

FABIAN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

AGENDA

Saturday 18 November 2023, 4.15pm, Central Hall, Edinburgh

Chair: Lord Roy Kennedy

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the 2022 AGM
3. Matters arising
4. In memoriam
5. Chair's report
6. General secretary's report
7. Reports from Fabian sections
8. Treasurer's report
9. Approval of annual report 2022/23
10. Appointment of auditors
11. Election of new vice presidents
12. Jenny Jeger prize for writing
13. Date of next AGM
14. Any other business

MINUTES OF THE FABIAN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

Saturday 19 November 2022, 3.30pm, London

Present: Martin Edobor (chair), Lord Roy Kennedy (treasurer) and around 60 members of the society

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from a number of members, including executive committee members Sancha Alasia, Thom Brooks, Emily Brothers, Anneliese Dodds MP, Catherine Fookes, Tom Gardiner, Kate Green MP, Zach Griffiths, Seema Malhotra MP, Wes Streeting MP.

2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were approved.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. In memoriam

A moment of silence was observed in memory of those Fabian Society members who had passed away over the last year. Fabian Society chair Martin Edobor paid tribute in particular to (Lord) Giles Radice, former chair of the society and author of noted Fabian publications.

5. Chair's report

Martin Edobor presented his report, reflecting on the turbulent political environment of the last year but also the renewed sense of purpose and optimism across the labour movement. The Fabian Society had been working hard to support the Labour party by developing evidence-based policies. Martin highlighted some of the achievements of the year, including the successful New Year conference and some of the key research reports and publications. He also reflected on the work carried out by the Scottish and Welsh Fabians, strengthening relationships with politicians in the devolved nations. He thanked Fabian staff for their work over the

past year and finished by stressing that the society had a huge role to play as the intellectual heart of the movement in the run-up to the next election, advancing progressive policies to support the party.

6. General secretary's report

Andrew Harrop began his report by thanking chair Martin Edobor and the rest of the executive committee, many of who could not be present because of the change of date of the AGM. He then outlined the successful programme of work over the Fabian Year (from July 2021 to June 2022), starting with the pamphlet authored by Labour leader Keir Starmer which set out his vision and showed the strong relationship between Labour's top team and the Fabian Society. Andrew highlighted how Fabian policies were now being adopted as Labour policy, in particular recommendations from the Commission on Workers and Technology and the proposals for digital inclusion. He also pointed to the successful events programme, including the hybrid New Year conference, last year's Northern conference and AGM with Rachel Reeves as keynote speaker and the series of policy seminars run in partnership with the Labour party. Andrew pointed to recent research and publications and forthcoming work including the Commission on Poverty and Regional Inequality.

The report was followed by member questions. In response to a question on whether any work had been done on falling Labour membership, Andrew pointed to research on member diversity which had covered concerns of party members on areas including antisemitism, islamophobia and disability rather than internal party democracy. He stressed the Fabian Society's commitment to open and respectful debate. In response to a question on local societies, he said there were fewer active local societies than before the pandemic but that the national society was

committed to supporting volunteers to set up and maintain local societies. There was a suggestion that a database of speakers should be established which might help provide contributors for both national and local events which Andrew said would be investigated.

7. Reports from Fabian Society sections

Young Fabians

Laura Cunliffe-Hall reported on a busy and successful year for the Young Fabians. There had been some 120 events, and a number of publications, including Anticipations magazine as well as a packed blog programme. The Young Fabians had worked hard to support candidates for elected office and the under-19s advocacy group had also had a successful inaugural year. Laura thanked all those involved in making the Young Fabians such a thriving part of the society.

Fabian Women's Network

FWN secretary Liz Hind presented the FWN report, beginning by highlighting the 10th anniversary of the mentoring programme which has now supported hundreds of women to take an active role in political life. Many had now been elected to political office. Liz also reported on FWN's policy work, particularly its women and justice project published this year.

Scottish Fabian, Welsh Fabians, local societies, policy groups

Written reports from other sections in the annual report were noted.

8. Treasurer's report

Roy Kennedy paid tribute to staff, particularly outgoing finance and operation manager John Rafferty, as well as to executive committee members. He said the outlook was good for Labour but we could not be complacent and the Fabian Society was well-placed to support the party to get into government. He reported on the financial statement outlined in the annual report, thanking donors and stressing the financial transparency of the society,

which had been recognised in a recent Open Democracy report. Roy said in the current cost of living crisis, the society needed to live within its means and would be increasing subscription costs by less than the rate of inflation.

9. Approval of annual report 2021/22

The report was approved.

10. Appointment of auditors

Roy Kennedy proposed that Knox Cropper be reappointed as the society's auditors and this was agreed by the AGM.

11. Motions – rule changes

Laura Cunliffe-Hall proposed the following rule change on behalf of the executive committee:

Rule 15 - replace: "The concession rate for under-23s, students, low-income pensioners and people receiving out of work benefits shall be" with "The concession rate for members who have not reached their 26th birthday, students, low-income pensioners and people living in households with no earnings or low earnings shall be".

Laura said this change would encourage continued youth involvement in the society. The motion were seconded and carried.

Martin Edobor proposed the following rule changes on behalf of the executive committee:

Rule 9 - Replace the first paragraph with:

The executive committee shall be elected as provided in rule 12 and comprise:

- (a) the honorary treasurer
- (b) six ordinary members;
- (c) four members who shall be Westminster politicians,
- (d) four members who shall be non-Westminster politicians
- (e) one member elected to represent and convene local Fabian societies
- (f) one member who shall be appointed by the Scottish Fabians executive and one member

appointed by the Welsh Fabians executive (subject to the provisions of rule 12);
(g) one member who shall be an employee of the society and who shall be elected to hold office for one year by the employees excluding the general secretary and deputy general secretary who may neither stand nor vote;
(h) one member who shall be appointed by the Young Fabian executive;
(i) one member who shall be appointed by the Fabian Women's Network executive;
(j) members co-opted by the executive committee provided that the membership of the committee does not at any time exceed 22 in number.

Rule 12 - Replace the first two paragraphs with: Before every second annual meeting (in odd-numbered years), the society shall elect by ballot the following positions, to hold office for two years:

(a) an honorary treasurer
(b) six ordinary members of the executive committee
(c) four Westminster politicians
(d) four non-Westminster politicians
Nominations for these shall be invited from national members and fully paid-up members of local societies whose names have been received one month before voting commences. At least two of the ordinary members elected shall be under 31 years of age on the date of the forthcoming annual general meetings, provided that two such members are duly nominated. If only one such member is duly nominated, that member shall be elected. The category of Westminster politicians shall consist of members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. Members eligible to stand in this category are ineligible to stand as ordinary members of the committee. The category of non-Westminster politicians shall consist of one elected Scottish politician, one elected Welsh politician, one elected English politician and one elected local government councillor (who shall represent and convene members of the society who are councillors)

The society shall also elect by ballot one member of the executive committee to represent and convene local societies. All full members of the society shall be entitled to vote. Nominations for this section shall be limited to currently affiliated local societies. Each candidate must be nominated by a local society which has satisfied itself that the candidate is an active member of that society. The member elected shall not be a Westminster politician.

Add a new final sentence: The maximum duration of membership of the committee shall be eight consecutive years.

Martin said the rule changes would strengthen links with the devolved nations and elected politicians in local and regional government and, in the case of term length, would bring the society into line with governance best practice. The motions were seconded and carried.

12. Jenny Jeger prize for writing

Andrew Harrop announced the winners:

Full-length report:

1st prize: New Arrivals, Thom Brooks

2nd prize: Bridging the Divide, Josh Abey

Shorter writing:

1st prize: Primary Concerns, Anne Longfield (chapter in the Prescription for Fairness pamphlet)

2nd prize: Mutual Aid, Olly Durose (Fabian Review article)

Writing by an author under 31:

1st prize: the 60th anniversary project edited by Milo Barnett and Hollie Wickens

2nd prize: The essay Socialist Imperialism and the Fabian Colonial Bureau, Ciaran Garcha

13. Date of next AGM

Saturday 4 November 2023, in a location outside London

14. Any other business

None