

Constitution of Brighton People's Assembly Against Austerity

1. Name of organisation

The name of the organisation shall be Brighton People's Assembly Against Austerity

2. Aims

Introduction

We do not accept the government's case for austerity. We oppose cuts to public services, social security and the NHS and we support the development of an alternative economic policy for a sustainable future that is fair for all.

Austerity does not work: it is a failure in its own terms, resulting in neither deficit reduction nor job creation.

Austerity is not fair: the government takes money from the pockets of those who did not cause the crisis and rewards those who did.

Austerity is undemocratic: at the last election no party was given a mandate to make massive cuts to the welfare state and impose privatisation on the NHS.

Our aims

The People's Assembly will promote debate and discussion on alternatives to the austerity agenda.

We want a tax system that shares the UK's wealth more fairly, instead of slashing benefits and squeezing the incomes of working people.

We want decent public services available to all those in need, instead of handing our public services to multinational corporations out to make a profit.

We want to fund decent public health care, housing, transport and pensions, instead of spending billions on Trident and other weapons of mass destruction

We need work that pays a living wage and contributes to a sustainable future for our planet, instead of insecure and badly paid jobs

We aim to listen to each other and rebuild a sense of unity and community, instead of blaming the poor, sick and disabled people.

Here in Brighton & Hove, we will stand alongside all those people and organisations resisting austerity. We will offer practical support and work with other groups, in order to strengthen our collective voice. We will counter the pro-austerity myths of the media and the mainstream politicians. We welcome all those who support these aims into a broad and united movement of resistance to austerity.

3. Members

Membership of the People's Assembly is open to anyone who lives or works in Brighton & Hove and surrounding areas, and who agrees with the aims of the group.

Members may join by putting their name to a statement in support of the aims.

There will be no fee to become a member.

The Administration group will maintain a list of members and will send regular updates to members by email.

Members may leave the group at any time, by contacting the Administration group and asking to be removed from the membership list.

4. Equality and Diversity

The People's Assembly will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexuality, disability, marital status, age or religious or political belief compatible with our aims.

The People's Assembly will celebrate diversity, be people-friendly and promote respect, understanding and inclusive behaviour.

5. Structure and Administration

Decisions about the policy and direction of the People's Assembly will be made by the monthly general meeting.

Working groups will be formed to implement projects and plans agreed at the general meeting. Each working group will report back regularly to the general meeting.

Officers

A Treasurer and Secretary will be elected at the Annual General Meeting. If either officer steps down during the year, a replacement will be elected at the next general meeting.

The Secretary and Treasurer will be authorised to sign documents and enter into agreements on behalf of the People's Assembly. The Secretary and Treasurer will attend meetings of the Administration working group regularly and will be guided and supported by other members of the working group, and by decisions made at general meetings.

Administration working group

There will be an Administration working group, which will be responsible for

- planning and organising general meetings
- supporting the Treasurer to keep the finances in order
- maintaining the membership list
- communicating with members

The Administration group will meet monthly. Administration group meetings will be open to any member of the People's Assembly.

6. General meetings

There will be a general meeting of the People's Assembly at least every six weeks. All members will be notified of the date, time and venue of each meeting by email, at least one week in advance of the meeting.

The quorum for general meetings (including the Annual General Meeting) will be 15 people, or 10% of the membership, whichever is the smaller number.

Chairing and minute taking

The roles of chair and minute-taker will be taken by volunteers at each meeting. Wherever possible, these volunteers will be decided at the previous meeting. The Administration group will support the chair or co-chairs of each general meeting to draw up an agenda and plan the meeting beforehand.

Minutes of each general meeting will be circulated to all members within one week of the meeting.

Decisions

Decisions will be made by consensus. In the event that consensus agreement cannot be reached on a particular issue, a decision will be made by majority vote.

Annual General Meeting

An Annual General Meeting will be held each year, within 15 months of the previous AGM (or within 15 months of the meeting at which this constitution was adopted).

All members will be given at least two weeks' notice of the Annual General Meeting, by email.

The Annual General Meeting will elect a Treasurer and Secretary for the coming year, approve the annual accounts and consider any proposed amendments to the constitution.

7. Finances

Records of income and expenditure will be kept by the Treasurer, with support from the Administration group. The Treasurer or another member of the Administration group will bring a financial report to each general meeting. A statement of annual accounts will be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

A bank account will be held in the name of Brighton People's Assembly at a bank agreed by a general meeting.

There will be four bank account signatories, including the Treasurer and Secretary.

Two signatories will sign each cheque.

Any member who wants to spend money on behalf of the People's Assembly needs prior agreement from the Administration group (for spending up to £50) or from a general meeting (for spending over £50).

8. Changes to the constitution

Amendments to the constitution may only be made at the Annual General Meeting.

Any member may propose an amendment to the constitution by submitting it to the Administration group at least ten days in advance of the meeting. Proposed amendments must be circulated to all members at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Amendments to the constitution require a two-thirds majority of the members present at the meeting.

9. Dissolution

If a meeting, by simple majority, decides that it is necessary to close down the group it may call a Special General Meeting to do so. The sole business of this meeting will be to dissolve the group.

If it is agreed to dissolve the group all remaining money and other assets, once outstanding debts have been paid, will be donated to the Brighton & Hove Trades Union Council.