

Cambridge Liberal Democrats
Annual General Meeting 17th November 2023

Minutes

1. Chair's Report - Jamie Dalzell

Jamie welcomed members. (There were 18 people in the Hall: no Zoom link provided this year. 7 apologies received: see Appendix One.

He then reminded people that he had become Chair on Anthony's re-election to the City Council and thanked Anthony for his hard work and for a very good hand-over. He thanked the Officers and Executive for all their work and especially thanked Simon Boyd for stepping in as Vice-Chair.

Jamie then said that it had been a positive year as we had turned the corner. Anthony's re-election meant we had increased our numbers on the City Group as we held all our seats and gained one. It was especially important to note that the PPC had held her seat, as Labour had been determined that she should not. The Labour Group on the City Council was, in fact, shrinking.

Since May, it seemed to have been one by-election after another: first Kings Hedges where we were the only party to increase the number of votes gained, though not enough to win: then the Mid Beds Parliamentary seat where many people went to support Emma Holland-Lindsay, former organiser here in Cambridge. Cambridge's contribution was one of the largest. Again we made sizeable gains from the Tories but without a win. Finally, the Queen Edith's by-election which, it is hoped, will result in a win next week - if we can get out the vote!

It is noticeable that Emma is not the only Cambridge alumni to be found in campaigning positions in the party - Cosmo Lupton is organiser for Ed Davey M.P, Nichola Martin in the West Country, Sam Oliver as Regional Organiser in the East of England, and Becky Grubb working for Wendy Chamberlain M.P.

In addition we had successfully presented three amendments at the Autumn Federal Conference - and promoted and organised the Disco to a triumphal return!

The other important thing to note was that the new boundaries for Westminster elections had been confirmed with Queen Edith's and Cherry Hinton wards moving into South Cambs constituency. It was important to build capacity in both and, especially in Cherry Hinton, persuade Labour to accept that we were the main contender against the Tories. We would be working closely with the South Cambs team to do this.

2. Financial Report - Treasurer, Bob Illingworth.

Bob formally presented the 2022 Financial Report which had completed all its statutory procedures and been presented to the Executive earlier in the year. He had also produced accounts for 2023 to date. Paper copies were available in the Hall.

Bob said it was important to realise that our regular expenditure needed to be paid for out of our regular income. The two main sources of regular income were standing orders and the Councillor tithes. Subscriptions mostly went to the national party with a very small amount staying locally.

Fundraising was needed to pay for campaigning especially at election time and a big boost would be needed for the General Election next year.

In the Hall, there was a leaflet promoting legacies, where it was important to specify which part of the Liberal Democrat party was to receive it. If people wanted any gift to go to the Cambridge local party, they needed to say so in the will, otherwise it would automatically go to the national party.

Jamie thanked Bob for all his hard-work and particularly for obtaining a Square terminal through which donations could be given digitally.

3. Report from the Data Officer - Tim Ward.

In Tim's absence, the Chair gave the figures as reported at a recent Executive Meeting: the Cambridge Local Party membership stats were:

All current members - 515, all current supporters - 92.

Last 90 days: 3 new members, 0 new supporters, 18 lapsed, 5 resigned.

The Chair thanked Tim for his steady work in the background.

4. No other reports.

5. Appointment of an Independent Person able and willing to report on the Accounts.

No one had been "lined up" so the matter was deferred to the January Executive.

Various persons were suggested

Action: Officers.

6. 7. Motions

No Motions had been received by the Secretary under either heading.

8. Declaration of positions for which there was no need of an election:-

Chair -	Jamie Dalzell
Vice-Chair -	Simon Boyd
Vice-Chair (Campaigns) -	Sam Oliver
Secretary -	Catherine Smart
Treasurer -	Bob Illingworth
Data Officer -	Tim Ward
Diversity Officer -	
Membership Development Officer -	Ian Manning
Executive Members	
	Sarah Squire
	Richard Fisher
	Elizabeth Parkin
	John Walmesley
	Mark Waller

Please note the vacancy for a Diversity Officer & for five Executive Members. The January Executive would need to address this.

9. Addresses on Looking Forward to 2024.

i) Cllr Tim Bick, Leader of the Group on the City Council.

Tim passed round a leaflet giving the “Vision for Cambridge” adopted by the City Group and depicted on some leaflets - and will be on more. It was not a manifesto but a vision - the five elements of which are: - A global power for good, An evolving city, Prizing the wellbeing of its citizens, Living lightly on the plane, & A liberal city. This was well received in the Hall.

Tim then pointed out that some people thought the big question facing Cambridge was whether or not to grow but really it was not whether but how. The jobs would be here - if the houses did not follow, people would have long commutes with all the pollution and waste of time and energy that involves. The best “brown field” sites for development, the N E corner of Cambridge (aka the Sewage Works) and the Airport both needed work before they would be available - and some of the local Labour councillors were very much against developing on the Airport.

However, we had a reasonable track record of doing expansion properly and had showed that the city was not run by nimbys - in spite of some loud voices. But we needed help from Government, particularly with the infrastructure. There was a pending water crisis; the transport system needed major improvements and, above all, the local government structure needed simplifying: a Unitary structure of some kind was the best option.

The Government's latest announcement about numbers did not fit the jobs scene as they were too large. It would be interesting to see if there was anything about Cambridge in the Autumn Statement next week.

ii) County Councillor Edna Murphy.

Edna welcomed the Vision that Tim had outlined as the overall aim for the area and agreed that a Unitary Authority would simplify things in local government. One of the roles she holds on the Combined Authority is as the lead Member on Governance and she agreed that the present situation was far too complex.

The County responsibilities overlapped with the Districts (including the City) and they had to consider the future for housing, but also water supply, transport, schools and primary care, among other things.

Edna mentioned that she had been appointed to the Fire Authority as Chair - to the shock of many who were more used to dealing with older, white men! As Chair, she was also on the Combined Authority,

Since the County elections, Cambridgeshire had been run by a joint administration led by the Lib Dems with Labour and some Independents. They had gained two members since the election and were now over half way through their term of office. They were at present refreshing their Agreement for the rest of the period. To aid them, they had commissioned a professional survey on the quality of life in the County to find out the main priorities and concerns of residents. Most residents thought Cambridgeshire was a great place to live but 86% were concerned about prices with 27% cutting back on buying nutritious food and 8% using a food bank. Also of great concern was what appeared to be an epidemic of loneliness, with 52% of 18-24 year olds being lonely (compared to 18% of those aged 55+), for which there was no simple solution.

At the moment the Joint Administration were grappling with the Budget. A large proportion of it had to be spent on social care with high-needs children requiring very expensive support. School transport for special needs children was also costly. They were not alone in feeling the strain: it was estimated that 10% of Councils would not balance their budget in 2023, rising to 40% in 2024 and 60% in 2025.

iii) Councillor Cheney Payne: PPC for Cambridge.

Cheney admitted that the political weather was not favourable at the moment. As a Labour facing seat, Cambridge's concerns were in danger of being overlooked and squeezed out of the narrative. But although we agreed on many things, Labour were NOT Liberal and we needed to continue to promote Liberal values. Our neighbour, South Cambs, will be a target seat at the General Election and it was important to continue to campaign in Cambridge so that Labour did not think

they needn't bother and could safely decamp to South Cambs and so scupper Pippa's chances of winning the seat, letting the Tories back in.

While it was clear that the Tory Government tolerated a measure of corruption and were manipulating a broken system, Labour were not planning real change: Lib Dems must continue to work for change in line with Liberal values.

Cheney then moved on to the impact of Brexit. It was important to continue to stress our international credentials and make the case for moving towards the EU and improving our links. Recent events had highlighted the importance of working together and she praised Layla Moran MP for her excellent leadership on the Israel / Gaza situation under difficult personal circumstances.

A third aspect of the present situation Cheney mentioned, was the way the country seemed to be falling apart. Recruitment and retention was very poor in many key services while schools were affected by RAAC and crumbling before our eyes. Elected Councillors needed to raise these issues as much as possible including with the Labour MP.

Finally she thanked everyone for their support over the last year and looked forward to an interesting, and busy, New Year.

Appendix One

Present:-

David Howarth, Edna Murphy, Simon Boyd, Olaf Hauk, Cheney Payne, Paul Saunders, Bob Illingworth, Neil Morris, Catherine Smart, Jamie Dalzell, Sam Oliver, Pete Snowden, Amanda Taylor, Mark Waller, John Walmesley, Katie Porrer, Tim Bick.

Apologies:-

Richard Fisher, Joye Rosenstiel, Mike Taylor, Sarah Squire, Ian Manning, Anthony Martinelli, Tim Ward.

The Meeting was followed by a Social Event.