The January NEC meeting covered a range of different areas including the General Election Campaign, local government, international politics, Europe and Wales, as well as reports from the Deputy Leader and General Secretary. Our NEC report focuses on the topics and discussions most relevant to local government.

Local government conference

This year’s local government conference takes place 7 February at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham. Over 200 delegates have registered and speakers include members of the Shadow Cabinet, Councillors from across the country and prominent members from across the Labour movement.

Councillors at the recent LGA meeting made it clear that while they are looking forward to hearing from members of the Shadow Cabinet, they also hope the conference will be a forum for the Shadow Cabinet to listen to Councillors. The conference is also an important opportunity for Labour to discuss and set out its vision for devolution.

Individual Electoral Registration

Individual registration has had a major impact on the number of people on this year’s electoral register. There was a lot of discussion about this at the NEC and a lot of concern that groups such as young people, tenants in the private rented sector, students and BAME communities were particularly effective. The LGA Labour Group is sharing best practice between Labour councils of how our councils are attempting to address this shortfall. The NEC also considered how local parties, trade unions, community groups and national pressure groups could work together to register more voters and enable more people to take part in the democratic process.

Regional Cabinet

The NEC noted that in September Ed Miliband announced that the next Labour Government would establish a Regional Cabinet to drive forward Labour’s devolution agenda. The inaugural meeting of the Shadow Regional Cabinet was held in Manchester in the autumn to establish what its remit would be. The second meeting will be taking place in the next few weeks and will set out more detail on the devolution agenda.

Labour’s manifesto for women

There was a lot of discussion at the NEC about the Labour Party’s manifesto for women, which will set out what the next Labour Government will do to make life better for women. These commitments will be underpinned by examples from councils of how Labour in local government is already delivering on these important agendas. Harriet Harman will be travelling around the country with Councillors, MPs, PPCs, community groups, trade
unions and members of the wider Labour movement. For more information, including how to get involved, please visit www.labourwomen.org.uk

**Local Government Funding**

There was a significant and constructive discussion about local government funding. Council budgets have faced significant cuts under the Conservative-led government. By 2016 many Councils will have half the money we had in 2010 to provide a wide range of vital services to our communities. This includes money for schools, libraries, fostering and adoption services, child protection, public health, community safety, and social care, as well as street cleaning, bin collections and the rest. We made it clear that the central government funding cuts to local government are unsustainable and put vulnerable people at risk. We were clear that the next Labour government must deliver fairer funding for local government to protect vital public services. We were grateful to receive support from so many NEC colleagues, who recognise this and support our position.

The NEC also noted that despite having to set challenging budgets, Council’s across the country are delivering projects on the ground which are making a real and positive difference to people’s lives as highlighted by the recent 50 Achievements publication.

**General NEC Discussions**

We asked the following questions during general discussions on campaigning and the general election:

- In terms of general election, what role does devolution in England have in Labour’s vision for Britain?

- How do you plan to grow Labour Party membership and engage existing members, particularly outside London? Are they targets for this and can the NEC please see these targets?

- In addition to traditional campaigning, what role do you see community organising having in the 2015 General election and future elections?

- We also sort a clear commitment that any Labour Government formed in 2015 would not introduce proportion representation for Council elections in England.

**Questions**

If you have any questions for us please get in touch with us via email at jim@jimmcmahon.co.uk and alicepperryuk@gmail.com. You can also follow us on twitter at @CllrJimMcMahon and @AlicePerryUK.