

Minutes of the AGM of Camden LibDems held on 24th November 2022 at The Winch Community Centre, Swiss Cottage at 7pm

Present: Baroness Sue Garden (in the chair)

James Bowen, Linda Chung, Will Coles, Judy Dixey, Jill Fraser, Janet Grauberg, Pranay Hariharan, Annie Sarah Hoyle, Nancy Jirira, Matthew Kirk, Jonathan Lewin, Derek McAuley, Jill Newbrook, Craig O'Donnell, Elizabeth Pearson, Michael Pedersen, Flick Rea, Paul Regan, Eugene Regis, Nicholas Russell, Tom Simon, Anne Ward.

Rob Blackie in attendance

| Item | Record |
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| 1. Introductions and Apologies | Sue Garden welcomed everyone to the meeting Apologies: received from Catherine Hays, Keith Moffitt and Erich Wagner |
| 2. Minutes of the last AGM | The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated in advance. There were no matters arising. They were agreed, Jim Bowen proposing, Derek McAuley seconding. |
| 3. Chair's Report | <p>Matthew Kirk reflected on the fact that this was the first face to face meeting for Camden Lib Dems since 2019. It has been turbulent times, and unfortunately our membership had been hit over the last 3 years, which now half the numbers in 2019.</p> <p>There has been some good news both locally, and nationally, with our wins in Belsize, Nancy's success in Fortune Green, Janet's near miss in West Hampstead, and Linda's win in the Hampstead Town by-election supporting the party's by-election gains in Amersham/Chesham, Tiverton/Honiton, North Shropshire, successes that were all supported by members from Camden.</p> <p>Our success in May mean that we were making a habit of winning, and with 5 councillors we are now the official opposition in Camden, suggesting there is much to play for, and that there are interesting times ahead!</p> <p>Matthew also paid tribute particularly to Janet, but also to the Exec Committee, Judy, Erich and Vice Chairs for all the hard work during the year.</p> |
| 4. & 5. Accounts for the year to December 2020 and interim to end November 2021 | <p>Accounts had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>In Erich's absence, Matthew presented his report, both of accounts to the end of the year 2021, which had been submitted and accepted at HQ; also summary accounts to November 2022 giving the current position.</p> <p>It was noted that there were differences between the 2021, and 2022 accounts. Noteworthy items mentioned here were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021 there was the London Mayoral, GLA and one borough by-election, while in 2022 it was the council elections (May) and the by-election, with major campaigning effort. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The energy and impetus of the Council election campaigns elicited several large donations from members and supporters, including one major anonymous donation; thanks to those who donated, we are expecting to end the year with a small surplus instead of the deficits seen in previous years. <p>The balance at 31st October showed an uncharacteristically large bank balance as a large outgoing expense was about to be paid. By the end of the year, it is likely to be closer to £14 – 15k.</p> <p>It was asked why the expenditure on campaigning not significantly higher in 2022 than in 2021, with the response that campaign expenditure during the campaign is strictly limited.</p> <p>A vote of thanks was agreed for the donations received.</p> <p>The accounts were accepted, proposed by Tom Simon, seconded by Nick Russell.</p> <p>The motion “This meeting resolves to authorise the treasurer to move the bank accounts from HSBC to Unity Trust Bank with signatories: Janet Grauberg; Keith Moffitt; Derek McAuley; Erich Wagner, with any two to authorise payments.” was proposed by Matthew, seconded by Judy. It was passed nem-con.</p> <p>Thanks to Erich Wagner for his care for the finances were minuted.</p> |
| 6. Independent Reviewer | <p>Thanks were also minuted to Valdir Francisco for reviewing these accounts; he agreed to continue in that role.</p> |
| 7. Parliamentary Update | <p>Baroness Garden updated the group on activity in Parliament. She continues to speak mainly on education and serves as Deputy Speaker.</p> <p>The Commons team have been heartened by our success in by-elections, which resulted in 3 new Lib Dem MPs. Sadly we are still the 4th party by size. Publicity is difficult, but there was good widespread coverage of Ed Davey’s deferred conference speech, and his emphasis on care, not just his very disabled son, but his wife’s multiple sclerosis.</p> <p>In the Lords, there has been a churn of Ministers. Boris’s new peers continue to be created in at a ridiculous rate, but they rarely appear after they’re invested. This is not good for legislation, but has the advantage that they aren’t claiming expenses, so don’t cost the country anything. There are currently over 250 Conservative peers but on a heavy whip they are lucky to get 150 to vote.</p> <p>Lib Dem peers work long and hard on amendments to some terrible bills, currently the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, the Procurement Bill and the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill. The Tory majority in the Commons means they often don’t bother to consider the Lords’ amendments, so some bad bills have gone through.</p> |

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| | <p>Keir Starmer talks of abolishing the Lords. Lib Dems agree there should be reform, but someone needs to scrutinise legislation, which the Commons have no time to do.</p> <p>There were two sad losses during 2022, great colleagues, Nigel Jones and David Chidgey.</p> <p>Baroness Garden ended with grateful thanks to the Committee and all who worked so hard for Lib Dem values in Camden.</p> |
| 8. Council update | <p>Tom Simon reported on the past 12 months in Council, with some notable successes, not least becoming the official opposition and ousting the Tory leader in the May elections.</p> <p>The group submitted a strong set of amendments to the proposed council budget in March. They were rejected, but inevitably gave rise to some greater consideration by the Labour group and some were quietly adopted later (e.g., number of trees being planted).</p> <p>Since the May elections, there have only been 2 "regular" Full Council meetings, as one was taken up with Mayor-making while the September meeting was overtaken by the death of the late Queen.</p> <p>All our Councillors sit on several committees. All spoke at the November Council, when our Motion on the Cost of Living proposed several good ideas that would have added to what the Council has already in place.</p> <p>Labour backbenchers take every opportunity to blame Lib Dems in coalition for all the ills of the current situation.</p> <p>There are some major issues coming forward. One of these is the O2 Centre, which is extremely controversial, and will probably coming to Planning in January.</p> <p>There is likely to be a cross-party motion to make Camden recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary.</p> <p>Flick Rea expressed concern at the potential creeping power of the Labour administration with the new Strategic Panel, overseeing planning.</p> <p>The Council Report was accepted.</p> |
| 9. Motions | <p>It was agreed to adopt the model constitution for local parties from January 2023.</p> |
| 10. Appointments and elections | <p>Returning Officer Nick Russell pointed out that the role of Honorary President was not up for election, and as Baroness Sue Garden was willing to continue, she was duly confirmed and thanked for continuing in that role.</p> <p>The position of Vice Presidents would be clarified with HQ in terms of the model constitution.</p> <p>Nick Russell announced that the following had been nominated for the Officers and the Executive Committee and were elected unopposed.</p> <p>The Executive Committee now is:</p> |

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| | <p>President Sue Garden Chair Derek McAuley Vice-chair Keith Moffitt Treasurer Erich Wagner Secretary Jim Bowen Membership Development Officer Pranay Hariharan Elections Officer Sarah Hoyle Diversity Champion Janet Grauberg Executive Committee Will Coles, Flick Rea, Jill Fraser, Elizabeth Pearson. Thanks were extended to Nick for his role as Returning Officer.</p> |
| 11. Campaigns update | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leaflets for Fortune Green were available to collect and deliver. 2. A team were going to Wimbledon the weekend of December 3rd to join the campaign for the General Election as this particular campaign is the top seat in London and nearest to Camden; so they will be determining timings/distances etc. 3. A Belsize Focus will be ready for distribution the weekend 10th/11th December |
| 12. Any other business | <p>Attention was drawn to the return of the legendary Christmas party at Flick Rea's house on 17th December. More details will follow in emails and on Facebook.</p> |
| 13. Rob Blackie | <p>Rob, who has been a strong candidate in the GLA elections and a campaigner around London, briefed the meeting on the charitable project he had established with others to promote freedom of speech, particularly in Russia at the moment, by using digital advertising techniques to get messages about the war in Ukraine across to millions of Russians deceived by the regime's control of the media.</p> |