

The Liberal Democrat AGM Minutes

held at Holford & District Village Hall on the 23rd November 2024 at 2p.m

Attending: Kay Barnard (chair), Rachel Gilmour, (MP) John Cossey (Treasurer), Jill Dillamore (acting secretary) Bill Revans (leader of Somerset Council), Laura Chalmers, Ian Scott, Jane Scott, Benet Allen, Curtis Lockston, Gary Wong, Mohamed Sharjed, Janice Beasley, Alan Beasley, Leonie Anderson, Sarah Baker, Ian Atkins, Taz Haysham, Sajjad Jabarlchel. Ganesh Gudka. **By Zoom:** Phil Harvey. Sharon Perry

Apologies: Sally Sinclair, Sue Harvey, Lesley Millard, Fay Ross-Ward, David Allen, Jim Barnard, Lance Moir, Mark Willitts, Jonathan Greenhow, Colette Winfield, Tina Marsh, Ross Baker, Sue Harvey. We had late apologies from Antony Nickolls, Janet and Peter Johnstone.

2) Minutes of the last AGM 11th Nov 2023 **agreed**

3) Reports

a) Chair: Kay welcomed everyone and introduced Rachel Gilmour, our newly elected MP for Tiverton and Minehead. In Somerset 4 Liberal Democrat 4 MPs were elected at the last general election, but a Conservative MP was elected in the Bridgwater constituency. It was felt that the voting was helpfully split by the Reform party. In addition, tactical voting websites recommending a Labour vote in the constituency had not helped. We will need to work hard and concentrate effort in the next local elections to gain ground.

b) Treasurer: Treasurer report for 2024:

Constituency Account	1,371.81
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Campaign Account	16,639.24
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Total	18,011.05
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£3,669.95 received from the Wells and Mendip Hills Constituency local party as the share of assets transferred to the Bridgwater & West Somerset local party for the 50 members transferred following the changes to local party boundaries on 31/12/23.

The financial assets of the Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge branch of £1,176.23 were transferred to the Bridgwater & West Somerset local party and the bank account closed in November when the whole branch was transferred to the local party (£609.03 at 31/12/23), The £1,176.23 will be ring fenced in the accounts for the use by members of the Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge campaign group.

£751.53 was paid by the Bridgwater and West Somerset local party to the Wells and Mendip Hills local party for the share of assets transferred for the 6 members transferred following the changes to local party boundaries on 31/12/23.

Income and expenditure for this year both estimated to be around £44,000

Income £12,036 - approximately £2,500 down on 2022

Income consisted of £208 in membership rebates, £4,371 in donations (mainly a very generous donation of £4,000 by a member), £7,427 in Councillor tithes and £30 from fundraising (Xmas raffle).

Expenditure £1,309 - approximately £10,000 down on 2023

Expenditure consisted of £634 of Office/Admin (printing and postage expenses for AGM and annual Royal Mail Freepost address charges), £60 for payments to Lib Dem HQ for Fleet/targeted emailing), £517 Campaigning costs (East Bower by-election for Bridgwater Town Council and the first expenses for the General Election campaign) and £98 in Fundraising costs.

Thanks was given to John for all his hard work.

c) Membership: Ross Baker was re-elected and thanked for all his hard work. There are currently 174 members.

4 lapsed members were contacted. We were reminded to watch out for the Christmas Draw

d) Campaigns: With 3 by elections coming up we need to increase our campaigning going forward, with Bridgwater highlighted. Candidate selection is currently underway in both Burham and Highbridge and Bridgwater, and planning of leaflets is underway.

e) Somerset Council: Leader of the Council Bill Revans informed us of plans by the government for a Directly Elected Regional Mayor. It is not clear at this stage which counties will be involved. If we do not elect a mayor we will not be eligible for a lot of government funding. Bill is going to make the case for changing the first-past-the-post voting system next year. Somerset may join Wiltshire, Dorset and Swindon to help with cost cutting initiatives.

Somerset Council has had difficulty to staff the planning department, but progress is being made. It is also difficult to meet the government building requirements due to the area of wet lands, nature reserves and moor lands. Due to the council funding shortages, parish and town councils are helping with some of the functions that the county council were previously responsible for. The council is working hard to ensure that Somerset children are being looked after in Somerset, with the council investing in new homes and foster care but Somerset needs more foster carers. The local homes will cost a lot less than the present arrangement and be better for the children. More home care is needed so that people only go into a care home when necessary. Services are under pressure so planning is difficult but we are working on the Local Plan for the next 15 years. Recycling has been going well especially plastics. The new ward boundaries have not yet been agreed but we will carry on campaigning in the current areas until there is a decision

Kay thanked Bill for his hard work and report.

Burnham and Highbridge Town Council: Mayor Sharon Perry submitted a written report on the achievements of the LD councillors including stabilising the governance, establishment of a Repair Café, Eco Festivals, Bus User Groups, Wildlife Surveys and the establishment of a Growing Group, which has taken on the planting of the Esplanade flower beds. A newly formed Charitable Interest Organisation will take this work forward.

f) Rachel Gilmour (MP) Rachel thanked her many supporters leading to 3,500 majority in the new constituency. As MP she has been pushing for greater transport connections. School improvements such as in Tiverton High school are in hand. She is also looking to protect our local services such as GP Surgeries, dentists and community hospitals. She has been working with other party MPs, as by working together it will solve many issues. Rachel was voted in as Vice Chair of the All –Party Parliamentary Group for Farming, meaning she has the opportunity to stand up for British farmers. Following a question from Taz Haysham Rachel agreed she would look into access problems and the state benefits for the disabled which are very limited.

Rachel was thanked for her time.

4) Motion to AGM none

5) Honorary President: Peter Johnstone: Proposer K. Barnard, Seconder B. Revans

6) Election of Officers

A Chair: Sarah Baker. Proposer T. Haysham, seconder K. Barnard

B Vice Chairs: Kay Barnard / Curtis Lockston: proposer J. Dillamore, seconder J. Beasley

C Treasurer: John Cossey: Proposer K. Barnard, Seconder J. Dillamore

D Secretary: Laura Chambers: Proposer K. Barnard, seconder S. Baker

E Election Officer: Bill Revans: proposer K. Barnard, seconder J. Dillamore

F Membership Development Officer: Ross Baker, proposer K. Barnard, seconder T. Haysham

G Diversity Champion: Andy Kingston-James: proposer K. Barnard, seconder B. Revans

H. Executive committee members: Benet Allen, Taz Haysham, Ganesh Gudka. Agreed unanimously.

7. The accounts for 2023 were noted by members.

8. independent examiner for 2024 accounts Andrew Dillamore: proposer K. Barnard, seconder J. Beasley

9 Lighthouse super-users. Agreed to be Sarah Baker and Benet Allen.

AGM closed at 3.30p.m

The date of the next AGM date is to be agreed.