

# Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

## Eastleigh Local Authority Local Party

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 @ 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 21 members were in attendance.

**1. Apologies:** Keith House, Tonia Craig, Bhavin Dedhia, Helen Corben, Bruce Tennent, Cynthia Garton, Colin Bird.

Before the meeting started the Chair informed those present that the meeting was not quorate due to there not being 10% of members present. Therefore, a vote had to be taken by the members present to agree the meeting could continue. The vote was clearly carried.

**2. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting:** No points were raised or questions asked. The minutes were proposed by Mike Thornton and seconded by Ian Corben. The vote on the minutes was clearly carried.

**3. Reports from: -**

**3.1 Chair:** Tanya Park presented the following report. If you're anything like me you're wondering how it is November already, but just because the year seems to have flown by quicker than ever before it doesn't mean we've not been busy. The year started with a by-election campaign in Eastleigh Central, which was comfortably won in February by Bhavin. Unfortunately, 5 days later we had to say goodbye to Lord Chidgey who sadly passed away. David became Eastleigh's MP in the 1994 by-election and stayed as our MP until 2005 when he was elevated to the House of Lords as Baron Chidgey, of Hamble-le-Rice. I know he will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Our local successes continued in May with a great set of results in the Local Elections, winning 13 of the 14 contested seats. Nationally the party also excelled in the Tiverton & Honiton by-election winning the seat with a 30% swing away from the toxic Tories. I like to think that a small part of that success was due to those of us from Eastleigh who travelled down to Devon and experienced the rather brutal Devonian hills! Internally we've not been idle either as in July we selected the wonderful Liz Jarvis as our PPC from a field of 4.

With Liz in place as our PPC we have started campaigning in earnest to bring a Lib Dem MP back to Eastleigh. This summer and autumn saw us knocking on doors and delivering Focus & Standpoint across the borough with an abundance of activity not seen since before Covid.

Our social activities though have been a little more curtailed than I would have liked, something I'm determined to improve upon next year. But we did enjoy a fabulous BBQ in the summer, thanks go to Nick Couldrey for hosting us. Next week Chandlers Ford are celebrating 50 years of LibDem successes in Chandlers Ford and on the 3rd of December Keith will be question master at our Christmas Quiz.

**3.2 Treasurer's report:** - Anne presented, and gave a commentary, on the 2021 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. The accounts for 2021 are now well in the past and comparisons between different years are never easy with the various things influencing the different years- General Elections, lack of ability to campaign during Covid and a time without a paid organiser. We now have a paid organiser which is essential both for the campaigning activity for the local elections but also the build up to a general election. The budget for 2023 is a rough educated guess due to the possibility of a general election but also due to increased costs for electricity and

the cost of paper, which has increased several times over the last 12 months, and envelopes. As a result of this branch costs for leaflets have slowly been increasing.

A number of the audience then asked questions which are summarised as follows:

Q-How are we going to fund the General Election Campaign?

Ans- Encourage donations from donors identified by the PPC. The Local Party does its best to cover the day-to-day costs.

Q-What reassurances can be given that donations for the General Election are ring fenced and not used for the local elections. Businesses might want to see donations ring fenced.

Ans- Part of the general election is to promote Liz ahead of the general election so donations will be used for that on things like glossy A3's and surveys. Liz is also working on a campaign plan for HQ to try and get staff time and funds. Ring fenced donations, including from businesses, will be reported separately.

Mike Healey then proposed a vote of thanks for all the hard work, Anne does. This was met with a round of applause.

**3.3 Membership report:** - Membership stands at 285 across the local party, down from 308 12 months ago. That decrease is in line with the national trend, though obviously something we would hope to reverse. We've continued to try and engage members with regular communications, to ensure that the members we have are active. Membership is split into 2 groups. Passive members provide a source of income, and we greatly appreciate their support, but it's active members who come canvassing and get involved with events, like the AGM, who are most critical to our success as a LP.

Priorities for the coming year are primarily:

**Member activation:** Ensuring that as we expand our campaigning and prepare for a GE. We have to find roles for people who'd like to get involved, and speak to as many members as possible.

**Membership growth:** As we become more vocal on national issues, we must build our membership and get people enthusiastic about the potential for change. It's important to recognise, I think, where people generally are at with politics: fed up, disengaged, worried about other things – we have a job to do in turning that into hope and the prospect of change.

The way we do that is the same as the way we'll build our delivery network and strengthen our data: by getting out and speaking to people.

And by ensuring that our regular member communications are complemented by some more regular members events, which fell away during the pandemic and have not returned to the same frequency they used to be. Overall, we need to make everything less "hard slog" but more "happy and friendly".

A question was asked how many members were in Valley Park and what the numbers would be for the new Eastleigh Constituency. Richard replied there were 21 members in Valley Park and the new constituency would have 205 members.

**3.4 Conference Attendees:** - The National Conference was cancelled due to the death of the late Queen Elizabeth II. Anne attended the Regional Conference and reported that it was good to be back in person. Sarah Green did an excellent presentation with Sarah and Liz working together on chalk streams and sewage discharges. During the PPC sessions Liz did a number of Q&A's. Lots of policy ideas came out of the conference as well.

### **3.5 Liberal Democrat Groups of: -**

**3.5.1 Eastleigh Borough Council:** - Presented by Ian Corben. While Keith and Tonia are auditioning for the next series of I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here, you have me for the Borough update but I hope others might join in as well to pick up any particular matters which they have been involved with and wish to share. This year has been another year of EBC doing what EBC does best - again benefitting from a stable political base and leadership. There are challenges of course but tackling them early on will mean the very best results for our residents in the future. In the late summer no sooner had EBC been shortlisted and the winner of a number of APSE (Assoc of Public Service Excellence) awards including Council of the year - and a fantastic achievement that was - it became clear that the economic effects of Brexit, Putin's illegal war in Ukraine and the pandemic recovery were going to ripple around the world and knock on our door in Eastleigh.

The dying embers of the Johnson Government and the Trussonomic disaster of September's Government caused

mayhem in the world markets, board rooms and living rooms across our Borough - seeing and living the results we now know as an economic crisis. EBC is clearly not immune and needs to review budgets and priorities led by new CEO James Strachan - an exercise which is ongoing.

The year started of course with a by election at the beginning of February in Eastleigh Central that gave those involved a good opportunity to walk off any Christmas excesses through January. Clearly it was worth it because despite Labour and Tory hopes the brilliant LD team got Bhavin elected to the Borough Council.

Events in Ukraine gave EBC and local residents an opportunity to support those displaced from their homeland and we were proud to do so providing refugee accommodation, as we had done so brilliantly, leading the way nationally, with the Afghan refugees. We protected the location of their accommodation, long before the recent shocking naming by some Tory MPs of hotels in their parts of the country seemingly to stir up local bad will.

May came around very quickly but once again hard work paid off and we welcomed a number of new councillors and welcomed back returning colleagues. Help came from a strange place with the MP bringing the then PM (for reference that was Boris Johnson - we have of course had a number this year!) to West End - that must have been worth a few votes for us surely. Wonder if he could bring him again next year? In the Borough Council elections, the Liberal Democrats gained 2 seats and held 11 (winning 13 overall); the Independent Group held one seat and lost one seat (1); the Conservatives lost one seat (0). The political make-up was and remains: Liberal Democrat 34; Independent 4; Conservative 1. A fantastic result.

Shortly before the elections the small matter of our Local Plan was adopted after much work - really important and with the 5-year land supply being well established, to get that on the books means we can provide robust defence against hostile unwelcome development. There is so much more going on, Eastleigh punches well above its weight in many areas and so I wasn't going to but I will fly the flag for OHH which is progressing, with the North- South spine road receiving planning permission recently, work is due to start in the new year. This is a brilliant example of where a local authority has intervened in a broken property market and is doing it the right way leading with infrastructure and focusing on the final home environment to make sure they are a sustainable and great place to live.

Paul Bicknell added that as well as building the right homes in the right place EBC is also in the process of opening its Housing Revenue Account and will be providing true social housing.

**3.5.2 Hampshire County Council:** - The following report was given by Tim Groves. The Leader of Hampshire and Kent County councils have sent a joint letter to the Prime Minister and Chancellor stating that unless there are fundamental changes in how local government is funded then both councils will be considering Section 114 notices in the next year or so. Basically, both are saying there is a likelihood they will be bankrupt and unable to provide the statutory services they need too! The leader has confirmed to councillors that is has enough reserves to enable delivery into 2025/26. Overall, this means again Hampshire is making a series of drastic cuts and service reductions the latest being to Transport with a reduced subsidy to public and community transport while increasing fares where they can.

There is to be a restructuring with the council being split into 5 areas, Hampshire 2050 (place), Adult Health & Social Care, Children's services, Universal Services, Corporate Services, People & Organisation. There will be a lead and deputy cabinet member for each and additional cabinet members for HR, Performance, Communications and Inclusion & Diversity.

Plans for the waste recycling facility for the whole of Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton are being progressed with the favoured site being Chickenhall Lane in Eastleigh. Concerns have been robustly expressed about increased traffic and air pollution and the need for better access i.e. The Chickenhall Lane Relief Road. The leader has stated though the scheme is too expensive so only incremental road improvements will be made from developers' contributions. Councillors were invited to a meeting where all schools in the Borough were discussed. Reduced expected entry figures to reception classes in many areas and the challenge this poses were discussed. It was stated all new schools would have to be academies with existing academies being expected to expand to take on more schools and teacher training.

Proposals for a Greater Hampshire County Deal, including an Elected Leader for the whole of Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, IoW & Bournemouth were submitted after being put on hold during the Conservative leadership changes. Our view is they are unlikely to progress but the fact the Levelling Up Secretary is again Michael Gove means there is a possibility it could progress.

Paul Bicknell added that Hampshire were pushing forward with a bus lane from the Riverside junction is Bishopstoke to the roundabout at Chickenhall Lane to save about 2 minutes. This scheme would remove the roundabout and re-signal the junction to improve traffic flows, especially in and out of Chickenhall Lane. This was government money, not Hampshire's, so it's no coincidence Hampshire are pushing it and the junction is being improved as it helps facilitate the Recycling Centre!

**3.6 Regional Party Representative:** - Anne read the following statement on behalf of Catherine Bearder, Regional Chair.

I am so sorry not to be with you in person today for your AGM but Anne is here on behalf of South-Central Region. As your regional chair, I am very keen that we report back to you at each AGM as we are here to support local parties and some of your membership goes toward supporting our work. So firstly, I would like to thank all of you who give up your time to help in any way, who stand as candidates, or who support candidates in any way. We cannot change the world without all you wonderful people.

As a federal organisation we are made up of many parts, with the local party and their members being possibly the most important element of the structure. Without members and your local executive team, we would not be able to deliver the change we want for this country, locally and nationally.

At region we employ 3 members of staff who work with local parties to help them develop their campaigning, fundraising and building the diversity we need to be able to represent each local community.

Two of these staff members, Chris Ward and Tom Woods are our regional campaign managers and work with our targets and held seats (OxWab and Chesham are held and Winchester and Wokingham are targets) our third member of staff was Nicky Dodds who was our Regional Development officer and she worked with all the other local parties to help them build their base and support their local work. However, Nicky has just left us and we are currently recruiting a new person for this post. All the other officers in the region are volunteers who just like many of you give their time to the LDs. We have a small team working on local party issues, currently changes to constitutions are taking most of their time, others help plan and deliver the regional conferences twice a year. Then there are specific jobs like treasurer, secretary and candidates' officer whose jobs are fairly easily explained. We are now also looking to strengthen a media and comms committee and a fundraising team.

We are there to help you in your campaigning, but in return we need your help.

Membership. We are only strong if we have members. They are our committed supporters; they bring in money and they are our core vote. But we need more. If every one of you recruited just one more member in the next month we could double the membership. Have you asked a friend who is horrified at the way the country is being run to join us? It's worth a try and you might be surprised at the result. It's easy to do online at the party website. So please, think about it next time you hear someone moaning at the way the Tories are behaving.

Secondly, we are trying hard to build up our war chest for the next General Election. Region will do the asking and split any money raised with the local party that supplied the names. We want your leads; do you know of someone who was once a Tory who is now disillusioned? A celebrity or well-known person in your area? A business owner or someone who traded with the EU? You don't need to know them personally or whether they are a LD. Just give us names of people who we can research, we will approach and do the asking (always the most terrifying part of fundraising!) Let me know and I will keep your name out of it if you would wish that. You know your area so much better than I do.

Finally, we need help running the region. Just as your local party needs people to keep it running, meeting on zoom, adding their thoughts and ideas. It's rewarding to be part of a winning team, and here in Eastleigh you are winning the arguments on the doorsteps, so join up locally or regionally to the exec to help us organise and make this one of the next places to turn golden.

Again, I'm sorry I could not be with you all, but wish you well for your AGM today.

**3.7 Prospective Parliamentary Candidate:** - Liz started by thanking everyone that had turned up for all their hard work now and in the future as she could not win on her own; the only way she could win and become the next Lib Dem MP for Eastleigh was with everyone's help. Last week Liz had a meeting with Region who put forward the work needed to be upgraded to a target seat. This will now be the focus for the next 3 months working with Cameron and the Team to get the message out on what we're offering and getting known across the constituency.

There's 3 areas to focus on moving forward:

1. Voter contact. We are doing well with the action days but we do need ward activity alongside the action days to boost the voter contact. Phone canvassing will be started in the new year which Tanya will lead on.
2. Membership. There is a plan which Richard has already touched on the earlier.
3. Fundraising. This is not as strong as it should be but we are trying to get as many donations as possible. We need to fundraise well before the general election to generate a regular income to be able to pay and keep the planned literature campaign going. We will be using the principle of Emily's List (**E**arly **M**oney **I**s like **Y**east from the USA) as early money enables us to grow the campaign early.

**4. Local Party Constitution:** - The secretary, Paul Bicknell, explained that the Party has issued a new updated Constitution that all local parties needed to adopt. The only amendment to the model Constitution is 9.3 Branch

Committee(s) with the amendment being (s). This is because a number of our county divisions include more than 1 branch so in the event of a contested seat it allows all members of those branches to vote. Cameron Spencer proposed the Constitution with Nick Couldrey seconding. The motion was clearly carried.

**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 and one position had no applicants. It was therefore agreed to proposed, second and vote on all positions together. Nick Couldrey proposed, Ian Corben seconded and the motion was clearly carried with the following people being elected.

**5.1 Chair:** Tanya Park

**5.2 Vice -Chair:** Bhavin Dedhia

**5.3 Secretary:** Paul Bicknell

**5.4 Treasurer:** Anne Winstanley

**5.5 Membership Development Officer:** Richard Gomer

**5.6 Election Officer:** Keith House

**5.7 Diversity Champion:** Vacant

**6. To note the accounts for 2021:** Noted

**7. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the 2022 Local Party Accounts:** Anne proposed Alex Clifton. Mike Thornton seconded and the motion was carried.

Tanya closed the meeting thanking everyone for attending, everyone's input and for making the whole evening an enjoyable experience. Finishing off Tanya gave credit to Cameron and thanked him for his sterling work which everyone agreed with.