at elections.

3.9 Building the link

Our aim

That at each level within the party we have strong links with all our affiliated unions.

The challenge

Trade unions and their members are vital to our party's organisation and are instrumental in the success of election campaigns. Trade union members bring a range of experiences at a national, regional and local level. They can reach into work places and communities in every constituency day-in day-out, recruiting new members, contributing to policy development and helping to run local campaigns.

Trade union members also play a key role in helping run local parties – in many instances combining their trade union activity in the workplace with building and maintaining a relationship with local parties.

The recent election campaign saw unions distribute over six million direct mails, sign up thousands of postal votes and provide staff and volunteers to help run the campaign.

Local parties should develop a strong dialogue with local union officers and members. Trade union liaison organisation staff (TULO) in regional networks and the national office in London can help with advice and support.

There are several ways in which local parties can help to build the link:

- Labour representatives (MPs, MEPs, councillors etc.) visiting union workplaces to meet with activists and members or addressing trade union branch meetings.
- Supporting trade union campaigns by running joint campaigns on issues of concern to the local community.
- Working on policy development by organising joint policy discussions with party and local trade union members on, for example, rights at work.

Case studies

There are many examples of trade unions working with local parties to organise policy forums for party and trade union members. **Unison** and **Amicus** have organised policy forums with their members in, for example, the health service and in companies such as Norwich Union. Trade unions also played a huge part in the Big Conversation holding workplace consultation meetings to consider policy areas affecting their members.

Amicus held a policy forum to discuss the health policy document. The policy forum was held in St Helens and Amicus worked in conjunction with the Regional Office and local constituencies to build the audience of health professionals and practitioners from the surrounding area. The majority of attendees were not party members. Baroness Margaret Wall and a Health Minister introduced the document and throughout the day workgroups considered aspects of the document and made a formal submission to the party's policy making process.

Trade union members attending a recent North West Regional Conference were invited to a Big Conversation event as part of the conference agenda. The Regional TULO was actively involved in building the audience from trade union members who were not present for the full conference and over 80 union members attended. The Big Conversation focussed on workplace related issues and was hosted by the Chair of the Party **Ian McCartney MP** with several other North West MPs and ministers participating in the discussions.

These events were outside the election period and demonstrate the close working together of the unions with the party on policy development.

Although a well organised CLP **Enfield North** faced the difficult task of defending a majority of just 2,200 and against the background losing control of the council in 2002. Joan Ryan and the CLP had run high profile

campaigning activities for two years in the build up to the general election but still required as many activists as possible on the ground if the seat was to be retained. The local party took to heart the TULO 'key seat' strategy and took on a key seat coordinator to work with them.

Two 'Meet the MP' nights were organised at the House of Commons for local trade unionists using mailshots from affiliates to trade unionists living in the constituency. More than over 10 per cent of those contacted attended the events that involved a tour of the House and a social gathering.

CLP and trade union activists 'worked' the room asking people about their local issues but also signing them up for a range of election activities. At one of the events, 80 attended, 25 volunteered, six joined the party and nine bought tickets for a CLP social event.

In total, some 40 volunteers were 'signed up' for the election. All were invited to the CLPs election training event and were regularly contacted by the key seat co-ordinator both before and during the campaign drawing them into activity and social events.

Party activists in **Elmet** worked across all wards along with excellent support and backing from local trade unions – in particular GMB, Unison, Usdaw and CWU - who provided funding and activists. The unions contacted all their local representatives with dates and times of campaign activities urging them to help. In line with the Operation. 3rd Term strategy, party and trade union members pounded the streets, knocking on doors and talking to voters. Elmet featured prominently in the Tories national plans, and local Tories believed they stood a real chance of winning. Thanks to the party and local trade unions working together, Elmet achieved a wonderful result with a swing to Labour from the Tories and an increase in their majority of nearly 500.

Recommendations for action**• Building local unions in the party's work**

Maintaining good formal and informal links with local unions is crucial. On major campaigns joint planning is vital and for smaller events, local unions can provide resources, ideas and support. Through both union nominated General Committee (GC) representatives and more informal links, parties should identify key local union activists and keep in regular contact.

• Support union work

Unions are key community bodies, supporting employees, local activists and campaigns. Many of these campaigns will be of direct interest to local party members. By supporting this work the progressive ideals of the Labour movement can be enhanced.

• Building new relationships

Unions have good links and contacts with local workplaces and can help local parties develop relationships with employees and employers. By thinking about the resources, events and materials that are appropriate to these groups, local parties can broaden their networks and pool of ideas. For example, consider what support local unions can offer in terms of Partnership in Power.

4. Summary of the recommendations for action

4.1 A campaigning party

Review your party structures

Local parties should think about their structures for organising the campaign. Is it effective or are there other structures which could work – for example, more informal task-based groups or groups that cross constituency boundaries?

Link campaigning to other areas of work to develop year round campaigning

We need to join up our work. For example, CLPs can use Partnership in Power to develop policy discussions and through this to build strong relationships with voters. There is no substitute for year round campaigning and regular communication with the electorate.

Make it local

Campaigners build up a body of local case studies which illustrate Labour's programme rather than base a campaign on national figures.

Produce an engagement strategy

Set targets for communicating and engaging with voters. Use a range of tools from 'Big Conversation' style events to surveys to reach out.

Don't become complacent

Political parties cannot assume support nor should any one in the party believe we have a right to be elected. Complacency is the enemy of good political organisation.

Build links with the nearest Labour seat

Parties without Labour MPs or other Labour representatives should build links with their nearest Labour seat. This should be a two-way relationship with the Labour MP attending and supporting events in your party and members from the non Labour seat joining campaigning activity or attending events in the Labour seat.

4.2 A broad based party

Reaching out

Local parties should constantly review their membership strategies to ensure they are seeking to attract a cross section of the community. As part of this process, local parties should look hard at their pattern of work to establish if they have the best possible programme for attracting members from every background.

As well as reaching out, it is important that parties keep in touch with their membership base with regular contact.

Using new technology

Many local parties and elected representatives (MPs, MEPs, NEC and National Policy Forum members) now use emails to keep in touch with members. Some use email groups of, for example, branch members or GC delegates to send information on future meetings and events as well as invite comment on local policy proposals.

Parties in rural areas could also consider using telephone conference calls to talk to members about particular local issues.

Building supporters networks

The national party should provide support and advice in the establishment of supporters networks and consider the more formal establishment of a national programme. The party should examine the impact of supporters networks on the current structures of the party.

Take stock, think ahead - what is the future pattern of local support?

Voters are more willing to change their support than in the past. Each party should think about how this affects their local situation. What are the threats this poses and what are the opportunities?

4.3 A party at the centre of local networks

Joining up our work

The Partnership in Power report recommends the establishment of local policy networks to inform the development and implementation of policy. The national party should provide support for local parties in establishing policy networks, providing a national resource and linkage to national policy making.

Local party networks

With the support of the regional and national office, local parties should establish and support the development of local networks – sharing ideas and experiences with other CLPs.

4.4 A party at the heart of the local community

Involve the local community in your discussions

Local parties should organise a series of 'Big Conversation' style consultation meetings on a local or national issue - inviting community groups and local residents who might have expressed an interest in this issue. Such consultation meetings should become a regular feature of your party's relationship with the community. It is also worth considering consulting with local groups and individuals on the drafting of local manifestos.

Keep in touch with voluntary organisations

Constituencies will have active voluntary groups such as resident associations, church groups, neighbourhood watch associations and other groups. Local parties could consider sending these people regular mailings on the work of the local party and invite them to events.

Encourage your membership to get involved

Many people would like to get involved in their local community but lack knowledge about how they can get active. For instance, local parties could use experienced members to organise events for members on how they can become a school governor and what the role involves.

4.5 A social party

Plan a programme of social events

Social events can help engage members and are also a valuable way of raising funds for campaigning. Local parties should consider at the start of the year what activities they would like to organise – perhaps a drinks party, a fundraising dinner, a trip to the theatre or a karaoke evening.

Use your Labour representatives

Local parties can organise social events for members and Labour supporters outside of the party, for example, through meet your MP/councillor receptions.

Look at how the party actually spends its time

Meetings, committees and formal events are an important part of our work but each party should take time to reflect on the amount of time it spends on activities such as campaigning, committee meetings, social events and policy discussions so as to ensure the best balance.

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Policy development

The Government consults on many issues in the form of White and Green Papers. Local parties should be involved in leading the local consultation with outside organisations and residents highlighting how government proposals will impact on the community, what more is needed and how the local party can help build a consensus for the kind of reforms that we need to see.

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Labour groups can work with Local Government Committees to hold open meetings each year which brings together senior Labour councillors, party members and residents to discuss local council issues/future plans.

Where community investment is planned for an area, Labour councillors and the local party should be at the forefront of encouraging local people to have their say and to get involved in stakeholder groups to help plan and oversee the development.

4.7 A learning party

Develop a political education programme

Each local party should have a plan on how it will develop both the skills and knowledge of its members. The plan could include formal and informal training sessions, mentoring for new campaigners, using Partnership in Power policy documents and bringing in outside speakers. An annual training and learning brochure could be provided to each member.

New member mentoring

Provide new members with access to a more experienced member who can answer questions and help build up their knowledge of the party's structures and methods of campaigning.

Study groups

Encourage the development of study groups which can meet informally, outside of the traditional party structures, to discuss political and current affairs issues in more depth.

European Forums

Working with MEPs, establish sub-regional/cluster constituencies European Forums. Open to all members from a group of neighbouring constituencies, these could be held one or two times a year which allow members to talk through European issues and the work of your local MEP in the European Parliament.

Use Partnership in Power

The party's policy development programme provides local parties with a framework for discussing and shaping party policy as well as learning about the Labour government's programme. It is also a great way to get outside speakers into the party and to engage with national politicians.

4.8 Leadership for the future

Identify, encourage and support members to become candidates

Local parties should always be on the look out for members who would make good council and/or parliamentary candidates. Watch out for them at local party meetings, hold regular social or other informal events where all members can meet local Labour politicians (MPs, MSPs, AMs or councillors) and learn more about standing for office.

Set up a local shadowing scheme

Encourage interested members to shadow a local politician giving potential candidates confidence to stand and a better awareness of what it would be like being an elected representative.

Use your local networks

Identify community leaders, trade unions representatives and activists who may not be members yet but are long standing Labour supporters who may make strong council candidates - for example, a local trade union steward, someone in the local residents or tenants association, or someone on the local health trust, or someone on your school governing body.

Establish Ethnic Minority Forums

Set up a local Ethnic Minority Forum to reach out to local black and minority ethnic party members and the wider ethnic community. In addition to helping you build stronger relations with your local black and Asian community, it will also help you reach another group of members who with encouragement and support would make strong Labour candidates at elections.

4.9 Building the link

Building local unions in the party's work

Maintaining good formal and informal links with local unions is crucial. On major campaigns joint planning is vital and for smaller events, local unions can provide resources, ideas and support. Through both union nominated General Committee (GC) representatives and more informal links, parties should identify key local union activists and keep in regular contact.

Support union work

Unions are key community bodies, supporting employees, local activists and campaigns. Many of these campaigns will be of direct interest to local party members. By supporting this work the progressive ideals of the Labour movement can be enhanced.

Building new relationships

Unions have good links and contacts with local workplaces and can help local parties develop relationships with employees and employers. By thinking about the resources, events and materials that are appropriate to these groups, local parties can broaden their networks and pool of ideas. For example, consider what support local unions can offer in terms of Partnership in Power.

5. Next steps

This report outlines the issues and challenges facing the party as we seek to organise and campaign in new ways in the 21st century.

Already many local parties have changed the way they organise so that they spend less time on bureaucracy and can involve more members in everything that the party does. Many have worked directly with or alongside the MP and councillors to better engage with their local communities.

To further progress the ideas and the recommendations for action highlighted in this report, local parties and affiliates are encouraged to:

1. Think and plan

Discuss issues raised in this report with members and at local party meetings. Can some of the recommendations for action be taken on board by your local party?

Managing change in any organisation is difficult but you can get advice and support from your regional offices.

However, don't underestimate the importance of the leadership local party officers provide to introduce change. The more interesting and innovative examples of new ways of organising and campaigning we received was clearly due to the leadership of a group of local members who wanted to look at 'smarter' ways of working.

2. Tell us what you are doing

Through out the consultation, it was clear that many local parties have been successfully working in new ways. But we don't always share these examples of good practice with other local parties

If your party has done something particularly innovative which worked well and it would be useful to share with other parties, please send in the details to:

Party Development
The Labour Party
16 Old Queen Street
London SW1H 9HP

3. Members interested in local networks

Many party members are school governors, members of Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities, serve as magistrates and/or are involved in local residents/tenants associations.

Local parties can start collecting information about members who will be interested in these local networks.

4. Review progress

The NEC will review progress on this report over the coming months ensuring that local parties are moving forward and that barriers to implementation are removed.

