

Minutes of Southend LD Association AGM-2020

Held via Zoom on Monday, 9th. November, 2020 from 8 pm.

Kindly Hosted by Granville Stride, our Data Officer.

LP Members Present: Billy Boulton, Bob Howes, John Batch, Granville Stride, Chris Hind, Katie Kurilecz, Jessie Skinner, Carole Mulroney, Paul Collins, Ashley Thompson, Beth Hooper, Nina Stimson, Roger Fisher, Carole Roast, Linda Wells, Dean Murphy, and Jacob Christie. 17 Members in Total.

Guests present: Callum Robertson: (Guest Speaker: Lib Dem Candidate for Essex Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner). Craig Cannell, from Rayleigh Lib Dems who oversaw the Election process.

We began by testing the online voting system which appeared to be fine.

Apologies for absence: Received from Rosemary Sudlow, Clive Potter, Howard Gibeon, and Phillipa Higgins.

Minutes of 2019 AGM: These were duly noted as an accurate record.

Matters arising: Billy had confirmation that Mr Bainbridge from Rayleigh was prepared to act as our Independent Examiner of our Accounts.

Billy introduced our guest speaker **Callum Robertson**, who admitted he was an election geek. We enjoyed an interesting account of his campaign to increase our share of the vote in the election next year. He was our Parliamentary candidate in Clacton last year, and believes that we Lib Dems can do so much, as we govern in the national interest. We have seen this in Chelmsford. Callum aims to attack the record of the Commissioner, especially the over-policing of ethnic minorities. He is visiting charities like "Changing Pathways". We have immigrants who are afraid to report, and are being taken to centres like Yarlswood. "We are unlikely to win this election of Commissioner, until we win in places like Southend, Chelmsford, Colchester, Brentwood, Thurrock and Essex" Callum stressed.

Questions were asked and answered. Billy asked what Callum would regard as success in his P, C and Fire Commissioner election, and the answer was, persuading the Commissioner to curtail the excessive "Stop and Search" without strong suspicion that goes on. The Essex electorate is around 1.5 million, which is enormous for one candidate to deal with. Carole Mulroney said that the Deputy Commissioner came to Leigh, and offered platitudes, but nothing has changed. Due to our size and seaside nature, Southend does have special requirements from the police service. Callum said that "this is where Community Policing is so important". The service has a £5 to £6 million deficit. Bob asked about drug addiction. "We need to treat drug addiction as a health service issue, as police spent 17% of their time chasing down recreational users of small amounts of cannabis" Callum replied. He recommended we read Mark Pack's Podcast, and he viewed it as essential reading. Roger asked about the public's perception that the judiciary were too soft on punishment. The answer was dealing with the causes of crime, and ensuring that the appropriate sentences were passed.

Chair's Report: Billy referred us to his written report, but added that we had improved our position in the General Election in the West in December last year, with Nina standing at fairly short notice.

Treasurer's Report: John started with a promotion of the 500 Club, which now has 95 participants. Shares are £15 per year, and you may win £10 or £25 per month plus £500 at the AGM. Payments may be made monthly if desired. John had sent us the 2019 Accounts online,

We are in a relatively stable position with £2,000 more than we started with. Given that we have had to finance a European Election and a General Election, we have done quite well. The Members noted the Accounts, and thanked John for his work.

Independent Examiner: John confirmed that Mr Bainbridge of Rayleigh had agreed to act as Examiner of our Accounts for next year, as John would do for the Rayleigh Party. Proposed by John and seconded by Bob.

500 Club: The annual £500 prize was won by Leigh ward. November: £10 won by Bob Howes and £25 won by Leigh ward.

Membership Secretary: Chris Hind reported that during the summer of 2019, we enjoyed a surge of new Members and that during this year we have seen a gradual decline. This is in line with most of our Local Parties. We currently have about 30 Members at risk of lapsing before long. The national Party have Webinars and outreach due out soon. Discussion took place around some Members complaining about receiving too many leaflets at election time. Ashley recalled that in the Witney By-election, only about 12 people complained, while we gained 23.5% on our vote share. Carole Mulroney also said we should not worry too much about the issue.

Election of Association President: Alan Crystall was re-elected unopposed.

Election of Officers, New Life Presidents and Appointment of Constituent Assembly Delegates:

Chair: Paul ("Billy") Boulton. unopposed.

Vice-Chair: Phillipa Higgins. “

Secretary: Granville Stride. “

Treasurer: John Batch. unopposed.

Data Officer: Granville Stride. “

Membership Development Officer: Chris Hind. unopposed.

Fund-raising Officer: Vacant. (Referred to December, 2020 Exec).

Communications Officer: Katie Kurilecz. unopposed.

Campaign Committee Chair: Bob Howes. “

Political Officer: Nina Stimson. “

Appointment of Delegates to the Liberal Democrat Constituent Assembly:

Roger, who is Secretary to the Assembly, explained that two Members had resigned last year due to age and ill-health. Billy suggested that this should be deferred to the December Executive Committee Meeting. The Club Company needed more Directors and they were due to meet later this week.

Election of New Life Presidents: (If required). No nominations were made.

Report from Southend LD Group on Southend Borough Council:

Carole Mulroney, our Group Leader spoke of the Covid 19 lockdown which has greatly affected the work of the Council. The Civic centre remains closed to the public, with most of the Officers working remotely. Much of the emphasis is on the health and well-being of our most vulnerable residents. Officers are working harder than ever, above and beyond their usual briefs. There are several large-scale property developments in the pipeline, plus on-going work within the environmental area. The Green City project, climate-change and sustainability all being key areas of the work. This includes Transport, which encourages people to walk, and cycle when possible, and during the lockdown to minimise travel and avoid using public transport. An online survey is due before long.

There is a new site which is now a hot-spot for air pollution, which is the West Street/ East Street junction with Victoria Avenue. This may be dealt with by adjusting the timing of the traffic lights.

The Administration has achieved a great deal in these difficult months, and continues to deliver all essential services.

Jessie Skinner praised the Council Group for all their hard work.

Report from Federal Conference attendees: Bob spoke about our first virtual Conference as being very different, and how the hours were a challenge. The attendance was another record at over 1,300! Starting on Friday, he joined at 230 pm and was disappointed by Conference voting heavily in favour of the principle of Universal Basic Income being introduced. 975 delegates voted on that Motion. It was good to be able to help form policy in the auditorium, and there was a chat column which Members could use to make comments at any time during speeches. Other Southend Members joined in including Granville Stride and Chris Hind, and we were all impressed by the high quality of the technology. Ed Davey gave a good speech, but it could have done with at least one joke.

Announcement of the winner of the Lancaster/Lubel Trophy.

Billy had consulted with our President, Alan Crystall, and they decided to award the Trophy to Leigh/West Leigh Branch.

AOB. Emergency election.

Billy wished to add this item as we were keen to elect a Diversity Officer for next year. We held two polls, the first to agree to electing a Diversity Officer. This was agreed unanimously. Then Dean Murphy was nominated by Billy for the post, and Dean was duly elected.

Bob mentioned that the funeral of David Elf was to be held on Friday, 20th November. It would be by invitation only. Roger said it may be available online.

Date of 2021 AGM: Monday, 8th November, 2021.

Venue: To be confirmed.

The Meeting closed at 10.10 pm.

Robert C. Howes (Secretary).