

Momentum Democracy.

1. Introduction

- i. This document is an attempt to find a consensus among Momentum members in response to a recent decision of the National Committee to recommend a delegate decision-making Conference rather than a more consultative process with online (OMOV) voting favoured by at least some of Momentum's founders (e.g., Jon Lansman).
- ii. Any discussion about democratic structures is likely to be divisive unless there is first of all a debate and agreement about the scope and objectives of Momentum itself. Without this there is a real risk that people coming to the table with very different assumptions about what a 'democratic structure for Momentum' is trying to achieve.
- iii. Most members agree that Momentum structures and decision-making processes should be democratic, inclusive, and transparent. This statement, sets out proposals for
 - a. what the objectives of Momentum should be;
 - b. the relationship between Momentum and the Labour Party,
 - c. the relationship between Momentum locally and nationally and
 - d. a proposal for the democratic structure of Momentum.
- iv. The intention of this document is to facilitate a discussion and agreement by Momentum members that can then be taken to the Momentum national conference in February.

2. The objectives of Momentum.

- i. The key objectives for Momentum are proposed to be:
 - a. To build widespread public support and win ***the next general election*** for a transformational Labour government, led by Corbyn and McDonnell.
 - b. To rebuild democracy within the Labour Party so that members can fully engage and participate in policy-making and decisions such that elected representatives, staff, and appointees of the Labour Party, are accountable to, and representative of, the membership.
 - c. To ensure that a Corbyn led Labour government has both the internal support within the Labour Party and the widespread public support it will need to implement a transformational and socialist policy programme, challenging entrenched and powerful media and financial interests.
- ii. These objectives cannot be taken separately. Each is an essential component of our underlying goal (c. cannot be achieved without both a. and b.).

3. The relationship between the Labour Party and Momentum.

- i. When all of the objectives above are addressed, Momentum will no longer be necessary. In this sense, Momentum should itself be a *temporary, transitional* movement focussed on transforming the Labour Party into a grassroots, deeply democratic, socialist party. It would be a party that builds alignment/solidarity and unity across a wide social movement - trade

unions, activist groups etc. - and transforms public opinion to go beyond the neoliberal, austerity narrative and gets the public to support policies that work in the public vs billionaire interest.

- ii. To be clear: if we are not able to build a democratic, campaigning *Labour Party*, we cannot build a progressive transformational government. Momentum is not a party-within-a-party nor should it be a faction within the Labour Party. It is not, and should not try to be, the prototype of a new party that will step forward if Corbyn fails. We should be very clear about this. Momentum does not need, and does not want to have, its own political platform or programme. The commitment to transforming the Labour Party cannot be a half-hearted one. We have to commit 100% to the objectives we have set out.
- iii. Momentum needs to be light on its feet, able to respond fast to events and able to adapt quickly to build campaigns, raise public awareness, mobilise support for elections and Labour policies - at the local and national level. It absolutely should not be developing an alternative party structure to the Labour Party - that route will only undermine the ability to democratise the Labour Party and to achieve the objectives above.
- iv. Achieving the goals of Momentum will involve vigorous debate about ideas and policies. There are bound to be different views about what a 'transformational government' will look like; what measures it would need to take. There will be debates about the policies to campaign on; and ideas to be developed that can feed into Labour Party policy making (nationally and locally), raising public awareness of progressive policy alternatives.
- v. All this is quite different from developing alternative party structures and policies. Momentum can be a thinking organisation while focussed on engagement and winning campaigns. Momentum should continue to be a place where people can feel that they are not alone, learn how to engage with and support a socialist policy agenda, roll up their sleeves and get involved with building an effective, democratic Labour Party and a wider social movement.
- vi. Momentum was born from the enthusiasm and energy of Jeremy Corbyn's first leadership campaign. As such, Momentum has a key relationship with the Labour leadership – in terms of driving campaigns in support of the leadership and providing an arena where policies and ideas supporting a transformational Labour government can be developed, discussed and shared.
- vii. Momentum is not a policy making body, nor should it become a Labour Party faction or caucus. Instead Momentum should encourage and support members to develop progressive ideas supporting a transformational Labour government, working within every level of the Labour party to discuss and develop support for these ideas and use the Labour party policy making mechanisms to develop ideas into policy - agreed by the majority of Labour members.

4. The relationship between Momentum locally (groups) and Momentum Nationally (National Committee / Steering Group)

- i. Momentum has to respond to two, sometimes competing, concerns. First, to democratise the Labour Party and win public support, we need local campaigns, activism and engagement (with the Labour party and with our local communities) like we've not seen for decades. At the same time we need to respond fast to national events - a general election, a

leadership campaign etc. The former requires lots of local organisation. The latter requires significant national coordination.

- ii. We need discussion on how we can best achieve the most effective balance of local vs national responsibilities in order to establish an ability to optimise to both. Democratic structures are not an end in their own right. We need structures and processes that allow effective local ownership as well as fast national mobilisation. Any effective decision-making process or structures need to reflect and address these needs.
- iii. In a socialist organisation, democracy should start with members and on the basis that all members are equal and should be able to participate equally. We should give as much autonomy to local groups (and liberation strands – LGBT+, BAME, Disabled) as possible. Local groups should own their own data, their own finance and take responsibility for their own organisation within an agreed code of governance (covering principals of inclusion/representation/organisational ethics) and the shared objectives. Each local group should principally be focussed on achieving the agreed objectives within a given geographical area. Each liberation group should principally be focussed on achieving the agreed objectives with respect to support, engagement and campaigns relevant to their respective memberships.

5. Democratic Structure For Momentum

- i. At present there is a National Committee with representatives from a range of affiliated organisations (principally local groups and liberation strands), and the National Committee elects a Steering Group, which has oversight of the national operations and decisions made by Momentum staff.
- ii. Momentum has been very successful in its first 12 months – leading the campaigns that have won the latest leadership election, the NEC constituency representative elections, mobilising volunteers to support and win many council by-elections (and mayoral campaigns), parliamentary campaigns (e.g. Oldham) and continuing to build support for the Labour leadership as evidenced by the increasing membership of the Labour party despite continuous attacks by the mainstream media.
- iii. It should be noted that these successes were a result of local group organisation and campaigns run nationally (agreed by the Momentum steering group). There is no evidence that the national committee has had any impact at all on the success of Momentum in the last 12 months.
- iv. The affiliated structure of Momentum is cumbersome and suspect that there is overlapping membership between organisational affiliates, and considerable variation in what each actually represents. A simple membership organisation would be preferable. And if there was a membership rather than affiliate structure there need only be one national body – which we refer to as ‘Momentum National’.
- v. Momentum National should be as simple as possible and have a clearly defined scope – specifically to provide coordination and infrastructure support (e.g. IT, PR, Training) for local groups, providing liaison with the Labour leadership, maintaining the Momentum “brand”, organising for elections nationally (e.g. for NEC and conference delegate positions) and organising national campaigns (e.g. leadership election).

- vi. As a coordinating (vs policy making) body, Momentum National should consist of a relatively small number (e.g. 16) of elected members – elected by the Momentum membership in a simple one-person-one-vote election. To ensure diversity of representation the Momentum national members should include at least one member self-identifying from each liberation strand.
- vii. Momentum National should maintain the essential protocol by which any local group can claim to be “Momentum”. Specifically for a local group (or liberation strand) to be part of Momentum this protocol should require:
 - Agreement with Momentum objectives
 - Compliance with an agreed code of governance.
 - Payment of an affiliation fee proportional to the number of members of the group. This fee would typically represent a percentage of the membership subscription fee.
- viii. The case for a regional tier of organisation with a democratically elected decision-making body has not been made and there is no need for an additional level of bureaucracy in this respect. Momentum members in areas where there is no local group will (as now) need to be supported by the nearest established group. A flat network of local groups with as much autonomy as possible is much more likely to lead to effective engagement and re-democratisation of the Labour Party.
- ix. Finally, we think there should be a real sense of urgency for what we are trying to achieve. We need to rebuild democracy within the Labour Party within 3-5 years. Maybe less. This cannot be a 20 year objective and needs pop-up/adaptable structures and processes that allow us to respond fast and imaginatively to events. A large and complex bureaucracy will kill our ability to achieve this.