

# LIBERTY

March 2020

Dear Liberty Member,

## **POSTPONEMENT OF AGM AND POLICY COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

As a result of the current public health emergency relating to Coronavirus (Covid 19) we have decided to postpone the AGM until it is safe, sensible and practicable to hold it. The enclosed emergency protocol drawn up by the Liberty Executive Committee, and approved by the Policy Council, sets out our reasoning and proposals in more detail.

Our constitution requires us to hold an AGM at least every 15 months. There is no provision to cover events beyond our control.

We have considered various options including a 'bare bones' meeting with minimal attendance and some form of 'virtual' meeting. The former would be most unsatisfactory and could not in all honesty be deemed to be a properly constituted AGM and the latter presents insurmountable practical problems. In reality this probably means that no AGM can be held this calendar year. Although this would be in breach of our constitutional requirements, the safety of our members, our staff and the wider population more generally must be our first and overriding concern.

For a membership organisation such as ours, the AGM is an important and integral part of our vital work. We do not take this decision lightly and will keep it under constant review.

Unfortunately we will also be deferring the elections to the Policy Council. These are conducted by postal ballot and we have members who are unable to get to a post box in the current circumstances. We hope to hold the elections in the summer and will be in touch as soon as we can to confirm the details. In the meantime the terms of current Policy Council and Executive Committee members will be extended until such time that an election can take place.

In order to conduct the key items of business that the AGM would have conducted, the Executive Committee has decided that it will – exceptionally – vest in the Policy Council the power to appoint financial auditors, elect a new member of the Conference and Appeals Committee and vote on policy motions. These business matters need to take place so as to limit disruption to Liberty's work. This business will take place virtually

(continued overleaf)

at the June 2020 Policy Council meeting and we will update members on its outcome. Policy motions that are passed by Council will be subject to retrospective ratification at the AGM when it is convened.

Liberty staff are now all working from home and will do so for the foreseeable future. We have ensured that, despite the office being closed, our vital work can continue with minimal disruption – in times of crisis human rights are more important than ever and the Liberty team are working around the clock to demand a rights-based response to the pandemic.

I wish you and your loved ones well during these unsettling times.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonali". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Sonali Naik QC  
Chair, Liberty Executive Committee