

Labour East Conference 2020 (postponed from 2019) – CLP Delegate report

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I attended the Labour East Conference 2020 as a CLP Delegate for South East Cambs Labour Party. The Conference took place on Saturday 22nd February and Sunday 23rd February. I could only be there on the Saturday so missed the motions ballot on the Sunday.

General Election analysis

After an opening speech by Mohammed Yasin, MP for Bedford, and various administrative announcements, there was an analysis of the election with Rachel Hopkins MP (Luton South), Sandy Martin (former Ipswich MP), Ashley Dalton (PPC for RSE in 2017 and 2019) and Max Holloway (Campaign Organizer in Welwyn Hatfield).

It was a good discussion with Rachel talking about the value of strong organising with large teams through WhatsApp groups, offering roles to everyone who wanted to be involved and tailored to their strengths and level of engagement in the campaign.

Sandy talked about the cynical Conservative campaign and poor-quality media coverage, building on his post-election speech, and controversially commented that there is a lot of racism in the country, and that this racism was exploited in the campaign. See his post-election speech for a flavour of what he said:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-suffolk-50778921/election-results-2019-ex-labour-ipswich-mp-sandy-martin-takes-aim-at-lies>

Max talked about the importance of community campaigns in between elections while Ashley talked about how “forensic” targeting of campaign messages online is essential to success.

It was a lively and passionate discussion and the panellists cordially disagreed at times.

Training session: Welcoming new members

Suggestions included:

- Have a welcome team (don't just leave it to a few people)
- Use post code groups
- Visit and phone new members within the first month of their membership
- Celebrate members' one-year membership anniversary

Fringe session: Digital community organising

A really good session on making campaign videos. Introduction to some software and best practices, including the importance of scripting, subtitling, using music, length and grabbing the audience within the first 1.7 seconds of the video.

Leadership hustings

Quite interesting. All three candidates answered questions competently although it was a fairly dry session. Rebecca Long Bailey was quite passionate and got some cheers at one point when discussing policy, Keir Starmer was fairly articulate but didn't say much of substance while Lisa Nandy came over as funny and sincere and talked a lot about towns. We didn't learn anything new from any of the candidates.

Europe report

Alex Mayer gave a moving account of her last few years in the European Parliament as well as the value of our membership of the EU and how it has helped preserved peace in Europe.

Deputy leadership hustings

More interesting and entertaining than the leadership hustings. All candidates spoke articulately. Ian Murray positioned himself as the anti-Corbyn candidate and also stressed the need to win seats in Scotland. Dawn Butler was very funny and lively and ran over the one-minute allocated on every answer – the chair had to be quite firm! She stressed the CORED strategy (Campaign, Organise, Recruit, Educate, Discipline) which is part of her “plan to win” and reminded the audience that she was the only candidate to have served in government. Dr Rosena Allin-Khan came over as passionate and really nice, highlighting her mixed-race heritage and stressing her credentials as an NHS doctor. Angela Rayner was unusually quiet but performed competently. Richard Burgon stressed the importance of empowering the membership and on policy questions have his own position but said it should be up to members to decide what became policy through Conference. We got a real sense of the personality of each candidate.

See next pages for photos.







