

Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting

Eastleigh Local Authority Local Party

Friday 29th November 2024 @ 7.45pm

Held at: Bishopstoke Community Association, Sydney Road, Bishopstoke, SO50 6DJ

The meeting opened with an introduction from the Chair, Tanya Park. Tanya welcomed everyone on behalf of the Executive group to this year's AGM of the Eastleigh Liberal Democrats.

The Secretary holds a list of all those present. In total 22 members were in attendance.

- 1. Apologies:** Received from Ian Corben, Helen Corben, Michele Marsh, Gaz Richardson, Chris Bicknell, Liz Jarvis, Rosemary Reynolds, Stephen Beer, David Goodall & Prad Bains.

Before the meeting started the Chair informed those present that the meeting was, for the first time in a long time quorate, due to there being enough members present. Therefore, a vote did not need to be taken by the members present to agree the meeting could continue.

- 2. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting:** No points were raised or questions asked. The minutes were proposed by Tim Groves and seconded by Tonia Craig. The vote on the minutes was clearly carried.

- 3. Reports from: -**

- 3.1 Chair:** Tanya presented her report.

With this being my last AGM as chair, I thought I'd take this opportunity to look back over the past 3 years and list our achievements over that time. And I must stress I am in no way claiming these as my achievements, but those of all of us.

January 2022 was a busy start to my time as Chair, seeing us employ Cameron as our new Organiser and win a by-election in Eastleigh Central. In the local elections that year, we cut the Tory presence on the Council in half and also saw Cameron elected in Eastleigh Central too.

Over that summer we ran a selection contest for our PPC which saw Liz Jarvis come top of the field of four candidates.

In 2023, we not only enjoyed great local election results again, but we also moved from our long-standing offices in Leigh Road. This involved a very nerve-racking installation of our Riso printers with the removal of a 1st-floor window and frame to get them in!

And finally, we look to this year the first half of which seemed to consist of endless leaflet delivery & canvassing leading to Liz Jarvis becoming our MP, so we once we have a LibDem MP for the Eastleigh Constituency.

Sadly, this meant that Cameron would leave us to work for Liz in Westminster where I understand he's doing sterling work.

That of course has meant another recruitment process, bookending my time as Chair, which has resulted in the recruitment of Ian as our new organiser! We expect you, Ian, to follow in Cameron's footsteps, become an EBC councillor, and get a LibDem MP elected. You're not allowed to leave us until you do!

Finally, I would like to say thanks to everyone for what we have achieved over my tenure as Chair but especially

to my fellow members of Exec, Anne as our treasurer & agent, Keith as our leader on EBC & HCC and to Cameron, whom I'm sure we all look forward to seeing in the Commons as a LibDem MP sometime in the future.

3.2 Treasurer's report: Anne presented the report and gave a commentary on the 2023 Local Party accounts which have been agreed by the Local Party and submitted to the Electoral Commission.

As required under PPERA this report includes not only the Local Party accounts but also the accounts of the branches. They do not include the Print Society which is listed separately.

A number of questions were asked, and answered, regarding loans and expenditure.

Another question was asked regarding literature and branch finances. Anne replied that there is a working group that will be making future proposals to the Exec on future funding.

Mike thanked Anne for doing a job no one else wants to do.

3.3 Membership report: presented by Richard Gomer.

Current LP membership is 256 which is down 14 since this time last year and the continuation of a trend since 2019-2020, when we had a bit of a spike. We're now back to around the pre-Brexit level.

There are no particular trends in losses. It seems largely to be natural turnover, people lapsing rather than resigning and is similar to what region and national suggest they are seeing.

Interesting we did not really see any boost from the GE. General contact is insufficient; people only think about becoming members if we ask them explicitly. Remember - we are very odd people to be members of a political party!

Branch numbers as follows:

BFO 25

BHH 38

CFH 76

HEWEB 47

Town 27

= 213

that is not 256!

We will be updating lighthouse - which is the membership system - to assign those people automatically. So, by next year everyone should be in a branch and we can give you the proper numbers!

We will be arranging Lighthouse training in the next month or so; one evening; to enable branches themselves to make use of our member data to support networks in the county elections, and check the status of their members. We'll post details in the members group on Facebook; but if you are not on Facebook and would like to be invited, send me an email.

3.4 Conference Attendees: - It was commented that the quality of the new MP's, how they engaged and participated in the fringe meetings and on the stage was impressive.

3.5 Liberal Democrat Groups of: -

3.5.1 Eastleigh Borough Council: - Keith House reported to those present.

Keith started by congratulating Tim Groves for stepping in at the last minute to be the Agent for Hamble Valley which covers 1/3 of the Local Party area.

EBC is now just starting to feel the pinch and having to make savings that other local authorities have been having to do for the last 10 years. While we have reduced council tax in real terms for the last 21 years it might not continue in the future but that really depends on the Government grant.

Noticeable and major projects this year have included the £3m renovation of Itchen Valley Country Park and the opening of Post Mark place, and with it the first true social council housing in the Borough for nearly 30 years. The first phase of One Horton Heath is progressing well with houses to be start being built in the new year.

On top of this the council has had reports back from various Government organisations and the Local Government Association which are all positive. It appears the “noise” made by our last MP was unfounded!

3.5.2 Hampshire County Council: Comments were provided by Tim Groves.

HCC is nearly bankrupt with a deficit that started at £138M, ballooned to £174M and now stands at £185M! ¼ of their budget goes on adult social care which is increasing hugely and of course was forgotten by the previous government!

Another area of heavy spend is education, school transport and SEND education. The latter 2 HCC are intending to combine but haven't said how they'll do it.

All bus subsidies are to be withdrawn and it is unknown what will happen with the bus improvement grant from government. Lastly there are big reductions in highway maintenance, highways in general plus the winter road salting programme.

3.6 MP & Parliamentary Representative: Cameron gave a report on behalf of Liz and Prad had given apologies due to being on honeymoon.

When this AGM date was planned Liz was due to be having a day off doing constituency visits but, as you know, instead she had to spend the day in parliament debating the assisted dying bill. Very unfortunate timing but this should give you an idea of the busy and every-changing nature of the last five months.

Since being elected in July, Liz has been meeting new colleagues from all sides of the House and participating in a number of debates, visits, meetings with a range of interesting people, and getting on with the job of representing Eastleigh. She would not mind me saying that the first couple of months were chaotic. Nobody tells you that two days after being elected you get a train to parliament, get given a laptop and on that laptop are hundreds of emails from lobbyists encouraging you to support every cause you can imagine, from members of parliamentary staff who tell you how parliamentary procedure works, and emails from constituents with a huge variety of issues.

Liz has now hired four and a half members of staff and we're starting to settle into a routine. We were very lucky to hire Ruth and Melissa, as case workers, who both have a lot of experience from the charity sector. Abdi has joined us after working in international development and Ian has also recently joined us, working on press and media for Liz too.

Since being elected Liz has spoken in debates including the Budget, care and the NHS, was our party spokesperson on Infected Blood and Disposable vapes and has joined the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. We have submitted many questions to ministers, worked with other Lib Dem MPs on issues like the Climate and Nature Bill as well as others. Over the next few months, we're hoping to finally set up our town centre office, which is progressing along. I'm sure there will be much more to report this time next year.

I hope by now you would have also heard about the Gold Club which has been launched by Lib Dem MPs. More events coming soon so watch this space.

James Duguid commented that members need to hear this news and that we need more comms to get more people helping if we want to win next time. We also need to be more engaging to gain smaller sums rather than just gold members.

Cameron replied that Ian will bridge that comms gap.

Paul Bicknell asked when will we see Liz. She is the figure head and we need people. Money in the bank doesn't deliver leaflets or do canvassing. We need to do serious recruitment.

Cameron answered there will be plenty of time in the coming months and years.

3.7 South Central Regional Party: Anne read out an open letter, copy held by secretary, sent by the outgoing chair, Catherine Bearder.

After the letter had been read out Tanya proposed, with Paul seconding, a vote of thanks for Anne and all the hard work she does. A round of applause followed.

4. Local Party Constitution: -

4.1. To Accept Changes to the Constitution:

Paul informed the meeting, as per the agenda, about the proposal to create a new position of Candidate Development Officer. The motion was proposed by Paul Bicknell, seconded by Mike Thornton and was unanimously agreed.

5. Election of officers: - The Chair asked the Secretary for the nominations and if there were any contested positions.

The Secretary replied there were no contested positions but there was no application for the position of Membership Development Officer. As applications could not be taken from the floor the Executive will have to review this in the new year potentially co-opting a volunteer into the position.

It was therefore agreed to proposed, second and vote on all positions together. Tonia Craig proposed, Tim Groves seconded and the motion was carried unanimously with the following people being elected.

5.1 Chair: Brian Selby

5.2 Vice -Chair: Nick Couldrey

5.3 Secretary: Paul Bicknell

5.4 Treasurer: Anne Winstanley

5.5 Membership Development Officer: vacant

5.6 Election Officer: Keith House

5.7 Diversity Champion: Tanya Park

5.8 Candidate Development Officer: Richard Gomer

5.9 Liberal Youth Rep: Cameron Spencer

6. To note the accounts for 2023: Noted

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the 2024 Local Party Accounts: Anne proposed Alex Clifton, Paul Bicknell seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

