

Minutes of the 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Devon and Cornwall Liberal Democrats, at the Woodlands Castle, Ruishton, Taunton on Friday, 11th November 2016

1. Welcome

Vanessa Newcombe, the Vice Chair, opened the meeting, welcomed the 38 members present and explained that the Chair's car had broken down, so he would be unable to make the start of the meeting.

3. Chair's Report

Vanessa read the Chair's report that Adam Killeya had prepared. He said he would like to start with a minute's silence for all of the members past and present who have passed away in the course of the year.

He observed 2016 was supposed to be a relatively quiet year: PCC and City Councils Elections in May, and maybe, possibly an EU Referendum: other than that it would be a rebuilding year. It hadn't worked out that way. Some of these unexpected events have been huge downs: the EU Referendum was both a shock and a huge blow to liberal internationalism, and its effects were not just immediate, for example in terms of a change of Prime Minister, the hit to the value of the pound, and the rise in hate crimes, but will also be felt for years to come. We are entering a period of economic instability, political upheaval and constitutional crises.

And then there's Trump. And those four words sum all that he'd like to say in more detail but which would fill many pages, and involve too many swear words.

Equally 2016 has had its ups: not least a series of fantastic council by-elections gains: he believed more than any other region, despite being one of the smallest regions. In Cornwall we are 7 councillors up on the start of the year – with 5 gains, a hold following a resignation, and a defection. On the other side of the Tamar we have made a gain apiece in Teignbridge District Council, South Hams District Council, and Torbay Council. We have also had some other near misses based on strong local campaigns in both Devon & Cornwall. This gives us a strong basis for going forwards and for turning Devon & Cornwall back to its rightful Golden colour at the next election, whenever that might be.

Outside of the region he and several other members went up to Witney to help with our excellent by-election result there, and many of us are planning to similarly support Richmond, where we have a real chance of gaining the seat. In terms of general elections, the possible snap election has not happened yet but remains a possibility, and whether or not it happens involved a huge amount of work particularly from those on the Regional Candidates Committee, as well as a much appreciated commitment from those who put their names forwards to be PPCs.

Beyond our core business of fighting elections, and our periodic annual tasks of organising conference, holding executive meetings, sending out newsletters and supporting our local parties, several other important pieces of work have been going on. These include (not in any kind of exhaustive list):

Regional Plan: the executive approved a two-year plan in March covering all areas of our business – elections, training, finance etc. Whilst some of this has been superseded by events and will need to be amended in the mid-plan review much of it remains a valid and important basis for going forwards.

Diversity: apart from the adoption by Federal Conference of the Diversity Motion, including all-women shortlists which will have direct implications for our region, we are also looking at the other steps we can take to improve diversity in Devon & Cornwall, including in our candidates for 2017.

Training: events in basic campaigning skills were held in both Devon & Cornwall in the middle of the year, and we are currently holding 'master-class' training, for example in Page Plus. Continuing this programme in the run-up to 2017 will be vital.

Supporting the establishment of Cornwall Lib Dems: with the existing organisation 'Campaigning for Devon' it was important to have a similar organisation in Cornwall: this has been locally driven, but Region has offered encouragement and support.

Preparing for 2017: Both of the above points feed into our critically important elections for Devon County

Council and Cornwall Council in May. These are important in themselves but also in establishing a strong base for retaking seats at the next General Election. Cornwall has been designated a national target, and we are also hoping to increase our numbers in Devon. We, and our party campaign staff as well as ALDC and local staff, will be supporting county and local parties in their very important campaigning over the next six months.

Boundaries: Ian Jolly has led the production of our submission to the boundary commission, something he hoped to discuss under AOB if there was time.

Filling posts: we had spent some time recruiting further Regional post-holders to help in important areas such as fundraising and social media. We had also recruited a new Treasurer to take up the duties of the late and sadly missed John Earle.

South West European Group: we have been working with Western Counties region on matters of mutual interest, and have agreed written terms of reference for doing so in the future.

English Party: More widely himself and Vanessa as Vice-Chair have attended and contributed to meetings of the English Party, and he was our region's rep and the Secretary of the English Review Group which has been set up to review the party's arrangements in England

There are many people Adam thanked for their efforts, individually or as groups, and in doing so he apologised for anyone who he unintentionally missed off. No offence is meant, and he hoped none would be taken. Vanessa had been a very supportive Vice Chair, acted as Treasurer for several months, and chaired the selection panel for our Police & Crime Commissioner. Dave who continues to be the pillar of wisdom and experience on which the regional executive rests and, I discovered this year, has missed only one Regional Executive out of about 112 since the region started. Sheila for her experience and efforts as Chair of the Regional Candidates Committee in what has been a particularly challenging year with the possible snap General Election as well as the Diversity motion and other matters. Gail for her considerable efforts in working with Western Counties to organise this conference: a task that is not unlike doing an impression of a swan: grace and elegance on the surface due to a great deal of activity and splashing underneath Other members of the Regional Executive: David our Diversity Officer, John our Digital Media Officer, Mike our training coordinator, Stuart our Fundraising Officer, Chris our new Treasurer; and Judith our Honorary President. All those others who attend and contribute to the Regional Executive as co-opted members, local party reps, and county or group reps; and all those who are part of the conference, candidates or local parties committee. Our regional party staff, Dave and Nick, who between them have the whole of the South West to cover as well as work in Wales, Witney and in Dave's recent case New Hampshire. Also our local employed organisers: Jeff and Nik for their hard work and efforts in their multiple constituencies. All those who stood for election throughout the year whether as council candidates, by-election candidates or indeed as a Police & Crime Commissioner candidate, and those who helped and supported them; and Dennis who coordinated Devon & Cornwall EU Referendum efforts. And finally all of those who hold important roles in local and county parties, and all of those who service the parties in other ways – as councillors, candidates, activists, raffle ticket sellers, and much else besides.

Unlike this time last year, he was NOT expecting the next 12 months to be relatively calm and peaceful, and he was sure they will not disappoint. Then as now he will greatly appreciate your efforts and your support.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the 2015 AGM, which had previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

4. Report from the Parliamentary Parties in Westminster

Baroness Judith Jolly spoke about the work of the House of Lords, she said she would not speak too long about Brexit as Nick Clegg would be covering this later in the evening at the dinner. She said she was leading for the Party on the Register of Arms Brokers Bill, and spoke about adding the Armed Forces to the Policing and Crime Bill. She then turned to the Richmond by-election, saying the voters were soft on Heathrow, but worried

about Brexit, which was an opportunity for us. She noted that Dick Newby had taken over as Liberal Democrat Leader in the House of Lords, and that she now led on Defence.

5. Presentation & Approval of Accounts

Chris Cooke said he had a debt of gratitude to Mark Taylor for preparing the 2015 accounts, and he then passed round copies of the relevant pages of these. After study of these accounts, they were approved. There then was a question on how the deficit for 2015 was secured, and the bank balances were discussed.

6. Treasurers Report and Outline Draft Budget For 2017

Vanessa Newcombe said she had been Acting Treasurer from March this year, when John Earle resigned, until Chris Cook kindly took over the position in September. She noted it was with great sadness that we heard of John Earle's death in August. Vanessa gave the current account balance and the Business Reserve account balance. The latest quarterly Membership rebate was paid in in September, and amounted to £2,012.95, an increase on the previous quarter of over £500, reflecting the significant rise in membership numbers. For 2015 we had only received three Quarters of Rebate, with one still outstanding, which was still being chased. There had been a flurry of financial activity during the Referendum, with us receiving £7,600 as our share of the South West European Group fund (shared on a 60/40 basis with Western Counties – we receive the 40% share). As agreed at Executive, each constituency could bid for £250 match funding for Referendum related activity and expenses, and parties that could demonstrate that they spent more could be supported by up to £500. In the event, the take-up was quite low, whilst other expenses, agreed by Adam Killea, Dennis Brewer and herself, included spending on advertising in the regional press, social media and phone canvassing.

The process of changing the signatories to the accounts had now been completed. We are looking at a new software programme ('Zero') highly recommended by HQ which gives a template for Electoral Commission compliant accounts to be produced with very little effort. She said the Accounts were looking healthy, and noted the Executive had agreed to appoint an Intern, and after Devon had withdrawn, the Intern would be working for Cornwall.

7. The appointment of a person to produce an independent report on the accounts

Because of the turn-over in Treasurers, the independent person to report on the Accounts for the year had not been approached, and after discussion, it was agreed that the new Treasurer contact last year's person from Western Counties to confirm she was willing to do this again.

8. Motion A

“That the subscription income remitted to the Regional Party by the Party in England (as determined under Article 6 of the Articles of the Party in England) shall for 2017 be divided between the Regional Party and the Local Parties as to 100% to the Regional Party.” After an explanation of what this applied to, it was carried by acclaim.

9. Motion B (Constitutional amendment)

"Add new

2.5 (i) elect the Region's Traditional Media Co-ordinator for the following calendar year.

2.5 (j) elect the Region's Social Media Co-ordinator for the following calendar year.

Re-title Article 3.0 (Officers) to read:

"The role of Officers and other elected regional posts"

Add new clauses as follows:

3.1 (g) The Digital IT Officer;

3.1 (h) The Diversity Champion; and

3.1 (i) The Fund-raising Lead.

Renumber 3.8 to 3.11, add the following new clauses:

3.8 The Digital IT Officer is responsible for driving our digital capability forward, managing the Region's website, and help local parties transform their digital impact;

- 3.9 The Diversity Champion is responsible for working with the Executive and local parties to build greater connection and engagement with minority groups, and implement the Party's Diversity strategies;**
- 3.10 The Fund-raising Lead shall be responsible for leading on regional level fundraising efforts, including big donor strategy and fundraising events; advising local parties on their own fundraising efforts and may establish a small group to assist with these.**

Add new clauses as follows:

- 3.12 The Regional Training Co-ordinator shall be responsible for co-ordinating the running of training events; developing and implementing a Regional Training Plan and ensuring appropriate communications about training to Local Parties and members, except training functions which fall within the terms of reference of the Candidates Committee.**
- 3.13 The Regional Traditional Media Coordinator shall be responsible for establishing and developing relationships with regional press, radio and television, and to issue regional press releases as appropriate and may also liaise with other Lib Dem groups in the Region on traditional media issues.**
- 3.14 The Regional Social Media Coordinator shall be responsible for establishing and developing a regional Twitter presence and a regional Facebook presence; as well as advising local parties on their own social media efforts.**

Reword 4.2 (j) to read:

4.2 (j) a member elected at the Annual General meeting as the Region's Traditional Media Co-ordinator:
Renumber 4.2 (k) to 4.2 (l), insert the following new clause:

4.2(k) a member elected at the Annual General meeting as the Region's Social Media Co-ordinator: "

This motion was carried nem con.

9. Elections the year 2017

The Returning Officer, Nik Altortsev, conducted this part of the meeting. It was explained as this was the first year that Regional elections would be conducted by 'One Member One Vote', any contested posts would be decided by the entire membership voting after a mailing from HQ following the AGM.

a. Officers

For **Chair** he read the nomination of **Adam Killeya**, and said as unopposed he would be elected.

For **Vice-Chair** he read the nomination of **Vanessa Newcombe** and said as unopposed she would be elected.

For **Chair of the Regional Candidates Committee** he read the nomination of **Sheila Hobden** and said as unopposed she would be elected.

For **Chair of the Regional Conference Committee** he read the nomination of **Gail Bones** and said as unopposed she would be elected.

For **Secretary** he read the nomination of **Dave Browne** and said as unopposed he would be elected.

For **Treasurer** he read the nomination of **Christopher Cook** and said as unopposed he would be elected.

b. For **Digital IT Officer** he had received no nominations. It was agreed that the Executive be empowered to appoint to this post.

For **Diversity Champion** he read the nomination of **David Chalmers** and said as unopposed he would be elected.

For **Fundraising Lead** he had received no nominations. After a discussion it was agreed the Executive be empowered to appoint to this post. It was noted that Chris Bones had offered to assist whoever was elected.

c. For the post of **Honorary President** he had received no nominations. He then re-opened nominations at the meeting, **Baroness Judith Jolly was nominated by acclaim. As she was unopposed she would be elected.**

d. For the 4 members of the **Regional Candidates Committee** he had two valid nominations: for **Dave Browne and Keith Baldry**. He then took nominations from the floor of the meeting: **Iain MacDonald** was

nominated and assented, these three would be elected. The 4th post was left to the Regional Executive to fill.

- e. For the 5 members of the **Regional Conference Committee** he had two valid nominations: for **Vanessa Newcombe and Dave Browne** - there would be elected. He then opened nominations to the floor of the meeting for the three vacancies: **Joanna Rimron, Tom Deakin and Alison Foden** were nominated, assented and would also be elected as the 5 posts were uncontested.
- f. For the 7 representatives on the **English Council**, Mark said he had valid nominations for **Vanessa Newcombe, Dave Browne and Sheila Hobden**: they would be elected. This left four vacancies, which were opened to the floor of the meeting after an explanation of what being on the English Council involved: **Martin Wrigley, David Chalmers, Joanna Kenny and Gail Bones** were proposed and assented and would be elected as the 7 posts were uncontested. It was agreed that **Iain MacDonald** would be a substitute.
- g. For the **Training Coordinator** there was no valid nomination and it was left for the Region's Executive to fill as felt appropriate.
- h. For the **Traditional Media Co-ordinator** there was no valid nomination, until **Simon Taylor** volunteered, and would be declared elected as the post was uncontested.
For the **Social Media Co-ordinator** there was no valid nomination, and after a discussion on linking it to the fund-raising task, it was passed to the Region's Executive to fill as felt appropriate.

The meeting then closed.