

## **BRIGHTON AND HOVE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

### **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 AT THE BRIGHTHELM CENTRE, NORTH ROAD, BRIGHTON**

Attendees: Owen Sharp, Helen Eccleson, Stewart Stone, Caroline Ellis, Simon Jardine, Ashley Ridley, Stephen O’Kane, Frances Lindsay-Hills, Claire Lachlan, Marjorie Leeds, Jim May, Robert Brown, Andrew Woolmer, Toby Keynes, Claire Fergusson-O’Toole, Trevor Freeman, Hyder Khalil, Ben Thomas, Peter Denyer, Josh Woolcott, Adam Burns, Stamati Crook, Nigel Fox, Owen Sharp and Caroline Brown

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Harrison, Ken Rist, Paul Chandler, Carolyn Dunn, Geoff Date and Duncan Hill.

The Chair, Simon Jardine, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

#### Minutes of the AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023

These were formally adopted.

#### Chair’s Report

The local party membership is currently 240, down from the peak of 700 during the Brexit years but still well above the “Coalition Trough” of 100 experienced in 2015. Notably, we did not experience a boost during the General Election as has happened in the past.

These trends are not restricted to Brighton & Hove, nor to the Lib Dems. The recent Conservative Leader election revealed that their membership had declined from 172,000 to 131,000 over the past two years, i.e. down by 24%. We need to recruit more younger members. 42% of our members are over 60, compared with 19% in the city as a whole.

We also need to recruit more women. 74% of our membership are men and this, together with the gender imbalance, is reflected in our Exec.

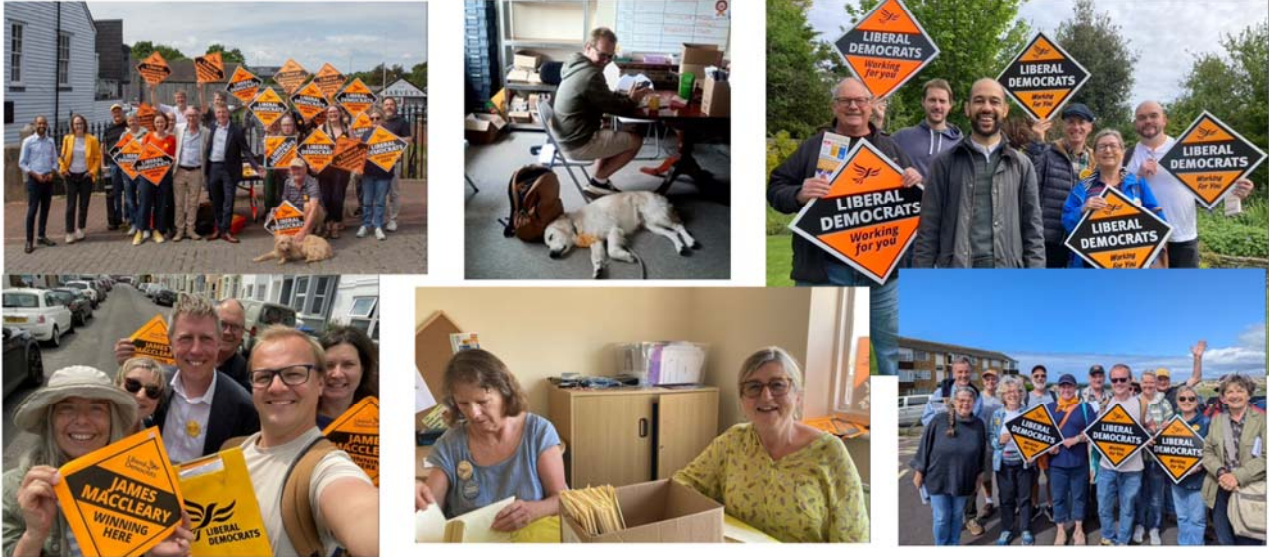
It was the right strategy to focus on Lewes and Eastbourne. We gave them £1,000 each and went over to Lewes and Eastbourne almost every day during the general election campaign. SJ was asked to cover Polegate and we delivered to the whole of that ward. It’s normally Conservative but now Lib Dem, thanks to our efforts. Ben Thomas led canvassing sessions in Lewes and we played a huge part in their campaign, learning a lot ourselves along the way. Josh Woolcott helped out in Mid-Sussex as well.

Today, we have five MPs in Sussex. We need to hold the seats we have won and, at the next election, they should be able to fight unaided so that we can concentrate on Brighton & Hove. We’ll probably be asked to help in Uckfield and Wealden, however.

2024 was exceptionally busy, what with four local by-elections in South Portslade (Ken Rist, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, 12%), Kemptown ward (Robert Brown, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, 14%), Queen’s Park (Dominique Hall, a paper candidate, 5<sup>th</sup> place, 3%) and Brunswick & Adelaide (Claire Lachlan, 4<sup>th</sup> place, 8%), plus a general election - Stewart Stone, Brighton Kemptown, 4<sup>th</sup> place, 10%; Ashley Ridley, Brighton Pavilion, 5<sup>th</sup> place, 3%, Michael Wang, Hove & Portslade, 5<sup>th</sup> place, 6%.

# The General Election

## A BIG Thank You to Everyone Who Helped



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### Treasurer's Report

Owen Sharp presented the 2023 and 2024 Local Party Accounts.

Income in 2024 was lower than in 2023 and the local party is responsible for generating most of its income. A percentage of donations made via the website goes to Lib Dem HQ. One individual self-financed their election campaign and contributed about a third. There are probably only about six members who donate amounts over three figures.

OS stressed that it was always better to pay membership fees directly into the local party's bank account, rather than to HQ, which passes on to us only 5 – 10%. He can provide bank details for anyone wishing to set up a standing order. Frances Lindsay-Hills encouraged everyone living, say, half-an-hour or so from the Brighton Centre to offer B&B accommodation to conference delegates, which she and Paul Chandler had found very easy and great fun. Their guest had slept on an air mattress in a back room and they had really enjoyed having him to stay. Altogether, the scheme had netted the party £800.

The appointment of Andrew Harrison as an independent auditor was unanimously approved and we thanked him for examining the 2023 accounts. According to the 2025 budget, we shall probably spend about £2,500, leaving us with a balance of £2,475. Only £1,200 is available for campaigning. Leaflets cost us £7,000 in the general election and £5,000 in local elections. We must therefore raise £1,500 to fund a general election and £1,000 for a local election.

The cost of printing a Focus leaflet for a ward was around £200, while a better one would be £300. A Facebook campaign would be around £60. Stewart Stone had experimented with one and thought that it had made a difference. Trevor Freeman asked members to try and avoid using PayPal since it takes a cut. Claire Lachlan had re-registered the party as "Brighton & Hove Projects" so that members can take advantage of an app enabling certain designated shops and brands to transfer a percentage of the price paid for a purchase to the party's bank account.

## Election of Officers and Ordinary Members to the Executive Committee (Caroline Ellis)

Helen Eccleson counted the votes and confirmed unanimous approval of every candidate with no objections. SJ said that we were making progress as a local party - we have a fantastic website, thanks to Trevor Freeman, and great press coverage, thanks to Caroline Ellis and Robert Brown. We should like more people to join the team and help with some of these activities.



### **Brighton & Hove Liberal Democrats Nominations to the Executive Committee AGM 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Position</b>
Simon Jardine	Chair	Hyder Khalil	Executive Member
Stewart Stone	Vice Chair - Kemptown	Peter Denyer	Executive Member
Trevor Freeman	Vice Chair - Pavilion	Robert Brown	Executive Member
Owen Sharp	Treasurer	David Sears	Executive Member
Caroline Ellis	Secretary & Press Officer	Toby Keynes	Executive Member
Ashley Ridley	Membership Dev't Officer		
Claire Lachlan	Fundraising Officer		
Caroline Brown	Minutes Secretary		
Ben Thomas	Campaigns Officer		

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Simon thanked the following outgoing members of the Exec for contributing their time, energy and skills to the party:-

- Ian Newman
- Jack Moxley
- Dominique Hall
- Michael Wang
- Stamati Crook
- Simon Gamble
- Paul Chandler.

Special thanks must go to Paul, who has been our Treasurer for very many years and also acted as Chair and Agent. Paul has designed most of our leaflets over the past 5 years. He was the approved candidate there in 2017 and 2019 when we stood aside in favour of Caroline Lucas and was our 2015 parliamentary candidate in Kemptown. Paul also stood for the local council on many occasions, most recently in 2023, and he was extremely helpful to SJ when he took on the Agent role for the local party.

Talk by Alison Bennett, MP, Mid-Sussex

Alison Bennett gave an informative and inspiring talk that covered the following topics:-

- Her experience of life in the House of Commons, complete with many amusing anecdotes
- The election of Donald Trump and its influence on UK politics
- Her engagement with All-Party Parliamentary Groups
- Her parliamentary brief – Care and Carers
- Climate Change
- Turning Mid-Sussex Yellow – How Trump’s first election win in 2016 inspired Alison to stand in her home ward and how the Mid-Sussex party steadily won ground.

Alison was presented with a beautiful bouquet as a thank you from the party for an inspiring as well as practical talk and Jim May proposed a vote of thanks to Simon Jardine and the Executive Committee for steering the party through an eventful and demanding year. It should be added that Simon kindly provided drinks for the AGM, while Frances Lindsay-Hills laid on the delicious buffet.