

As the meeting was not quorate, a vote to hold the meeting was taken & carried unanimously.

MINUTES

In Attendance: Vilnis Vesma (VV) who chaired the meeting, James Joyce (JJ) Dr Anthony Lynch (AL); Gill Moseley (GM); Jonathan Gault (JG); Sue Edwards (SE).

- 1. Apologies for absence** Stewart Bean (SB), Aaron Burnard (AB), Pete Brown (PB), Tom Allan (TA)
- 2. Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting** held on 2 November 2023 were agreed without change. Proposed VV, seconded JJ. There were no matters arising.
- 3. Reports**
 - 1. Chair** – SB (chair) sent apologies to the AGM but his excellent report was made available to all members via a link from the Calling notice. Receive report - proposed AL, seconded VV. The full report is attached. The Executive thanked SB, who has resigned, for his hard work throughout his term.
 - 2. Treasurer** – AB sent apologies to the AGM but the accounts were made available to all members via a link from the Calling notice. Executive thanked AB, who has resigned, for his hard work throughout his term as treasurer. Signatories for bank are being changed. AB, VV, JG plus one other – secretary? – will be the 4 signatories.
 - 3. Membership** - PB (membership Secretary) & TA (assistant membership secretary) sent apologies to the AGM but the report was made available to all members via a link from the Calling notice. The full report is attached. The executive thanked PB, who has resigned, for his hard work throughout his term as membership secretary.
 - 4. Council Group**
 - 1. District GM** continues as VC of Development & Management committee (Planning applications) & her successful motion on S106 moneys will now save the council several thousand of £s. The full report will be attached.
 - 2. County GM** also wrote & presented the GCC report as attached. Her two excellent reports were considered worthy of being used to show constituents what is being done on their behalfs.
 - 3. Conference Representative** - this is now a redundant role & will be removed.
- 4. Motions to AGM:** none
- 5. Election of Honorary President.** Dr Anthony Lynch was elected unanimously. Proposed VV, seconded GM. AL made a gracious speech thanking volunteers - including the executive - and extolling liberal democrat values. Full speech attached.
- 6. Election of Officers** – Chair, Treasurer & Membership secretary resigned their officer roles, but happily they all remain on the executive committee in new roles.
 1. Chair – JJ - proposed VV, seconded GM
 2. Treasurer – JG - proposed VV, seconded GM
 3. Membership -TA – proposed JJ, seconded GM
 4. Secretary – SB – proposed VV, seconded GM
 5. Data Officer – JG – proposed VV, seconded SE (this role is usually part of treasurer's remit)
 6. Ordinary member – GM – proposed JJ, seconded SE
 7. Ordinary member – AB – proposed GM, seconded SE
 8. (Ordinary member VV, Nominating officer PB, minutes secretary SE remain in role)
- 7. Receive the Accounts for 2023** Proposed JG, seconded VV. Budget for 2025 deferred as not essential.
- 8. Appointment of Independent Examiner** It was agreed to defer this appointment as FoD Liberal democrats have not reached the financial threshold whereby this would be necessary. JG referred exec to Lighthouse for rules on this and budget.

The meeting closed at 20:20.

Reports follow

Chair's report - For 2024

This year featured a surprisingly early general election. The Liberal Democrats 72 MPs represents the party's best performance in decades and will lead to a higher profile in UK media. It is worth recognising that this was achieved by ruthlessly targeting some seats at the expense of others. Locally we now have MPs representing both Cheltenham and Tewkesbury and I hope that this will benefit our performance at the next local elections.

I would like to thank James Joyce for standing as our parliamentary candidate. We invested in a leaflet for each household in the constituency which promoted James and the local party. Many votes were cast tactically to oust the sitting MP and this reduced our overall vote share – fortunately without losing our deposit. While canvassing recently, residents have remembered James Joyce from the leaflet.

The next elections in May are for Gloucestershire County. The Liberal Democrat group is currently the second largest and has a good chance of sharing control with other progressive parties. There is also possibility that we may win sufficient seats to gain outright control. In the Forest of Dean our priority is to hold the Newent division.

For those who already volunteer, I thank you for your efforts. I appeal to other members to come forward and help if you can. This help includes writing a few envelopes, delivering leaflets and letters in your street, offering to host window posters and stakeboards and telephone canvassing. The latter is a good way of helping over the winter period from home. I know that no division will be held or gained without effort from our volunteers. Thank you. Research shows that the best ways to raise awareness of our party is by leafletting and canvassing. Uniquely, canvassing identifies our supporters so we can remind them to vote on polling day. It also identifies supporters of other parties who might then be persuaded to vote tactically for the Liberal Democrats. Canvassing also reveals local issues that can be brought to the attention of the party and generally engages us with residents. If you wish to volunteer, please come forward.

This year has seen more letter writing to The Forester promoting LD policies either directly, over a LD signature, or obliquely in a personal letter. Vilnis Vesma also had a larger article published on home heating that included a reference to our party. I ask all letter writers to keep up their good work as it lifts our profile.

We now have several petitions on the website that are being promoted on Focus leaflets. They are successfully engaging residents who provide their contact details when supporting the petition. Whilst the number of residents who have provided email addresses so far is modest, we have made a good start and proved that the mechanism works. Expect more petitions in the future.

A second summer social occasion was held at the Chair's house which was well attended drawing in members, supporters and friends, from all parts of the constituency. The occasion provided an opportunity to thank members and supporters who, throughout the year, have volunteered their time.

I would like to thank our councilors and all members of the executive, particularly those who hold positions recognised by the national party and therefore receive emails from the national party. So, many thanks to Aaron Burnard (Finance and Data), Pete Brown (Membership), and James Joyce (Secretary) for their efforts. I thank Sue Edwards for taking the minutes of meetings so efficiently.

After two years as chair I am stepping down to concentrate on the campaigns in my local divisions of Newent and Mitcheldean. After May 1, I will try to be more involved in the national Liberal Democrats Science and Technology group with a particular interest in climate change.

Finally, thank you all for continuing to be members of the Forest of Dean Liberal Democrats party.

Regards

Stewart Bean

Chair

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REPORT (2024/25)

As at October 31st 2024 we had 84 registered members and 25 registered supporters which represents a fall of 8 members and 4 supporters from the previous year. However, there has been a slight increase in members during the last couple of months and, hopefully, this trend will continue. A small sub-committee has been formed the purpose of which is to explore new approaches to both recruitment and retention of members.

We are continuing the campaign commenced a year ago to recruit/influence young voters which involves them receiving personal letters. Tom Allan is co-ordinating this programme and has re-drafted the letter following the party's remarkable success in the recent general election. We would very much welcome additional assistance with the distribution of letters particularly in the Coleford and Cinderford areas.

Anybody interested in helping out should contact Tom by phone on 07392 938244 or by e-mail at thomasallan1352002@gmail.com

It is sad to report the passing of a long-standing member Robin Warren who died recently at the age of 93. Robin served on the Forest of Dean and Lydney Town Council and was also for some time President of our Association. His contribution to the Liberal, and latterly Liberal Democrat cause in the Forest of Dean was highly significant.

Confronted with both an unpopular Labour Government, and Tory opposition party, opportunities for the Liberal Democrats are endless. Let us take full advantage by expanding our membership base during the year ahead.

Our President Dr Anthony Lynch spoke at The FOD Liberal Democrat AGM

He thanked The Executive for their work and presence at meetings throughout the year and emphasised his thanks to those who throughout the Constituency do the bulk of leafletting, phone calling, getting posters in windows and putting stake boards by garden gates; for the hours spent addressing envelopes; and tea making. It is because of the willing work of these volunteers in 2024, that in the year coming we hope to have more seats in The County Council.

He said: "In a World that is full of challenges - wars in Gaza, The Ukraine – environmental challenges from The Amazon to The Rivers Severn and Wye – a President in The USA who supports 'Big Oil' and denies Climate change and who does not believe in vaccination – who seems to regard morality as only for the 'Woke' and is meaningless for everyone else. Our values matter...

"Liberal Democrat values of compassion, fairness in all parts of society and across the political spectrum, proposing and working towards real democracy with proportional representation – these give us some pride.

"That pride in what we are holds us firm in matters large and small. It is that pride which keeps us at every level grounded on solving the problems in our own locality.

"So - we Liberal Democrats volunteer to do the mundane, local things that make lives better.

"And work with other parties where there is solid agreement in principle.

"Our perhaps very small actions bring about change. And you have cause to be proud of that.

"Thank you all ...I look forward to seeing you during the year and at Our AGM in 2025.

"Be well and be lucky"

Anthony.

Wednesday 19th November 2024.

GCC Report for Lib Dem AGM Nov 2024

Group Matters:

Ben Evans and Lisa Spivey continue to provide strong leadership for the 16-strong Lib Dem Group both in the Council Chamber and for the county as a whole. As we approach the next GCC elections in May 2025, our aim is to take control. The number of seats will increase from 53 to 55, and Ben is developing a county-wide strategy to win.

The Group's full-time political assistant, Tim Cobbett has returned to Kingston but his replacement is someone who is well-known to some of us - Chris Ward. Chris masterminded the committee room in the delayed 2019 Newent election when Vilnis and I were first elected as District councillors and worked in the Cheltenham Lib Dem hub with Andy Williams for a number of years before before gaining wider experience as a development officer.

In my role as a Lib Dem spokesperson, I have added Flood Management to my Environment as my brief. Quarterly briefing meetings are now scheduled with senior officers for our spokespersons.

Local Issues:

As well as following up the usual highways complaints mostly potholes, and having had some success in getting the new jet-patching machine to repair three of the worst areas in my division, the motion at Full Council by our Group to declare a Highways Emergency earlier in the year gave us good headlines to use on the Focus leaflets.

My patch is the worst served in Gloucestershire for fast broadband speeds over 30Mbps. After a frustrating quest for information, I was referred to an officer in Herefordshire who is responsible for the Fastershire project. I have been able to understand the very complex delivery system and why it has failed so many of the residents.. A temporary fix using 4G is the only solution for the moment through a Household Digital Grant or a more expensive satellite system with no grant for remote areas..

EV charging points roll-out. The government has only given the GCC grants for on-street charging points at present (7Kw)and I am highlighting the need for joined-up thinking with the district to plan to install fast or rapid chargers (22Kw or 50Kw) n the district car parks.

I usually attend the parish council meetings and coffee mornings in all of the ten parishes I represent in order to listen and respond to local issues. I have been able to provide help for highways safety problems from my Highways Local Funding of £30Kpa. The footbridge over the Oxenhall ford was completed thanks to a grant from this fund. In addition, I have a community pot of £40K and recently an extra £3K for youth and an extra £10K for general community projects to enable schemes to get over the line or to fund them entirely. Projects such heating systems, cinema projection equipment, noticeboards, play equipment, sports lighting, are examples of where the funding helps to support local communities.

Gill Moseley