Leadership Elections: Labour Party

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This note outlines the rules under which leadership elections are conducted by the Labour Party and gives details of previous leadership contests.

Contents

A. Leadership election rules

The rules for the election of a leader of the Labour Party are set out in the *Labour Party Rule Book 2004*.[1] They specify:

> 4B.2   Election of leader and deputy leader

> 4B.2a   The leader and deputy shall be elected separately in accordance with rule 4B.2c below, unless 4B.2e applies.

> 4B.2b   Nomination

> > (i)   In the case of a vacancy for leader or deputy leader, each nomination must be supported by 12.5 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP (*Parliamentary Labour Party*). Nominations not attaining this threshold shall be null and void.

> > (ii)   Where there is no vacancy, nominations shall be sought each year prior to the annual session of party conference. In this case any nomination must be supported by 20 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP. Nominations not attaining this threshold shall be null and void.

> > (iii)   Affiliated organisations, CLPs (*Constituency Labour Party*) and Labour Members of the European Parliament may also nominate for each of the offices of leader and deputy leader. All nominees must be Commons members of the PLP.

> > (iv)   Nominees shall inform the General Secretary in writing of the acceptance or otherwise of their nomination at least two clear weeks before the commencement of the procedures for voting laid out in 4B.2c. Unless written consent of nomination is received, nominations shall be rendered null and void.

> > (v)   Valid nominations shall be printed in the final agenda for party conference, together with the names of the nominating organisations and Commons members of the PLP supporting the nominations. In the case of a vacancy under 4B.2e this information shall be included with the documentation circulated with any ballot.

> > (vi)   Nominees who do not attend the relevant party conference shall be deemed to have withdrawn their nominations, unless they send to the secretary - on or before the day on which the conference opens – an explanation in writing of their absence satisfactory to the CAC (*Conference Arrangements Committee*).

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[1]   *Labour Party Rule Book 2004*, pp 4-1 to 4-2

4B.2c Voting

(i)   Voting in the election of leader and deputy leader shall take place so that the results are declared at an annual session of party conference; except in the case of a vacancy occurring under 4B.2e of this rule when the timetable for the ballot shall be as determined by the NEC.

(ii)   Voting shall take place consecutively in three sections as follows;

Section 1 shall consist of Commons members of the PLP and members of the European PLP. Each such member shall be entitled to one vote in each ballot held under this section of the rules.

Section 2 shall consist of a vote of all eligible individual members of the party on the basis of one member one vote. This ballot shall take place on a national basis and shall be counted and recorded as an aggregate vote broken down by CLP. Eligible members shall be those currently on the national membership list who are endorsed and have not lapsed from membership.

Section 3 shall consist of those members of affiliated organisations who have indicated their support for the Labour Party and that they are not members or supporters of any other party or otherwise ineligible to be members of the Labour Party. Voting shall take place under the procedures of each affiliated organisation, but on a one-person-one-vote basis recorded by affiliated organisations and aggregated for a national total. The ballot paper shall provide for the declaration of support and eligibility required under this rule if no prior declaration has been made.

(iii)   The votes of each nominee in each section shall be calculated as a percentage of the total votes cast in that section and shall then be apportioned as follows:

Section 1 (members of the Commons and European PLPs) – one third

Section 2 (individual members of the Labour Party) – one third

Section 3 (members of affiliated organisations) – one third.

(iv)   The votes apportioned as provided in 4B.2c(iii) above shall be totaled and the candidate receiving more than half of the votes so apportioned shall be declared elected. If no candidate reaches this total on the first ballot, further ballots shall be held on an elimination basis. The redistribution of votes shall be according to preferences indicated on the ballot paper.

(v)   The votes cast for each nominee in each section shall be recorded and published in a form to be determined by the NEC as soon as possible following any election.

4B.2d   Timing of an election

(i)   When the PLP is in opposition in the House of Commons, the election of the leader and deputy leader shall take place at each annual session of party conference.

(ii)   When the PLP is in government and the leader and/or deputy leader are prime minister and/or in Cabinet, an election shall proceed only if requested by a majority of party conference on a card vote.

(iii)   In any other circumstances an election shall only be held when a vacancy occurs, subject to 4B.2e below.

4B.2e   Procedure in a vacancy

(i)   When the party is in government and the party leader is prime minister and the party leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the cabinet shall, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as party leader until a ballot under these rules can be carried out.

(ii)   When the party is in government and the deputy leader becomes party leader under (i) of this rule, the Cabinet may, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as deputy leader until the next party conference. The Cabinet may alternatively, in consultation with the NEC, leave the post vacant until the next party conference.

(iii)   When the party is in government and the deputy leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the Cabinet may, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as deputy leader until the next party conference. The Cabinet may alternatively, in consultation with the NEC, leave the post vacant until the next party conference.

(iv)   When the party is in opposition and the party leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the deputy leader shall automatically become party leader on a pro-tem basis. The NEC shall decide whether to hold an immediate ballot as provided under 4B.2e above or to elect a new leader at the next annual session of the party conference.

(v)   When the party is in opposition and the leader and deputy leader, for whatever reason, become permanently unavailable, the NEC shall order a postal ballot as provided under 4B.2e above. In consultation with the Shadow Cabinet they may choose to appoint a member of the Shadow Cabinet to serve as party leader until the outcome of that ballot.

B.   Contests 1922-1980

Between 1922 and 1981, only members of the Parliamentary Party were eligible to vote for the leader and the deputy leader. Under Labour Party rules, elections took place annually whilst the party was in opposition, but only when vacancies arose if the party was in government. Contested elections were required on eight occasions in this period:

21 November 1922

James Ramsay MacDonald	61
Joseph Clynes	56

3 December 1935

	1st Ballot	2nd Ballot
Clement Atlee	58	88
Herbert Morrison	44	48
Arthur Greenwood	33	-

14 December 1955

Hugh Gaitskell	166
Aneurin Bevan	70

3 November 1960

Hugh Gaitskell	157
Harold Wilson	81

2 November 1961

Hugh Gaitskell	171
Anthony Greenwood	59

14 February 1963

	1st Ballot	2nd Ballot
Harold Wilson	115	144
George Brown	88	103
James Callaghan	41	-

5 April 1976

	1st Ballot	2nd Ballot	3rd Ballot
James Callaghan	84	141	176
Michael Foot	90	133	137
Roy Jenkins	56	-	-
Tony Benn	37	-	-
Denis Healey	30	38	-
Anthony Crosland	17	-	-

3 November 1980

	1st Ballot	2nd Ballot
Michael Foot	83	139
Denis Healey	112	129
John Silkin	38	-
Peter Shore	32	-

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

C.   Contests 1983-1992

At the 1981 party conference the voting procedure for the election of party leader and deputy leader was altered. The electorate was extended to include nominations for members of the constituency parties and trade unions. MPs were given 30% of the vote, the constituencies 30% and the trade unions 40%.

2 October 1983

	PLP (%)	CLP (%)	TU (%)	Total (%)
Neil Kinnock	14.778	27.452	29.042	71.272
Roy Hattersley	7.883	0.577	10.878	19.288
Eric Heffer	4.286	1.971	0.046	6.303
Peter Shore	3.103	0.000	0.033	3.137

2 October 1988

	PLP	CLP	TU	Total
Neil Kinnock	24.842	24.128	39.660	88.630
Tony Benn	5.158	5.872	0.340	11.370

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

18 July 1992

	PLP	CLP	TU	Total
John Smith	23.19	29.31	38.52	91
Bryan Gould	6.81	0.69	1.48	9

Source: Thomas Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party: Organisational Change since 1983*

D.   1994 Contest

At the 1993 party conference the voting procedures were altered to introduce the principle of 'One Member One Vote'. Trade unions and constituency Labour parties were required to ballot their members individually, with results being allocated proportionately. The weighting of votes in the electoral college was also changed to give each section (PLP, CLP and TU) a third of the share of votes.

21 July 1994

	PLP	CLP	TU	Total
Tony Blair	60.5	58.2	52.3	57.0
John Prescott	19.6	24.4	28.4	24.1
Margaret Beckett	19.9	17.4	19.3	18.9

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

E.   2007 Contest

On the 10 May 2007, Tony Blair announced his decision to stand down from the leadership of the Labour Party, triggering a leadership contest. He also announced that he would resign as Prime Minister on 27 June 2007.[2]

On the same day, John Prescott also formally announced his decision to step down as deputy leader of the Labour Party.[3]

These announcements heralded a leadership and deputy leadership contest under the rules set out in Section A. The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party met on 13 May 2007 and agreed the detailed rules of the contest and the timetable, which were outlined by *Guardian Unlimited*:

May 14: MP nominations open at 2.30pm
May 17: Nominations close at 12.30pm.
May 18: Deadline for nominated candidates to accept nomination.
May 20: Hustings meetings (to June 16), even if there is only one candidate for leader, that candidate will attend around the country, but will not be subject to an affirmative ballot.
June 1: Close of supporting nominations.
         Deadline for withdrawal of nomination by declared candidates.
June 21: Close of affiliate ballot.
June 22: Close of Labour members and MPs' and MEPs' ballots.
June 24: Leadership conference and announcement of results at a special party conference in Manchester. If there is only one candidate for leader that person will be declared elected unopposed.[4]

In order to go forward to the ballot, candidates for leadership had to receive nominations from 12.5% of the Commons members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), that is 45 members.[5]

1.   Labour Leadership contest 2007

Having previously announced that he would not seek a fourth term as Prime Minister, in September 2004,[6] and that the 2006 Labour Party Conference would be his last as leader, in September 2006,[7] Tony Blair's formal announcement, on 10 May 2007, that he was standing down as party leader and Prime Minister was widely expected.

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[2] Matthew Tempest, "Blair to stand down on June 27", *Guardian Unlimited*, 10 May 2007
[3] BBC NEWS, *Prescott quits as deputy leader*, 10 May 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/6642805.stm
[4] Hélène Mulholland and Lewis Williamson, "Labour leadership: what happens next", *Guardian Unlimited*, 14 May 2007
[5] *Labour Party Rule Book 2004* Rule 4B.2b Nomination
[6] George Jones, "Blair has heart treatment today", *Daily Telegraph*,1 October 2004
[7] Andrew Grice, "Blair buys time with pledge to quit within 12 months", *Independent*, 8 September 2006

His announcement initiated the formal leadership contest, with Gordon Brown declaring his intention to stand as a candidate for Labour leader the following day.[8] Two other members of the PLP had already declared their intention to stand for the leadership: John McDonnell, in July 2006;[9] and Michael Meacher, in February 2007.[10]

After conceding that John McDonnell had secured more nominations than him, Mr Meacher withdrew his candidacy on 14 May 2007.[11] On 16 May, Gordon Brown secured his 308th nomination, making it mathematically impossible for John McDonnell, who had secured 29 nominations, to reach the required 45 nominations.[12]

The total nominations received by Gordon Brown, as at 14 June 2007, were:

MPs	MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates
313	19	407	17

Source: http://www.labour.org.uk/leadership/labour_party_overwhelmingly_unites_behind_gordon_brown

At the close of nominations, Gordon Brown was declared the sole candidate for the leadership. He accepted the nomination in a speech on 17 May 2007.[13] However, his formal appointment as Leader of the Labour Party was not made until the Special Conference on 24 June 2007.

2.   Labour Deputy Leadership contest 2007

On the 10 May 2007, Mr John Prescott also formally announced his decision to step down as deputy leader of the Labour Party.[14]

At the Labour Party Conference in September 2006, John Prescott said that he would stand down as deputy leader of the labour Party and Deputy Prime Minister when Tony Blair stood down.[15] By the time of his formal announcement, six MPs had already announced their intention to contest the Party's deputy leadership:

- Peter Hain announced his intention to stand on 12 September 2006;[16]
- Harriet Harman announced her intention to stand on 15 September 2006;[17]
- John Cruddas announced his intention to stand on 27 September 2006;[18]

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[8] Deborah Summers and Hugh Muir, "Brown lays out leadership credentials", *Guardian Unlimited*, 11 May 2007
[9] Nick Assinder, "Labour MP launches leadership bid", *BBC News*, 14 July 2006
[10] Matthew Tempest and Tom Happold, "Meacher enters leadership race", *Guardian Unlimited*, 22 February 2007
[11] Patrick Wintour and Will Woodward, "Key backing for Johnson in Labour deputy fight", *Guardian*, 15 May 2007
[12] Patrick Wintour, "Brown secures Labour leadership unopposed", *Guardian*, 17 May 2007
[13] Patrick Wintour, "Brown: Britain's two prime ministers", *Guardian*, 18 May 2007
[14] BBC NEWS, *Prescott quits as deputy leader*, 10 May 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/6642805.stm
[15] Colin Brown, "Tears and cheers as Prescott says he will bow out with Blair", *Independent*, 29 September 2006
[16] BBC News, *Hain runs as deputy leader*, 12 September 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/5336426.stm
[17] BBC News, *Harman intends Labour deputy bid*, 15 September 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5350360.stm
[18] "Cruddas goes for Prezza job", *Birmingham Party*, 28 September 2006

- Hilary Benn announced his intention to stand on 27 October 2006;[19]
- Alan Johnson launched his campaign on 10 November 2006;[20]
- Hazel Blears announced her intention to stand on 24 February 2007.[21]

All six candidates received sufficient nominations from the Commons members of the PLP to progress to the nationwide ballot which closed on 22 June. The total deputy leader nominations received by the candidates as at 14 June 2007 were:

	MPs	MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates
Hilary Benn	47	4	77	1
Hazel Blears	49	1	36	1
John Cruddas	49	2	68	3
Alan Johnson	73	9	45	2
Peter Hain	51	1	23	5
Harriet Harman	65	2	60	none

Source: www.labour.org.uk/leadership

The results of the contest were announced at the Labour Party's Special Conference on 24 June 2007, in Manchester:

Electoral college results (%)

Candidate	1st round	2nd round	3rd round	4th round	5th round	
Hilary Benn	16.40	18.22	22.33			
Hazel Blears	11.77					
Jon Cruddas	19.39	20.39	23.89	30.06		
Peter Hain	15.32	16.42				
Harriet Harman	18.93	21.23	25.88	33.58	50.43	ELECTED
Alan Johnson	18.16	23.74	27.90	26.35	49.56	

Source: http://www.labour.org.uk/leadership/deputy_leader_election_results

The breakdown of votes among the different components of the electoral college is reported in Appendix 2.

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[19] BBC News, *Benn to run for deputy position*, 27 October 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6090384.stm

[20] BBC News, *Johnson starts deputy leader bid*, 10 November 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6135128.stm

[21] BBC News, *Blears launches deputy leader bid*, 24 February 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6392565.stm

Appendix 1: Labour party leaders 1906 – present

1906-8	Keir Hardie
1908-10	Arthur Henderson
1910-11	George Barnes
1911-14	James Ramsay MacDonald
1914-17	Arthur Henderson
1917-21	William Adamson
1921-22	Joseph Clynes
1922-31	James Ramsay MacDonald
1931-32	Arthur Henderson
1932-35	George Lansbury
1935-55	Clement Attlee
1955-63	Hugh Gaitskill
1963-76	Harold Wilson
1976-80	James Callaghan
1980-83	Michael Foot
1983-92	Neil Kinnock
1992-94	John Smith
1994-2007	Tony Blair
2007-	Gordon Brown

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

Appendix 2: 2007 deputy leadership election results

(Percentage shares)

<u>Round 1</u>

	MPs/MEPs	Members	Aaffiliates	Total
Benn	4.27	7.21	4.93	16.41
Blears	4.99	3.01	3.77	11.77
Cruddas	4.63	5.67	9.09	19.39
Hain	4.81	3.87	6.64	15.32
Harman	6.54	8.04	4.35	18.93
Johnson	8.08	5.53	4.55	18.16

<u>Round 2</u>

Benn	4.74	7.93	5.56	18.23
Cruddas	4.74	6.01	9.64	20.39
Hain	5.10	4.24	7.08	16.42
Harman	7.29	8.80	5.15	21.24
Johnson	11.47	6.35	5.91	23.73

<u>Round 3</u>

Benn	5.65	9.29	7.39	22.33
Cruddas	6.30	6.58	11.01	23.89
Harman	8.61	10.15	7.12	25.88
Johnson	12.78	7.31	7.81	27.90

<u>Round 4</u>

Cruddas	7.65	8.81	13.61	30.07
Harman	10.29	13.82	9.46	33.57
Johnson	15.39	10.71	10.25	36.35

<u>Round 5</u>

Harman	15.42	18.83	16.18	50.43
Johnson	17.91	14.50	17.15	49.56

Source: *The Guardian*, 25 June 2007